

**"The Dialectics of Decolonization:  
Nationalism and Labor Movements in Postwar  
Africa"**

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The triumph of independence movements over colonial rule in Asia and Africa is another one of those metanarratives that needs to be rethought.<sup>1</sup> But questioning the metanarrative does not mean that there are an infinite number of narratives of independence jumping around. In the world as it exists today, there are only so many ways to imagine what a state might look like, and that number appears smaller in 1992 than it did in the heady days thirty years ago when British and French flags were coming down in one colony after another. Indeed, the narrowing began earlier: as the very question of taking over the state became a realistic possibility, nationalist leaders often began to channel the variety of struggles against colonial authority on which they had drawn--embracing peasants, workers, and intellectuals--into a focus on the apparatus of the state itself and into an ideological framework with a singular focus on the "nation." In the process, many of the possible readings of what an anticolonial movement might be were lost.

This paper, focusing on Africa from the end of World War II to the early 1960s, will look at two sorts of dialectics: first, between colonial states and nationalist movements as they shaped each other in this period and defined each others' options, and second, between two kinds of struggles in which people in colonies were involved--for social goals and for control of the state itself. These two dialectics also shaped each other: trying to defend their right to rule against challenges in the post-war era, imperial states asserted their power to superintend social and economic change--in the name of a universalistic notion of progress--while renouncing what was specifically colonial about colonial authority. For their part, nationalist movements came increasingly to deny the legitimacy of the social movements on whose diverse strengths they had initially built. What we are trying to explain is how Africa ended up with the kind of decolonization it for the most part got: politically assertive and socially conservative, regimes focused on their control of the coercive, patronage, and symbolic apparatus of the state itself, distrustful and hostile to the continued influence of non-state organization, hostile to the very idea of a social movement that might make claims on it.

I will focus on one sort of social movement--labor--and on a particular example, the transition of the French West African labor movement from a class-centered, internationalist organization from roughly 1945 to 1955 to a nationalist organization that insisted that workers subordinate their own concerns, interests, and identity to the emerging national struggle. The most influential leader in both phases of this process was Sékou Touré of Guinea, and when he came to power in 1958, he added the coercive potential of the newly independent state to the argument about the relationship of class struggle and national struggle. The paper begins with a profound--and often constructive--tension between these two principles; it ends with the freezing of the dialectic.

On Colonialism and Decolonization

The metanarrative of nationalist triumph takes two forms.<sup>2</sup> One, which

can be called the narrative of social mobilization--or, by those who disparage it, the narrative of bourgeois nationalism--goes like this: inchoate, often local, resistance to colonial rule which had been evident since the conquest, was channeled into a unified anti-colonial movement in the years after World War II by western-educated intellectuals. Mobilizing people through a wide range of organizations--from ethnic associations to trade unions--and bringing them into modern political parties, these leaders forged a movement that attacked head-on the fundamentally racist construction of the colonial state and claimed its territory, its symbols, and its institutions to bring material progress and a sense of national identity to the people of each African colony.<sup>3</sup>

The second metanarrative is the revolutionary one, most powerfully articulated by Frantz Fanon: the anti-colonialism of western-educated intellectuals--and indeed of wage workers, aspiring only to become a labor aristocracy--was false, and the revolutionary dynamic lay in a peasantry and a lumpenproletariat willing to face up to the absolute denial of identity that colonialism necessarily entailed and to use violence to throw over the colonial regime.<sup>4</sup> Fanon had little sympathy with the rhetoric of racial unity or the invocation of symbols of the African past which "bourgeois nationalists" found easy to embrace as they set themselves up as brokers between African "tradition" and post-colonial "modernity." His imagined future came out of the struggle itself: "'The last shall be first and the first last.' Decolonisation is the putting into practice of this sentence."<sup>5</sup>

Both versions show nationalism subsuming all other struggles. In the triumphant nation, any voice for a particular interest represents divisiveness or a colonialist reaction. In post-colonial Africa, stolidly "bourgeois" regimes like the Ivory Coast and Kenya and self-proclaimed radical regimes born of peasant mobilization and violence, such as Mozambique or Zimbabwe have shown a similar tendency to regard formal opposition and the organization of civil society as illegitimate; the single-party state is but one manifestation of this tendency.<sup>6</sup>

In practice, of course, governments lack any such unity or autonomy: they are tied into complex and subtle relations with internal social groupings and are in constant dialogue with the "western" world. Governing elites--and the peoples they govern--are trying to define their own politics, their own networks, their own identifying symbols in a world whose spatial boundaries are constantly being cut across and rebuilt. But official ideologies focused on the integrity of the nation and the singularity of its mission to define its people's identity and build their future cannot speak to the dilemmas and complexities which the state's porousness implies. Nor can they open up a wide debate on the unresolved problems of what the state can and cannot do to reform poor and unequal societies.

The metahistories of decolonization imply particular readings of colonialism itself. The first version accepts the image of progress associated with western education, but insists that the colonial enterprise was fundamentally hypocritical, denying a role in bringing about that progress to those among the colonized who were best adapted to the task. Racism and foreign exploitation were the key charges levelled against the colonizers. The second version sees colonialism as destructive at every level. Fanon in particular psychologizes the problem of colonialism: he posits an archtypical colonial subject whose very personality is attacked by the fact of

colonization, so that the colonized can only see themselves in relation to the colonizer.<sup>7</sup>

This psychologizing enterprise is deeply problematic. It works by identifying a social and political process--the domination of one country over another--with individual experience, and subsumes the multidimensional structures within which and against which people acted into a singular, essentialized category. Colonialism itself becomes an actor. But why a modestly prosperous cocoa farmer in the Gold Coast, in whose life a white person almost never appears but who is very much subject to the structural constraints of the colonial economy, should be affected in the same way as a worker on an Algerian settler's farm--who is subject to the daily humiliation of racialized work discipline--is not obvious. Nor is it clear why the ways in which colonial subjects make use of, say, Christian religious symbols and practices in building religious movements out of combinations of elements that are original and creative should be treated as a pathological reaction to colonial domination. Nor is it obvious that the western-educated African is the pathetic figure Fanon sees: he or she may be using the symbols of European domination in a calculated, instrumental way, or may be acting as a creative cultural bricoleur. The idea that the colonized subject is obsessed by the fact of colonialism--and builds his or her self around the model or the negation of the supposedly Western subject--centers colonialism more than it should. This is a difficulty not only for Fanon's argument, but for the huge literature that groups African (and other) political action under the rubric of "resistance."<sup>8</sup>

What colonial powers were more consistently able to do was to shape the terms through which colonized subjects addressed a wider world, crossing the bounds of communities within colonies or reaching into the institutions of the colonial state and the metropole themselves. How colonization shaped different discourses, in different spheres of interaction, has been the subject of much recent scholarship on the subject. Much of this work has tended to break down monolithic views of colonialism.<sup>9</sup> Whereas some colonists wanted to create an abject, obedient colonial servant--who would for example work on plantations or in mines--others sought to "colonize minds" in a more active way, to reshape the way Africans thought about themselves and their futures.<sup>10</sup> The very fact of treating the resident of a mission as an individual, detached from a web of social connection, the very fact of reifying a complex and flexible pattern of group identity by writing dictionaries of "tribal languages" and creating institutions of "indirect rule," shaped the terms in which Africans, as individuals and as members of collectivities, had to behave in daily life. But much of this scholarship has been much more persuasive in showing what kinds of identities and ideas missionaries, teachers, traders, and administrators tried to "inscribe" on colonial subjects than in showing how such individuals actually thought of themselves.

