

A Continent on the Move (January 7, 1960)

Abstract

The USSR became interested in Africa as a continent during and after Africa's rapid decolonization. Before decolonization, Stalin had considered Africa low on the list of foreign policy priorities, mostly because it was controlled by European imperial powers and therefore not yet ready for revolution. However, after decolonization, Nikita Khrushchev saw an opportunity and began to develop a foreign policy for Africa. The country had four major long-term policy goals in Africa: cultivate a lasting presence on the continent, gain a voice in African affairs, undercut Western/NATO influence on the continent (especially by associating capitalism with Western imperialism), and (after 1962) prevent China from developing its own counterbalancing presence. The third foreign policy objective can be observed in this article; the author of the article in this East German paper argues that the continent is struggling against the old colonial powers, the United States, and Bonn's "neocolonialism," invoking a connection between the West and colonialism and thereby implying the superiority of the socialist system.

Source

Africans' Great March to Freedom, Storming the Last Bastions of Colonialism

In December 1958, at the All-African People's Conference in Accra, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, prime minister of Ghana and a leading African politician, already a symbol of the freedom struggle, looked towards the future, stating that the peoples of Africa will not rest until the last vestiges of colonialism and imperialism have been eradicated from the continent, and that unity of actions and aims must become the chief slogan of all African peoples. Since then, these words have become an inexorable reality, in the fight against detested colonial imperialism, in the struggle, in solidarity, of Africans in North and South, East and West, who prove victoriously that the Belgian Jean-Paul Harroy was wrong in his work "Africa, a Dying Land," which appeared ten years ago. At the same time, they bring down the calculations of the US magazine *Collier's*, which more than ten years ago also noted hopefully: "It is the largest continent on earth after Asia. Although no one can precisely estimate its resources, we know that they are fabulous. The calculations are already based on Africa's strategic uranium, rubber, cobalt, manganese, diamonds for industrial applications, chromium, zinc, lead, iron ore and bauxite."

The "Quiet Continent" was a Misnomer

Not just the editors of *Collier's* and the rest of the Western press, however, but also their imperialist patrons, with the Americans rising to prominence especially after the Second World War, wished to maintain Africa as a gigantic economic and strategic reserve and considered it a "quiet continent." Today they must recognize with bitterness that they were wrong here as well and that their situation is hopeless. The Africans' thrilling slogan that "all Africa shall be free in this, our lifetime" is becoming a reality at unprecedented speed, as readily within reach as the conviction of Dr. Hastings Banda, political leader of Rhodesia that there are no white, black or qualified freedoms. There is but one freedom, which applies to all people of all races and faiths ... We shall realize this freedom in Africa—the drums are beating for it in the bush.

For millennia, the drums have reverberated in the jungles—and today, across steppes and marshes, forests and rivers, they herald the united liberation struggle against the old colonial powers, against the USA, which since the last world war has spread out politically, economically and strategically on the continent, which stretches across 30 million square kilometers and is inhabited by 200 million people,

and also against Bonn's neocolonialism, which seeks to penetrate the colonial possessions of its NATO partners in order to take a leading role. It is all too obvious that the clerical-militarist regime on the Rhine and Ruhr has taken up the colonial traditions of Wilhelm II and Hitler. The former BHE member of the Bundestag [sic; he was a member of the Berlin state parliament] Benda's brazen demand of April 1954 that the UN give the Adenauer government trusteeship of a colony in Africa is typical of the system and its course of terror and aggression down to the present day.

United Front Against Colonialism

Colonialism, with its intrigues and bloody terror, stubbornly clings to its dwindling positions, but its final shaky bulwark is crumbling and breaking and will collapse in the foreseeable future, all the more rapidly the more firmly Africans close ranks against the common foe and form a common front with all the forces of anti-imperialism in the world. The entire disreputable colonial system will go down along with colonialism in Africa, inexorably and for all time, and this certainty about their historic task inspires the peoples of Africa. Before the war, there were only four formally independent states—Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia and the South African Union. This year there will be at least 16, as the four aforementioned will have been joined by the now sovereign states of Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan, Ghana, Guinea and Cameroon as well as Togo, Nigeria, Somaliland, the federation of Mali, consisting of Senegal and the French Sudan, Central Congo and doubtless several more. If last year was already a decisive stage in the African struggle for freedom and independence, the year that has just begun will cause the colonial masters in Africa to tremble still more.

