

HISTORY

SENIOR FIVE

THE ATLANTIC CHARTER OF 1941 AND THE RISE OF AFRICAN NATIONALISTIC ACTIVITIES

The Atlantic Charter of 1941 was a document issued in August 1941 by Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the then USA president and Winston Churchill, the then Prime Minister of Britain with Joseph Stalin of Russia as an observer. The document was signed in luxury yacht off the shore of Atlantic Ocean. The signing of the charter greatly spurred the growth of African nations in the following ways:-

The charter portrayed the commitment of the USA to fight for the independence of the colonized countries in the world. In demonstrating this, the colonized people of the world came to realize that they had the support of one of the leading democracies in the world, the USA. This therefore gave them the inspiration that they needed in the struggle against colonial rule.

The charter expressed the anti-colonial feelings of the USA and USSR as the new world super powers. The anti-colonial attitude of USA and USSR motivated African nationalists like Kwame Nkrumah and Azikiwe Namdi. This attitude encouraged them to become leaders in the decolonisation process. It was through this that Ghana was granted independence on the 6th March 1957 while Nigeria under Namdi Azikiwe became independent on the 1st Oct 1960. Other African nationalists like Nyerere and Jomo Kenyatta also drew their courage from the anti-colonial attitude of the USA and USSR. It was from that, that Tanganyika was able to acquire independence in 1961 while Kenya equally became independent in December 1963.

Britain was forced to respect the terms of the charter and to declare her commitment to respect, democratize and grant self-rule to territories under her rule amidst opposition and protests from Winston Churchill. It was partly due to this commitment that the pace for the decolonization process was speeded up in the British colonies. The African nationalists took advantage of this to force out the British from their countries.

The charter brought Joseph Stalin and the entire USSR on board (though as an observer) to play a significant role in its implementation. Joseph Stalin had signed this Charter as an observer; however he became an active and vigilant implementer of the clauses of this charter. The avidity with which he implemented the charter inspired and encouraged African nationalists in their struggle for independence.

The Charter confirmed the legitimacy of African aspirations for independence. Article III of the Charter inspired the African nationalists because it called for self-determination among all people deprived of their rights by the respective colonial masters. When the Charter was signed, the Africans used it to champion their claims. For instance, Kwame Nkrumah published a book entitled "Neo-colonialism the last stage of imperialism" and a second book entitled "Towards Colonial Freedom" These literary works aroused the determination among nationalists and the zeal to rise up against the colonial masters.

The Charter was endorsed by UNO General Assembly as its working tool hence stirring nationalistic activities. All member states of the UNO accepted to apply the charter as a way of ending the British and French colonialism in Africa. For instance, the Asian states being strong members of the UNO exerted pressure on the two colonial masters to end their grip over the African states. This pressure later encouraged nationalists like Xuma of South Africa, Peter Abrahams, Jomo Kenyatta, Ahmed Sekou Toure and many others to rise up against their respective colonial masters.

The Charter influenced the calling of the 1944 Brazzaville Conference. This was a high level meeting of all key representatives of the French West African colonies called by General de Gaulle. In this conference, constitutional reforms were discussed and the African were granted some degree of liberty in preparation for eventual independence. The Brazzaville Conference later turned out to be an event of great magnitude in the growth of African nationalism.

The Charter influenced the adoption of the Universal Declaration of human rights was in tandem with the declared rights. UN declaration of the fundamental human rights later led to the development of political consciousness in countries like South Africa and Namibia which were under the apartheid rule, Southern Rhodesia and Kenya which were under minority settlers' rule. In all these countries, nationalists organized boycotts, strikes, demonstrations, armed resistance which eventually precipitated the growth of African nationalism.

The signing of the Charter influenced mass media activities and was used by the journalists in publishing their claims all over the continent leading to the rise of nationalistic activities. For example Kwame Nkrumah through '*The Accra Evening News*' and '*The West African Pilot*' of Namdi Azikiwe. The journalists used this paper to awaken black consciousness hence promoting the growth of nationalism.