Some of the most interesting writing on colonialism has come out of the self-styled Subaltern Studies school centered in India. Their work is a reaction not only against elite nationalism but also against a Marxism which reduces the colonial subject to a stick figure in a drama written elsewhere. This body of scholarship has sought to uncover the structures of dominance that bound subalterns to Indian elites and to the British empire, the ways in which British and Indian elite power were articulated with each other, and the origins of insurgency among the subalterns. As the manifesto of Ranajit Guha

puts it, the starting point of analysis is the "autonomous" domain of the subaltern and the goal is to show people acting "on their own."<sup>11</sup>

The problem here is the concept of subalterity itself. It is not clear that the subjectivity of subalterns (or of elites) is actually theirs. The assumption of a neat boundary between subalterns (however defined) and elites (however defined) is questionable, as is the notion that the very terms in which dominance is articulated, by colonizers or indigenous elites, exists prior to their interaction with the supposedly dominated.<sup>12</sup>

Much of what we know about colonial rule in sub-Saharan Africa suggests that the terms in which "colonial hegemony," if one wants to use such a term, was articulated arose from the colonial encounter itself and had to be redefined periodically. Colonial rule in most of the continent was rule-on-the-cheap, probably more so than its architects wanted it to be. In the early colonial era, colonizers took on various projects of social reform--such as efforts to build a proletariat--but with only occasional and minimal success. It was after their failure to create the African worker or the African capitalist that colonial powers began to congratulate themselves on their genius at preserving African societies while slowly changing them from within. The much celebrated policy of "indirect rule" in British Africa--and its less talked about equivalent in French Africa--represented an attempt to call retreat a policy.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the cultural work that colonial regimes undoubtedly did, it strains the concept of hegemony to apply it here. The rituals of power focused on the state itself were largely conducted for the benefit of its agents, as well as white settlers, missionaries, resident traders, and--of course--the folks back home. Indeed, keeping overseas colonials within the fold--preventing them from "going native" or from blurring the sexual boundaries of colonizer/colonized with racially mixed offspring or from crossing an imagined line of colonial respectability--became a virtual obsession of colonial regimes from the late nineteenth century onward. This is an indication that the outward face of the colonizer's superiority did not mechanically flow from the fact of conquest but had to be reproduced continually and vigilantly.<sup>14</sup> Colonial regimes, to be sure, tried to awe the populace--building modernist capital cities, staging elaborate ceremonies--but it is not clear in what circumstances the populations in question found them awesome, as opposed to, for example, silly. Nor is it clear that colonial efforts to define clear borders or to set up well-defined categories by which the behavior of the "natives" could be understood was as meaningful in Africa as it was to the consumers of colonial cartography and ethnography back home.<sup>15</sup>

None of this takes away from the terrorism of King Leopold's rubber collectors in the Congo, the bureaucratized brutality of the labor system of South Africa, or the humiliations to which aspiring African clerks in bureaucracies were continuously exposed, but it does raise the question of whether a concept like "the colonized subject" is discerning enough to tell us very much about the exercise of power in colonies.

We cannot understand colonial violence without realizing that--unless it could call on the human and economic resources of a South Africa--it was directly effective only when concentrated in time and space. In between, the power of colonial states depended--day by day--on a patchwork of alliances.

From the colonial center, it looked as if power depended on the subcontracting of authority. What ruling through "chiefs" meant in practice varied tremendously: to some extent chiefs were colonial creations, but to some extent local elites manipulated colonial officials to give them greater local authority than they had previously possessed.<sup>16</sup>

Ideologically, in any case, the colonial state depended on the way authority was constructed and displayed in each of the various entities through which the state worked. Only gradually--and often in ways manipulated by chiefs and elders--did colonial states acquire the ethnographic knowledge necessary to understand, let alone affect, the numerous idioms in which power was articulated.<sup>17</sup> Colonial police and armies lurked behind all this, but their use marked a failure of the system and was only effective if concentrated at a particular point. The intellectual labor of establishing hegemonies (in the plural) thus was done in many places and in many idioms, by African elites whose local knowledge was vital to the enterprise and obscure to the central colonial power.

Where the demands of colonial regimes were the heaviest, where the social situation in which many Africans lived the most Fanonesque, the regime's reliance on indigenous intermediaries was paradoxically the most acute. John Lonsdale and Bruce Berman have made this clear in the case of Kenya: the settler regime, drawing labor out of Kenyan communities, relied on chiefs to do the work, and thus depended on the opportunity for chiefs to develop their own mechanisms of accumulation. In Kenya and elsewhere, excessive demands--as for forced labor--on chiefs risked undermining their legitimacy and was a major reason why colonial governments sometimes pulled back from rigorous recruitment efforts. At times, they had to pull back from the chiefs they had built up, when their overzealous subimperialism threatened to inspire resistance that might imperil the greater imperial good.<sup>18</sup>

Inevitably, officials' need to convince themselves of the merits of their program of subcontracted authority and legitimation compounded their anxieties about budding groups that fell outside their boundaries and which often received the label "detrified." These included mission converts and educated Africans--the very minds imperial powers seemed to be colonizing--and wage laborers, the necessary condition of a capitalist future. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that the chiefly authority being supported was only in the loosest sense "traditional": the vaguest bonds of linguistic or cultural commonality were often institutionalized into political units that had never before existed; changing political and cultural relations of the nineteenth century were often frozen into bounded territories, gazetted power structures, and newly defined "ethnicities."<sup>19</sup>

### Colonial Authority Challenged

By the 1920s, French and British policy makers had turned the reformable "other" of the days of conquest into a frozen being whose otherness colonial governments now claimed to protect. Yet they had created a system vulnerable to challenges in precisely those areas they did not want to think about. However uneven and unimpressive efforts to build imperial economies in Africa were, colonial regimes had created islands of wage labor production--mines in Northern Rhodesia, farms in Kenya--as well as nodes on commercial networks, through which cash crops produced by peasant farms and the narrow range of

European commodities sold by European firms, passed. Islands of wage labor and constricted commercial pathways were subject to disruption by relatively small numbers of wage laborers: 4,000 dockers in Mombasa, for example, held the import-export economy of Kenya and Uganda in their rough hands.

Colonial regimes were able to diffuse the strains of the Depression of the 1930s into the countryside, but the revival of export production reconcentrated African labor and led to the first wave of strikes in the Copperbelt and in some railroad and port centers. In much of British Africa, World War II--when Britain had little to supply to African workers and much to demand of them--led to endemic labor crisis, forcing officials to raise wages and more importantly to think seriously for the first time about the category of labor. French Africa caught up soon after the war ended, in a period when exports were increasing, labor forces were growing, and urban inflation was rampant.<sup>20</sup>

But the continued strike wave took place in a changed political and economic context. France and Great Britain, their economies in shambles and their ability to sell their own products for foreign exchange cruelly limited, saw their tropical colonies as the only way they could save the franc, the pound, and national autonomy from the new hegemon on the international horizon, the United States. India was going, Indochina was threatened, and officials said in so many words that Africa was their great hope, its underdeveloped state itself a sign of how much its productive capacity could be improved. Ideologically, the great war against conquering tyrannies--and the language of "self-determination" which was not on the face of it confined to whites only--put colonial powers on the defensive, and the Soviet Union was eager to attack colonialism while the United States was less than eager to defend it.