Africa Belongs to the Africans

All across the Dark Continent, that turbulent region, the population is preparing for the second All-African People's Conference, which will begin on January 5 in the Tunisian metropolis. It is a hopeful continuation of the historic Bandung conference, which also ushered in a new era of anti-imperialist struggle in Africa, the African-Asian Solidarity Conference in Cairo, at which the assurance of victory of the peoples represented there emerged with a vengeance, the two conferences in Accra that excluded the Western powers and the Congress of Tangiers. This highly significant meeting in Tunis of the delegates of the free African peoples and their brethren still under the colonial yoke will discuss further strengthening the struggle to liberate Africa completely from colonialism, the creation of unity on the Dark Continent and the economic and social development of its countries, and who in the world can still doubt that this meeting will provide new impulses and energies for the liberation struggle? They will take stock of the many sacrifices and victories, deliberate over new concerted militant actions and forms and recall proudly and joyfully the flaming words of Dr. Fanon, the delegate from Algeria, at the last conference in Accra, who suggested that every African must be an anti-imperialist fighter, all forms of struggle must be adopted, and Africa must belong to the Africans, even if they have to take their property by force.

The Western governments, particularly their colonial ministers, have serious concerns, and it is quite understandable that they are seeking by every means of political and diplomatic intrigue to secure at least their economic positions in order to maintain their effortless and immense profits. The hasty trips to Africa by King Baudouin of Belgium, de Gaulle and the British colonial minister McLeod should be viewed in this light. They were, however, only modestly successful and could not prevent the African peoples from pushing ahead with their struggle against imperialism, colonialism and the atomic threat and their unconditional dedication to freedom, independence, unity and progress. The declaration of the Abako leader at the congress of the patriotic Congolese parties in Kisantu near Leopoldville—made while Baudouin was visiting the city (!)—that his organization would no longer recognize the Belgian colonial authorities starting on January 1 was a serious one!

The center of the national liberation struggle has shifted to Africa, successfully, as developments make

clear, since people all across the continent have long since refused to be an inexhaustible reservoir of cheap human material, a provider of resources to be plundered, a territory of vast profits, tactical and strategic strongholds and the “last frontier” of the USA, as the American author John Gunther baldly calls for in his book *Inside Africa*. The Africans are also fighting against the 17 NATO air bases and eight NATO naval bases on their continent and thus also against the West’s aggressive military alliances, realizing that this assistance creates obligations. And what this assistance looks like was evident during the Suez aggression and the interventions in Jordan and Lebanon and is still revealing itself in all its bloody horror in the brutal Algerian War.

Hardly a day goes by without new reports of fighting and uprisings, which are supported by the already independent African states, with the exception of the race-baiting regime of South Africa. And the aim of all this struggle is plain to see: Freedom, independence and unity. Federations and coalitions of states are already emerging, which are politically and economically far stronger than the individual states and regions. Thus, the passionate, self-sacrificing and yet promising struggle of those African peoples who are still colonially subjugated and exploited—in Uganda and Somalia, the Congo, Angola and Tanganyika, Rhodesia, Mozambique and Kenya, in Nyasaland, Bechuanaland and Basutoland, Chad, Togo and Nigeria, Mauretania, French Sudan and Niger, also in the South African Union, the Spanish colonies and especially Algeria— has the aid and support of all the freedom-loving people of this world. The government and population of our republic, too, afford the peoples of Africa universal assistance and stand together with them in a single front, since German imperialism is, after all, the mortal enemy of the German people and the African people alike. Our republic, with its international standing, backs in word and deed our government’s assurance that “the GDR will continue to do everything in its power to support the just struggle for national independence and freedom in Africa.”

Source of original German text: “Ein Kontinent im Aufbruch – Der große Marsch der Afrikaner zur Freiheit, Sturm auf die letzten Bastionen des Kolonialismus,” *Neue Zeit*, no. 5, January 7, 1960, p. 3.

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