In this context, the two leading colonial powers had to articulate a compelling justification for what they were doing in the colonies. The idea of "development" simultaneously promised that Africa would make an enhanced contribution to global production--saving the empires--and that Africa would receive the benefits of the technical knowledge and newfound ability to plan, as well as whatever capital these powers could afford to invest. The strikes were both a disruption of the economic project and an embarrassment to the ideological one. They represented a telling instance of the "powerless" making the "powerful" reconfigure both ideology and the apparatus of government. Both governments thought that "development" would be a framework they could control. French officials, in particular, thought that an infusion of capital, planning, and technical assistance would be compatible with allowing African societies to evolve in their own milieu, without the dangers of proletarianization. That was not to be. The post-war strikes in French Africa, notably the two-month long strike movement in Senegal in 1946 and the five-month long railway strike throughout French West Africa in 1947-48, forced French officials to catch up with their British fellow-colonialists and come to grips with the labor question.

What both governments found was that the subcontracted power structure and the subcontructed hegemonies they had elaborately constructed in rural Africa meant nothing in the workplace. The perceived loss of control had a double effect on the exercise of power in colonial regimes in this critical conjuncture: first, African action helped to change the makeup of colonial bureaucracies. It diminished the once-dominant provincial administrators who



knew their natives and had long tried to keep Africans inside their "tribal" categories in favor of a rising generation of technocrats whose interventions were rooted in the universalities of European social engineering. Labour Officers and Inspecteurs du Travail became key actors. Second, the need to reassert control in mines, railways, ports, and cities forced officials much further down the road to a new--and unified--hegemonic project than they may have wanted to go, and toward a closer effort to articulate that project with the intimacies of actual social life. Trying to think of ways to get Africans back to work, officials turned to the precedents they thought they knew: the efforts to tame class conflict in Europe itself.

The ideological journey from the peculiarity of the African to the universality of the worker was a surprisingly fast one; the Governor-General of French West Africa, for one, made it in weeks, with the help of one of those social engineering specialists sent from Paris when the Dakar general strike began in January 1946.<sup>21</sup> Initially, colonial officials were constrained from using their most obvious old weapon--the colonial army--because of their belief that Africans were a naturally rural people and that wage workers would desert the city if handled too roughly. The brutality of colonial regimes in the 1940s and 1950s--beyond the occasional detention of "agitators"--was largely reserved for people whose dissidence could be conceptualized as atavistic and whose actions invoked the spectre of the dangerous violence of primitive people, as in the terror unleashed against rural rebels in Madagascar in 1947 and Kenya in 1952. As long as strikers kept up a modernist form to their resistance, they were treated with caution; the fear that they might desert and the hope that they might act like modern workers were inducements to colonial restraint.

The alternative chosen was to try to create--quickly--the industrial relations machinery used in Europe. Officials suddenly came to think trade unions were a good idea, since an orderly process of negotiation could be carried out with them.<sup>22</sup> The idea of masses of cheap labor power circulating among jobs and between workplace and village lost its appeal, for it was this seemingly amorphous nature of an urban labor force which was blamed for the fact that strikes rapidly became general strikes. Officials set about attaching workers to particular occupational categories, and fracturing the almost uniform low level of wages through substantial raises to workers in the most vulnerable sectors. They began to talk of "stabilization," of making a career, not just a few months of employment, attractive to African workers.

And officials soon began to think that the labor force had to be reproduced in a different way. The old model of the worker--and officials thought almost exclusively about male workers--as a single man who need only be paid an individual subsistence, leaving the costs of maintaining households, raising children, and caring for anyone not actually at work to a village economy increasingly peopled by women--seemed to be reproducing the wrong kind of workforce. Now, they wanted workers to be socialized and acculturated to urban life and industrial discipline from childhood. As a Kenyan report put it, "We cannot hope to produce an effective African labour force until we have first removed the African from the enervating and retarding influences of his economic and cultural background."<sup>23</sup>

As the drive to turn the African worker from unruly primitive into industrial man accelerated in the late 1940s, colonial officials' conceptualization of the "traditional" Africa took on harsher overtones. Such

an African was no longer a quaint figure whose well-being and cultural integrity the wise colonial ruler was to maintain, but an obstacle to progress. It was no accident that the late 1940s and 1950s witnessed some of the most brutal attacks on "atavistic" Africans even as officials were treating "modern" forms of resistance with considerable caution.<sup>24</sup> The quest for the modern African was not limited to the field of labor--cautious attempts to bring select Africans into European-modelled political institutions were being made, and a wave of efforts to remake African agriculture in the names of the scientific disciplines of agronomy and animal husbandry were being made. But the labor question struck in the most visible and vulnerable parts of empire, and forced officials to come to grips with the concrete realities of Africans acting in ways that transcended the old boundaries of control.

The discourse described above represented an effort to reassert control. Organized around a single vision of progress in a European image, focused on specific institutions and practices, it represented a hegemonic project couched in universalistic language. But even before the notions of stabilization and reproduction had been fully spelled out, African labor leaders were trying to seize the discourse. They turned a language of social engineering into a language of entitlement, seizing on the desperate hope of officials that Africans would behave in predictable ways to claim that wages and benefits should also be determined on a European model.

#### From Working Class to Nation: Trade Unionism in French Africa

The skill of union leaders in turning the developmental discourse of the French government into claims to entitlements emerged in the first major post-war strike movement, in Senegal in 1946. At one bargaining session, a union leader left his opposites speechless by asserting, "Your goal is to elevate us to your level: without the means, we will never succeed."<sup>25</sup> The combination of demands placed within the discursive formation French officials were trying to promote and the discipline of an effective general strike won substantial gains and gave unions confidence to demand more. Officials tried to expand the wage hierarchy, dividing workers by occupation and rank, but the victories of some encouraged others to try, while the fledgling organizations of workers focused demands on the state itself for a "code du travail" which would set minimum standards of wages and working conditions for all wage workers.

This was also a demand officials thought paralleled their own desire for a clear map--based on French labor codes--of what industrial relations were supposed to be. Such a code had to apply to workers of all races, unless France wished to undermine its own claim it was making in response to critics of its empire that Overseas France was an integral part of France itself, and that raised the stakes of the debate over how the universal worker would be defined. Business groups saw the danger, but could not jettison either the rhetoric of imperial unity--depending as they did on the protection of the colonial state--or the rhetoric of regulation, for they too wanted industrial relations channelled into predictable directions. So they could only plead that the special conditions of the colonies be taken into consideration in drafting the code.

Meanwhile, worker organizations began to affiliate with the rival labor federations into which unions in France itself were grouped, and by far the

most popular was the Confédération Général du Travail (CGT), closely linked to the French Communist Party. The CGT's efforts in the colonies have been the subject of some scholarly debate, and the organization's claim to have assisted colonial proletariats has been challenged by scholars who insist that the CGT acted in an imperialist manner, for all its left-wing rhetoric. Irwin Wall, in particular, has pointed out the condescending attitude of CGT and PCF leaders toward colonial aspirations for self-determination and to their insistence that only French communists could lead colonized peoples on the path to socialism. In short, he argues, they missed the paramount importance of nationalism to the people of the colonies.<sup>26</sup>

But this argument itself assumes that an historical judgment can be passed on the basis of a discussion that took place in France. At the same time, the argument naturalizes nationalism--treating it as an inevitable drive toward a future of political independence, as a train that one either boards or misses. The argument misses the dynamics and the interactions of the colonial situation. Whatever the limits of the vision of CGT leaders in France, Africa trade unionists could use the institutions of the CGT and the legitimacy which it had in French politics in their own ways.<sup>27</sup> By associating themselves with the CGT, African trade unionists not only let colonial officials think that their approach to work issues was fundamentally modern and progressive--modelled on France--but reminded them that claims to universalism could take more than one form.

In practice, the CGT-affiliated unions in French West Africa waged a number of campaigns in different colonial cities, with uneven but significant success, for higher wages and other benefits, while they developed a French-West-Africa-wide organization to mobilize politically for the Code du Travail. The CGT unions insisted throughout the late 1940s and 1950s that their fundamental goal was "equal pay for equal work," and indeed equal benefits for equal work.<sup>28</sup>

Given the universalistic, non-racial definition of the wage laborer, the costs of whatever guarantees workers won could be high. The elevated stakes of the debate over the Code du Travail caused it to drag on for six years, until November 1952. Its final passage in fact came after a one-day, highly effective general strike throughout French West Africa, organized by all the trade union federations and spearheaded by the CGT. The code guaranteed all wage workers a forty-hour week, paid vacations, and other benefits; it guaranteed the right to organize unions and, with certain restrictions, the right to strike; it created consultative bodies in the state apparatus with union representation. It did all this for a strictly bounded work force--wage laborers only. So called "customary labor"--which included most labor done by women as well as most of the forms of labor on African farms which shaded into tenancy--was left to an African world which officials did not have to probe. This was a realm, in fact, within which several leading African politicians, like Léopold Senghor and Félix Houphouët-Boigny were building political machines, and they were quite content to keep the Inspecteurs du Travail from asking too many questions there.

The African deputies to the French National Assembly in Paris had played an active role in the debate, and their threats to drop their support for the Code if certain provisions which they cherished were left out had swayed some metropolitan politicians who feared polarization and a new strike wave.

This was the high point of cooperation between the leaders of African political parties and the trade unions. Earlier, the leading political activists had retained a certain distance from the labor movement: Lamine Gueye, then the leading Socialist politician in Dakar, had all but sat out the 1946 strike and had accordingly earned the contempt of the strikers. Senghor and Houphouët-Boigny had at times seemed more concerned with the damage the railway strike of 1947-48 was doing to commerce than with helping the railwaymen achieve victory, and Houphouët-Boigny was credited by the French labor inspectors with persuading the railwaymen in his territory, the Ivory Coast, to give up the strike two months before the rest of the workers settled. Houphouët-Boigny remained distrustful of the labor movement, although Senghor, after the railway strike, moved to bring its leaders into his party's orbit, pushing Ibrahima Sarr, the hero of 1947-48, into an elected office. But in the strike wave of 1946-48, it was clear that electoral mobilization and labor mobilization were two processes, with considerable tension between them.<sup>29</sup> After the victory of 1952, the tension would soon become manifest again.

The most interesting figure in this regard is Sékou Touré of Guinea. He had been a humble clerk in the French bureaucracy and made his start in a civil servants' union. He became leader of the Guinean national federation of CGT unions and led a bitter general strike, largely over the government's setting of the minimum wage, in 1950. This gave him a reputation throughout CGT circles, and he was one of the prime movers behind the strike of November 1952 for the code. He more than anyone stood in the early 1950s for CGT trade unionism: aggressive tactics, detailed demands for one after another of the perquisites enjoyed by French workers, and the rhetoric of proletarian internationalism. He was a true "cégétiste."<sup>30</sup> There were curious sides to his political persona even then: outside of union matters, he cooperated with the more conservative Houphouët-Boigny, and within the CGT he was a rival of the Soudanese leader Abdoulaye Diallo, who had the inside track in internationalist circles, having become a Vice President of the leftist World Federation of Trade Unions.<sup>31</sup> But at the time of victory in the struggle for the Code, Sékou Touré' seemed fully committed to making the French working class the reference point for the aspirations of African workers. When the Code was voted, he directed his union leaders, "Résponsable, your bedside reading is the Code du Travail, which you can never study enough."<sup>32</sup>

When business interests tried to stall implementation of key provisions of the Code and the government temporized, another French West Africa-wide strike movement materialized, while in Guinea Sékou Touré led a strike lasting 67 days and resulting in acceptance of the labor movement's interpretation that a key article of the code entitled workers to a twenty per cent increase in the minimum wage. This strike, officials admitted, was a "remarkable personal success" for Sékou Touré.<sup>33</sup> He took a less personal interest--but the CGT and other union forces were in any case well prepared--in the next great campaign culminating in 1956, this time for family allowances for wage workers. By then, strike threats were sufficiently intimidating to get the government to make the necessary concessions before the scheduled strike took place.<sup>34</sup>

But already the politics of African trade unionism were shifting, with Sékou Touré leading the new direction as he had led the old. In 1953, the year of his triumph in the Guinea strike, Sékou Touré ran for the Territorial Council, the principle legislative body at the level of the individual colony.

He was not the only trade unionist to realize that labor offered a launching platform for politics, but that it was no more than that. In fact, the precision with which the Code du Travail defined the working class--and the partial success of union efforts at raising wages and government efforts at stabilizing the labor force--meant that the population with a direct interest in labor's success was narrower than it might have been in the days of the amorphous laboring mass. Houphouët-Boigny was explicit in downplaying workers as a political base; the relatively well off farmers who constituted his own base may not have been more numerous, but their networks of tenancy, clientage, and affiliation penetrated much more deeply into the Ivory Coast's rural population.<sup>35</sup> Sékou Touré seems to have begun by following Houphouët's tutelage in his political career, and in those years he kept his union activity compartmentalized so as not to antagonize his patron.<sup>36</sup>

Herein, I think, lies the best way for understanding the shift in the French labor movement from a predominantly internationalist ("cégétiste") orientation to a nationalist one. Most writing on the subject of the anti-metropolitan turn among African trade unionists don't consider any explanation necessary: the nationalism of the African masses is self-evident. But there is not much evidence that this turn originated among the rank-and-file. There is, on the contrary, evidence that the shift came from above, from labor leaders anxious to enter the political arena, and that as they did so, the autonomist labor movement they had spawned itself became subject to rank-and-file pressures for old-style demands, for higher wages and for equality with metropolitan workers. For someone like Sékou Touré, electoral support required mobilizing people of diverse interests through multiple networks of organization and affiliation and finding a language of broad appeal. The language of the labor movement had, since the war, urged African workers to cast their gaze toward French workers, and demand entitlements accordingly. It was, of course, filled with attacks on colonialists, but above all on colonialists who had not lived up to the assimilationist and universalistic rhetoric of French imperialism. The peasant or pastoralist in rural Guinea had no French person whose entitlements he or she could conceivably imagine, let alone claim; yet peasants and pastoralists had much in the structure of colonial society to feel constricted by. The common denominator of the groups a budding politician in the early 1950s could mobilize was not equality, but resentment of colonial authority.

It was thus while workers were still engaged in struggles for equal wages and family allowances that some labor leaders in FWA began to try to disaffiliate their organizations from their metropolitan connections and turn them into truly African organizations. What is of particular interest here is what French officials made of it, for it reveals not only the tensions among Africans over the contradiction of nationalist and social agenda, but the way in which French thinking about their own exercise of power was being transformed in dialogue and confrontation with African organizations. At first glance, one might guess that French officials would reject out of hand the autonomist position, for it negated every premise of post-war imperial ideology. In the immediate post-war years, officials had seemed to see something positive in the CGT for affirming that French standards provided a model for African aspirations. But by 1954 or 1955, officials were not so sure--for the CGT had been far too successful using this rhetoric--and officials greeted the autonomist surge in the labor movement with something akin to relief. As the chief Inspecteur du Travail commented,

[The C.G.T. leaders] have succeeded in trapping the public powers and rival union confederations in a kind of cycle that one can break out of only with great difficulty. If in effect one satisfies demands, these serve as a point of departure for new, more elevated demands, which threaten at this pace to break open the structure of the country and lead to a crisis, with unemployment, misery, discontented masses...<sup>37</sup>

Even earlier, French officials had thought that Sékou Touré might lead a nationalist exodus from the CGT, and they had welcomed the possibility. They were premature, but kept hoping.<sup>38</sup> And in 1955, open confrontation burst out between Sékou Touré, who insisted that the French CGT and the WFTU were out of touch with "African realities," and Abdoulaye Diallo, who heaped contempt on "so-called African trade unionism."<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, African politicians were calling for a specifically African trade unionism that would work alongside African political parties. The feuding gave rise to a new federation, the Confédération Générale du Travail--Autonome (CGTA), independent of the French CGT. The loyalists--thinking the autonomists were playing into the hands of the Government--promptly dubbed the new organization "CGT--Administrative." French officials in fact were pleased over the split, although worried that lest the new organization be too successful and reestablish unity on a different basis.<sup>40</sup> The non-communist federations also went through a similar process, with most forming specifically African federations independent of the metropolitan centrales. In 1957, most of these organizations decided to combine forces in a single trade union federation that would express aspirations to African unity. It became known as the Union Générale des Travailleurs d'Afrique Noire (UGTAN).

Sékou Touré became the most articulate spokesman of the new African trade unionism. He argued that the fundamental issue was African unity in the struggle against imperialism. The old rhetoric of equality, like that of class struggle, was gone. Indeed, Sékou Touré insisted, "Although the classes of metropolitan and European populations battle and oppose each other, nothing separates the diverse African social classes." Because of the common identity of Africans, there was no need for a plurality of trade unions. The claim to unity and uniformity came in the same breath.<sup>41</sup> UGTAN debated the issue of class struggle, and refused a proposal that the organization act not only against "white colonialism, but also against Africans who exploit their racial brothers, like the planters of the Ivory Coast." Instead, delegates--with considerable unease and disagreement--insisted that the liquidation of colonialism should "take pride of place over the class struggle."<sup>42</sup> In secret, French officials welcomed the new direction in African trade unionism: "the movement could a priori be considered--and it has not failed to be this in effect--as favorable to our future in Africa."<sup>43</sup>

In 1956 the context in which the African struggles for power and for social justice intersected underwent a dramatic change. The French government, frustrated in its efforts to shape economic and social change in its own way, fearing a second Algeria, and seeking to distance itself from all the demands for parity that followed from its assimilationist and universalist imperial ideology, pulled back. Developmentalist thinking, in the end, did not offer an answer to the question that had bedevilled Africa's conquerors for over sixty years: how to harness the resources and labor power of the continent.<sup>44</sup> The French Government redefined political institutions under the loi cadre, devolving effective government (except for foreign affairs,

defense, etc.) to the individual territories, operating under elected legislatures, a "Vice-Président du Conseil" chosen by the party controlling the legislature, and African Ministers. Most decisions and budgets were devolved from the federations (French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa) to the territories (Senegal, Ivory Coast, Dahomey, Niger, etc.).

France made it clear that the civil service in each territory, with certain transitional provisions, would be the responsibility of each government; if government workers were to get any more perquisites the territorial legislatures would have to raise the money to pay for them. The effect of this was to put the French reference point at one remove from African civil servants and workers. The civil service unions realized quickly that "territorialization" threatened the rhetorical and institutional basis for all their demands. But the tide was against them: African politicians were eagerly seeking the legislative and executive offices, and trade union leaders were prominent among them.

French officials thought they had got themselves out of the trap their own rhetoric and CGT organization had got them into. As one political observer noted, as soon as trade union leaders won office they would be in the same position as their French predecessors in facing workers' demands for new entitlements, and--having to pay the bills--they would offer "meager satisfaction. Workers would be held in check by "their respectful fear of local African authorities, who will not lack the means of make their point of view prevail."<sup>45</sup> It would now be African trade unionists who would fall into a trap baited by their own nationalism and sprung by the takeover of state institutions by ambitious men of power.

French officials guessed right: as African politicians, including those of trade union background, moved into state offices, they would seek to tame the labor movement. Trade union leaders did well in the 1957 elections. In eight of the nine territories of FWA, trade union leaders were named Minister of Labor or Minister of the Civil Service, and seven of these eight were UGTAN members. Sékou Touré became Vice-Président du Conseil in Guinea.<sup>46</sup> And the level of strike activity in fact went down, while UGTAN itself intervened to cool off some strike movements. This soon led to considerable tension from the rank-and-file, whose interests in the old demands of equality with French workers, higher minimum wages, better benefits, and guarantees against the loss through territorialization of already-won privileges were now threatened by the very success of anti-colonial politics.<sup>47</sup>

Sékou Touré, as he moved toward power, told trade unionists that they would have to fall in line to express the unity of the African personality and the unity of the anti-imperialist struggle. A strike against "the organisms of colonialism" was one thing....

But when it is directed against an African Government, it affects African authority, reenforcing by this means, in the relations of force established between the dependent power and the dominant power the authority of the latter.... Trade unionism for trade unionism's sake is historically unthinkable in current conditions, trade unionism of class just as much... The trade union movement is obligated to reconvert itself to remain in the same line of emancipation.<sup>48</sup>

His Minister of Labor, Camara Bengaly, also lectured trade unionists on their new duties:

The workers, without renouncing any of their rights but convinced of the necessity to use them in good earnest, will go through a reconversion to become the precious collaborators of the elected authorities of the people and more particularly of the young Conseil de Gouvernement in its mission to realize the happiness of all Guineans through work done in love.... [T]he orientation of our trade union movement must necessarily correspond to the general policies desired by our populations. Any conception of trade unionism contrary to this orientation must be discarded, and courageously fought in order to be eliminated definitively.<sup>49</sup>

Coming on the eve of Guinean independence, the words were chilling. The assertions that Africans were an undivided people, that Africans now ruled themselves, and that Africans were engaged in an ongoing struggle with outside forces would be used to ensure that Africans spoke with a single voice. One of Sékou Touré's collaborators and rivals in years of trade union action, David Soumah, already understood the implications:

A unity which stifles the voice of free trade unionism sets back the emancipation of the laboring masses instead of facilitating it. A unity which ends up in reality in subordinating trade union action to the good will of governments and employers, which submits trade unionism, the very expression of liberty, to a too narrow obedience toward political parties and political men, neutralizes the action of the masses for social progress.<sup>50</sup>

Sékou Touré practiced what he preached. He led Guinea out of the French empire in 1958 and duly set about consolidating his personal authority and those of his henchmen, repressing--among other groups--any vestige of autonomous trade unionism. In the end, he was a better repressor than anti-imperialist, and he had to give foreign corporations attractive concessions to Guinea's bauxite mines in order to stave off the utter collapse of his miserable economic system.<sup>51</sup>

There was, of course, a case to be made that African trade unionists had done well enough in the final years of colonialism that they should have exercised restraint in the early years of independence, but the Guinean government was not asking for restraint. They were declaring that Unity had arrived. The tensions of social justice and political autonomy are real enough; they could, in theory, have been recognized within the political arena. Sékou Touré's version of anti-imperialism--and other regimes similarly posited "development" as a national goal which noone could legitimately oppose--denied the very possibility of a dialectic.<sup>52</sup> The unified people would carry on its unified struggle; the police, the jailor, and the executioner would also play their roles. The nightmare of many Africans after decolonization was not so far from Fanon's dream: in declaring the first to be last, Sékou Touré and his fellows denied the complexity of Africa's past and present and the possibility of legitimate debate over where, between first and last, the varied components of an African territory would situate themselves.



## Conclusion

Looking back on the moment in 1957 when Africans were first entering ministerial office in French West Africa, there is something strange and revealing about the way the "colonizers" and the "colonized" were portraying their own actions. French administrators were congratulating themselves on having found a way to end the cycle of demands that trade union organization and French imperialist rhetoric had unleashed: they would give up power to Africans. African leaders were perfecting rationales for repressing, more vigorously than the colonial regime, social movements of the sort from which they had sprung. The colonizers could no longer see themselves as very colonial; the self-conscious leaders of the colonized were taking over the colonial state's claim to define the meanings of progress and legitimacy. Both sides seemed to hope--vainly it turned out--that the authoritarianism of the latter would be more effective than that of the former.

What French officials were then discovering is that knowledge is not power. They had, over the previous decade, given up subcontracting authority and shed their ambivalence about France as a social model for Africa. As in the labor field, French city planning, French health authorities, and French education had come to constitute a singular mode for articulating the authority and legitimacy of France. As colonialism was challenged inside and outside Africa, the universalistic claims of developmentalism reasserted a metropolitan claim to reshape the most intimate social processes--remaking family as well workplace--and the broadest ideological constructions. But in labor--as in other domains--the assertion of a scientific vision of social restructuring was being turned into a series of claims to entitlements, while the actual program of social reform was not, as officials slowly realized, turning the workplace, the farm, the family, or belief systems into reflections of French images. Development efforts were leading to new forms of contestation without showing signs of making Africa into the productive partner of post-war colonial imagination.

And so by 1957, officials were thinking that the project of a Europeanized Africa could only be realized if they themselves stepped out of the picture. They put forward these ideas as if they were clever ploys for maintaining control. But they were turning over to African elected politicians the sites where social change was actually in question, where power was brought to bear on African men and women as they worked, as they formed families, as they sought to educate their children, as they pondered what sort of life they would lead. They had, in all but name, accepted the fact of decolonization.

Although had made the crucial withdrawal from the front lines of the struggle to colonize minds and ways of life, they were still asserting power in another way, and that gave rise to the powerful but questionable label of "neo-colonialism." In posing the labor question (and others too) in a particular way, they had potentially set the parameters of political discourse even if they could not maintain control over its contents. They had enmeshed African trade unionists in a particular institutional and discursive structure--one which naturalized the capitalist workplace and the state's role in "industrial relations" and which defined other forms of organizing production as beyond the scope of legitimate political action. These institutions and this discourse were located not only in the administrative structure of the soon-to-be state, but in relations of state and union

bureaucracies to international organizations such as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the ILO, the UN, and later the foreign aid apparatus.

At first glance, the modernizing agenda of the post-war officials appears to have had lasting effects on how labor questions were framed in the post-colonial state. Most states in French West Africa have kept in place modified forms the "Code du Travail," of 1952, defining a bounded working class, its modern structure starkly separated from the "customary" labor ("informal" has become the more fashionable buzz-word). Although some (Guinea included) have gutted the legislation of its meaning by a cruder assertion of administrative authority over the workplace and by the destruction of trade unions, others (like Senegal) have kept in place a structure of industrial relations very much on the model set up in the 1950s. So too, African governments have attached great value to the form of the colonial city and colonial urban planning--downtowns, with their rectangular blocks and tall office buildings, have come to be a concrete, in more ways than one, manifestation of a Eurocentric modernism that remains potent in independent Africa.

But within limits. The hegemonic project of post-war imperialism, passed on to post-colonial states, has become a gatekeeper's ideology. It is most salient at the intersection of ex-colonies with international systems. In taking over capital-city institutions, African governments soon learned how thin was the wave of "nationalism" that had carried them into office, and how much they had merely taken over a colonial apparatus, and a sovereignty often better defined by its linkage to organizations overseas than within the territory of the state. Some scholars have even argued that such states exist largely by virtue of their international recognition--their seats in the United Nations and above their being the locus for administering aid programs and as a target for IMF and World Bank interventions.<sup>53</sup> Developmentalist ideologies are crucial to the gatekeeper state: those are the terms in which aid is appealed for. The gate, of course, faces inward as well, and in a country, like Senegal, where foreign aid equals 14 per cent of GNP, and where administering the rather narrow channels through which import-export operations and the modest activities of multinational corporations amount to another large chunk, the gate in fact represents a potent source of jobs and patronage.<sup>54</sup> But, now that the universalistic claims of development theories have failed to remake economy and society, these processes serve to maintain a tottering apparatus rather than to form the basis for the further penetration of a hegemonic ideology much beyond the site of the gatekeeper's tollbooth.

For ex-colonial powers (and their imperial partner in the United States), the post-war developmentalist project defines another sort of power: the power to label. Thus, for example, international agencies and scholars call that portion of the labor market which falls outside of the "Code du travail" or similar legislative regulation, the "informal sector." Hawkers, unlicensed beer brewers, self-employed artisans, workers in unregulated sweatshops, prostitutes, and other laborers outside of the formal subsumption of labor to capital fall into this category; it is not merely incidental that much of what women do in African cities falls into this category. The label carries a belittling connotation, as a kind of lesser work of the kind which we in the West largely do not do.<sup>55</sup> The people who are so labelled do fall victim to it in certain ways: they are not protected by labor legislation and they are often harassed as "illegal" operators by post-colonial governments.

But most observers agree that this "sector" has mushroomed in most African countries, and in some it is by far the most dynamic and productive. Somebody living in the "informal sector" does not necessarily have to take the label seriously: social relations within it are often quite complex, flexible, even formal. But they are not what Marx wrote about in Capital or Clark Kerr in Industrialism and Industrial Man. Labelling all this "informal sector" may assert the power of the gatekeeper ideology, but doing so does not control its spread--in some countries the "second economy" is larger than the first--or define what goes on within it.

Indeed, the labelling process may well impede further understanding of how such labor is performed, how economic relationships are shaped, and how power is articulated within networks of market women or of artisans--let alone how these structures articulate with more "formal" forms of capitalism. Analyzing African societies in terms of the dichotomies of formal-informal, market-nonmarket, modern-backward, governments, aid agencies and quite a few scholars frequently remain caught in the categories established in the struggles of the era of decolonization, unable to look at social issues in all their complexity and subtlety. What African governments have discovered is that power is not necessarily knowledge.

## Notes

1. The following abbreviations are used in notes: AS, Archives du Sénégal (files K, labor, 17G, politics, and 21G, security), and ANSOM, Archives Nationales (France), Section Outre-Mer (files IGT, labor, and AP, political affairs).

2. A third metanarrative has surfaced more recently among certain imperial historians in Great Britain: that the impetus for decolonization originated within the British bureaucracy before nationalist parties arose to challenge it, as a result of calculations of British interests and power and consistent with an older conception of colonial rule, based on the "white" Commonwealth, as a stepping stone to self-government. This is a classic bit of Whig history and has been rightly attacked as such. See John Darwin, "British Decolonization since 1945: A Pattern or a Puzzle?" Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth Studies 12 (1984): 187-209. A more sophisticated variant for the French case comes from Jacques Marseille, who argues that colonies were discarded because they didn't pay except as the privileged reserves of weak metropolitan firms, and the timing can be explained by the increasingly European focus of the French economy in the 1950s, which further marginalized vested interests and sentimental attachments to empire. Marseille's focus is so resolutely metropolitan that he does not ask what inside of colonies accounts for the fact that they didn't pay. Empire colonial et capitalisme français: Histoire d'un divorce (Paris: Albin Michel, 1984).

3. This theme characterized much writing by political scientists influenced by modernization theory in the 1950s and 1960s; for a particularly cogent example, see James S. Coleman, Nigeria: Background to Nationalism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958). A more radical version from a scholar with strong personal ties to the post-war generation of African political intellectuals is Thomas Hodgkin, Nationalism in Colonial Africa (New York: New York University Press, 1957). The triumphalist version emerges most strongly in autobiographies and other publications by leading participants, including Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Jomo Kenyatta, and Sékou Touré.

4. Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, trans. by Constance Farrington (New York: Grove, 1966; orig. 1961).

5. Ibid., 30; Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove, 1967; orig. 1952), 226-29.

6. One of the first American political scientists to point to the frightening implications of ideological systems which combined a singular history of nationalist triumph with a singular notion of the future--the drive for development--was Aristide Zolberg, Creating Political Order: The Party States of West Africa (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966).

7. This way of thinking about colonialism has other influential exponents, including in different ways O. Mannoni and Albert Memmi. See also the more recent and sophisticated treatment in Ashis Nandy, The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983). Sensitive to the point that colonialism's "ultimate violence" was to "create a culture in which the ruled are constantly tempted to fight their rulers within the psychological limits set by the latter," Nandy nonetheless

shows how this process could in some ways be more of a trap for British rulers than for Indian subjects and that alternative frameworks (in the plural) for thinking about Indian society and about the British Raj posed a genuine threat to colonial categories.

8. Sherry Ortner, "The Ambivalence and Ambiguity of Resistance," CSST Colloquium, December 4, 1991. Ortner's critique of resistance literature seems to me a powerful argument for getting out of this framework altogether, although she does not advocate that step. Obviously, people resisted specific incursions into their lives, but the notion of resistance to colonialism takes attention away from the multidimensional political agendas which mobilization entailed.

9. Frederick Cooper and Ann L. Stoler, "Tensions of Empire--Colonial Control and Visions of Rule," American Ethnologist 16 (1989): 609-21.

10. Jean and John Comaroff, Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa. Volume One (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

11. Ranajit Guha, "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India," in Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (eds.), Selected Subaltern Studies (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 39, 40. Emphasis in original. A similar problem besets James Scott's distinction between "hidden" and "public" transcripts: his argument that subordinated people develop a discourse among themselves which, at certain moments, allows them to break out of the narrow bonds of their discourse with their dominators to make a political intervention. Scott fails to appreciate that the dialogue of hidden and public transcripts was two-way, and could be creative in both directions. Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

12. For a thoughtful critique, see Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Recovering the Subject: Subaltern Studies and Histories of Resistance in Colonial South Asia," Modern Asian Studies 22 (1988): 189-224. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak raises important questions--in a manner that is alternatively penetrating and obscurantist--about the possibility of knowing the subjectivity of the subaltern. "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography," in Guha and Spivak, 3-34.

13. Anne Philips shows the ambition of the first British administrators in British West Africa to remake the meanings of land and labor, followed only after World War I by more conservative policies. The Enigma of Colonialism: British Policy in West Africa (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989). I have discussed at greater length an attempt by Great Britain to turn African slaveowners into capitalists and slaves into workers, an effort that failed in both its dimensions. From Slaves to Squatters: Plantation Labor and Agriculture in Zanzibar and Coastal Kenya, 1890-1925 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).

14. Ann Stoler, "Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th-Century Colonial Cultures," American Ethnologist 16 (1989): 634-60; idem, "Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule," Comparative Studies in Society and History 13 (1989): 134-61. Ashis Nandy suggests at times that it is the colonizer who should be

subject to psychological analysis, more so than the colonized. The Intimate Enemy.

15. In Foucault's terms, one cannot call colonial power "capillary." It was, at times, modernizing without being modern, but when it was most self-consciously modernizing, in the decade after World War II, the nonmodern character of colonial power became a frustrating and confusing problem for colonial officials.

16. Martin Chanock argues that colonial law was partly a creation of local elders, who--faced with officials asking them how family and other matters were handled "traditionally"--allocated themselves much more patriarchal authority than they had previously possessed. Law, Custom and Social Order: The Colonial Experience in Malawi and Zambia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

17. One of indirect rule's theorists, Governor Donald Cameron, defined the dilemma of the colonial ruler as find a means "for communicating with primitive and ignorant people." Indirect rule was a search for such idioms, necessarily in terms that would reach "the hearts and minds and thoughts of the people." Quoted in Steven Feierman, Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 135.

18. John Lonsdale and Bruce Berman, "Coping with the Contradictions: The Development of the Colonial State in Kenya," Journal of African History 20 (1979): 487-506; Frederick Cooper, "'Conditions Analogous to Slavery': Imperialism and Free Labor Ideology in Africa," paper for a conference on "Slavery and Freedom in Comparative Perspective," University of California at San Diego, October 4-6, 1991.

19. Terence Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa," in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 211-62.

20. These points, and much of what follows, will be developed and documented in my forthcoming book, Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa.

21. Frederick Cooper, "The Senegalese General Strike of 1946 and the Labor Question in Post-War French Africa," Canadian Journal of African Studies 24 (1990): 165-215.

22. Some of the most noteworthy strikes, as in Mombasa in 1939 and 1947, took place in the absence of formal worker organization, while others, as in Senegal in 1946 or on the Gold Coast railways in 1947 or among the government and railway workers of Nigeria in 1945, were organized by registered (if inexperienced) trade unions.

23. Kenya, Report of the Committee on African Wages (Nairobi, 1954), 11.

24. It is in this sense--and in relation to post-war imperial ideology--that there is some truth in Fanon's remark, "The Colonial World is a Manichean world" (Wretched of the Earth, 33). For quite different reasons, Fanon and colonial officials wanted to deny the complex interplay of different forms of culture and power, and to see Africa in dichotomous terms, divided in the one

case between colonizer and colonized, in the other between modern and backward.

25. Transcript of interview, 15 January 1946, between representatives of the Union des Syndicats and the Director of Personnel and the Director of Finance of the Government General of French West Africa, K 405 (132), AS.

26. Irwin Wall, French Communism in the Era of Stalin: The Question for Unity and Integration, 1945-1962 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1983), chapter 9; Philippe Dewitte, "La CGT et les syndicats d'Afrique occidentale française (1945-1957)," Le Mouvement Social 117 (1981): 3-32.

27. When a French CGT leader came to Dakar in the midst of the general strike of 1946 and (this being the period when the CGT was cooperating with the government) counselled moderation, he was politely ignored. But the very leaders who ignored him were eager to affiliate their unions with the CGT and to be in a position to organize across different territories and use whatever political clout the CGT could muster in France. Cooper, "Senegalese General Strike."

28. This included family allowances--a valued piece of social legislation won by French workers in 1932--and which fit into a picture of enlightened social engineering as a means of encouraging the reproduction of the working force, both in the biological sense and in the sense of fostering stability and continuity in the workforce. Before the war, the idea that family allowances could be applied to Africans was ridiculed: Africans bred too much anyway, and it was better that they not get attached to a place of work. But by the late 1940s, officials were rethinking this position, and the CGT was pushing them very hard to apply the French system of family allowances to workers of all races in Africa.

29. Frederick Cooper, "Le nationalisme et le mouvement ouvrier: La grève générale de 1946 et la grève des cheminots de 1947-48," Historiens et Géographes du Sénégal 6 (1991): 32-42.

30. Or a "notorious communist," as security official sometimes put it. French West Africa, Service des Affaires Politiques, "Pointe de l'activité syndicale en A.O.F. au 31 Décembre 1950," AP 3408/5, ANSOM.

31. As early as 1951, French security agents picked up the extent of this rivalry and reported private remarks from Sékou Touré critical of French communist designs on the African masses and an insistence that the PCF "would not penetrate the African soul." Not coincidentally, Houphouët-Boigny, whose party had a cooperative relationship with the PCF in France (although this was never more than an alliance of convenience for this most bourgeois of African politicians), had broken with the PCF in 1950. FWA, Direction de la Sûreté, Renseignements, 5 October 1951, 17G 272, AS.

32. Quoted in R. W. Johnson, "Sékou Touré and the Guinean Revolution," African Affairs 69 (1970): 351.

33. Sûreté, Renseignements, 1956, on Sékou Touré, 17G 606, AS.

34. High Commissioner to Ministry, telegram, 22 November 1955, K 418 (144), AS.

35.FWA, Revues trimestrielle, Ivory Coast, second and third trimesters 1953, AP 2230/4, ANSOM.

36.French security was keeping a good eye on all this, and became convinced that despite Sékou Touré's actions in the labor field, he would come around to an anti-communist, anti-cégétiste position. High Commissioner to Minister, 20 March 1954, IGT 11/2, ANSOM.

37. Note from the Inspecteur Général du Travail to the Minister, 26 July 1954, IGT 2, ANSOM.

38.Affaires Courantes, Dakar, to Governor, Soudan, telegram, 16 November 1951, 17G 272, AS.

39.France, Overseas Ministry, 2e Bureau, report dated 21 October 1955, on comments of Sékou Touré on the meeting of the Comité de Coordination des Unions Syndicales CGT de l'AOF et du Togo, 1-14 March 1955, Saint-Louis, AP 2264/8, ANSOM.

40.Sûreté, Senegal, Renseignements, 5, 31 July 1956, 21G 215 (178), AS; IGT, "Evolution de la situation syndicale en A.O.F.," 28 July 1956, 17G 610, AS.

41.The spy who reported Sékou Touré's speech to a Senegalese audience also noted that the audience showed signs of "impatience" as he spoke and that the Senegalese CGTA leader advised Sékou Touré to cut his remarks short--it is by no means clear that this was the message rank-and-file workers wanted to hear. Senegal, Sûreté, Renseignements, 21 February 1956, 21G 215, AS.

42.Governor, Dahomey, to High Commissioner, 22 January 1957, K 421 (165), AS, reporting on the UGTAN conference in Bamako.

43.They did have their worries about too much African unity, but worried more that CGT veterans would take over UGTAN. "However any solution would appear preferable to a reimposed seizure by international communism of African trade unionism...." Minister to High Commissioner, draft of letter (not sent), dated 8 February 1957, AP 2264/8, ANSOM. The High Commissioner even considered financial aid to UGTAN to make sure it didn't turn to the French CGT for help, although he decided not to do this and only to maintain a close and positive liaison. High Commissioner to Minister, 8 February 1957, IGT 11/2, ANSOM.

44.Why this was so is too complicated to go into here. Indeed, there is no satisfactory answer in the literature, but for some thoughts see Frederick Cooper, "Africa and the World Economy," African Studies Review 24, 2/3 (1981): 1-86.

45.FWA, IGT, "Note sur l'évolution du syndicalisme in A.O.F.," 19 April 1957, IGT 11/2, ANSOM.

46.Georges Martens, "Le syndicalisme en Afrique occidentale d'expression française: de 1945 à 1960," Le Mois en Afrique 178-79 (1980): 88-89.

47.FWA, Service de Sécurité, Bulletin d'Information, May 1957, 17G 630, AS.



48. "Exposé de M. le Vice-Président Sékou Touré à l'occasion de la conférence du 2 février 1958 avec les responsables syndicaux et délégués du personnel RDA," "Le RDA et l'action syndicale dans la nouvelle situation politiques des T.O.M.," PDG (9)/dossier 7, CRDA.

49. Speech of Camara Bengaly in name of Conseil de Gouvernement to Congrès Constitutatif de l'UGTAN, Conakry, 23-25 May 1958, sous-dossier UGTAN, K 421 (165), AS.

50. Report of David Soumah, Secretary General, to Congrès de la CATC, Abidjan, 10-12 November 1958, 17G 610, AS.

51. Some of the flavor of Guinean intellectuals' eventual verdict on their leader is contained in the title of a book of a former collaborator who was later exiled, Ibrahima Baba Kaké, Sékou Touré: le héros et le tyran (Paris: Jeune Afrique, 1987).

52. On the way African governing elites used the idea of a struggle for development to deny the legitimacy of opposition, see Zolberg, Creating Political Order.

53. Robert H. Jackson, Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

54. World Bank, World Development Report 1991 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991): 242.

55. Some scholars however have pointed to the growth of informal sector operations in New York or Los Angeles as a sign of the third-worldization of the United States economy. It is also worth noting the resemblance of what is today called the informal sector to what used to be called, in Victorian England, the "residuum," or in some contexts the "dangerous classes."

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