The Charter being brain child of USA was used by Africans to exert pressure on France and Britain calling upon them to respect it which in turn stimulated nationalistic activities. USA was aware that France and Britain were militarily exhausted and they needed rejuvenation with the support from USA as a super power. This compelled France and

Britain to prepare an end to colonial rule in their respective colonies as a way of getting assistance from the US. They did this through opening up the political space and encouraging the drafting of pre-independence constitutions.

The Charter influenced the calling of the 1945 5th Pan African conference in Manchester. It was used by the leading nationalists in the Diaspora and those on the continent to organize the 1945 Manchester Conference through which nationalistic ideas were addressed. This conference energized the participants from the continent and demanded them to return to their respective states and share with other nationalists the desire to hold to the different clauses of the charter leading to the development of political consciousness.

By signing the charter, a new breed of leaders assumed power in Britain. The Conservative Party under Premier Winston Churchill had become unpopular and was defeated by the Labor Party under Clement Atlee. This was totally against British colonial occupation in Africa since it was a burden to their treasury in Britain. Therefore Atlee called for the desired pre-independence changes in the different British colonies which accelerated the eventual attainment of independence.

The charter aroused the student activities and movements in the Diaspora. This championed nationalistic activities in Africa. After its signing, the students in the Diaspora realized the need to re-firm their activities which had existed before and after. For example WASU of Solanke Lodipo, The International African Friends of Ethiopia (IAFE) and many others. These were used as nationalistic conduits for the Africans against the existence of colonial rule.

The charter encouraged Africans to return to their respective states and these later called for the eventual decolonization. These elites had been exposed to ideas like liberty, fraternity and democracy during their academic programs in the diaspora. These students included Kwame Nkrumah, Namdi Azikiwe, Jomo Kenyatta and many others. On their return to the continent they shared such ideas with masses who realized the need to agitate for the immediate independence from the colonial masters.

The Charter promoted African political awareness about their rights to independence and was used as a platform to form political parties and liberation movements which stirred their countries to eventual decolonization. The elites who were at the forefront in promoting African political awareness were:- J.B. Dankwa (1947) who formed the UGCC IN Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah who formed the CPP in Ghana and many others. These parties mobilized and sensitized the masses about the desire for independence in their respective states.

The Atlantic Charter of 1941 influenced the granting of independence Asian countries like India in 1947. It piled up pressure on Britain and other colonizers to speed up the

process of decolonizing India and other Asian countries respectively. The Charter also encouraged the India and other Asian nations in their fight against colonialism by declaring that every nation had a right to choose their own political destiny and how they should be ruled.

The principle sovereign right, self-governance and freedom from foreign rule and domination was adopted during the 1955 Bandung Conference. This conference was yet another episode of profound historical significance to growth of African nationalism. It was in this conference that the nationalists agreed to speed up the process of decolonization, form political parties and come together to fight foreign domination. In this way the spirit of nationalism in Africa was galvanized.

USA used the signing of the charter to draft the Marshal Aid plan which enhanced the growth of new nations. The Plan was to assist the poor states and others which had been devastated by the Second World War. France and Britain which had been defeated as super powers needed financial and military aid from USA, but to qualify for assistance, USA demanded France and Britain to end colonialism. Therefore France and Britain accepted to end their colonial occupation over the respective colonies.

Revision Question:

Assess the contributions of the Atlantic Charter of 1941 to the growth of African nationalism

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE BRAZZAVILLE CONFERENCE OF 1944 TO THE GROWTH OF AFRICAN NATIONALISM

The Brazzaville Conference took place in 1944 in the town of Brazzaville, the capital city of the French Congo. It was organized and convened by the French president Charles de Gaulle as the Second World War was raging on. The conference was attended by delegates from the French colonies of Congo Brazzaville, Ivory Coast, Niger, Senegal, and Cameroon. Among, others the issues discussed in the conference included:- political empowerment and economic betterment of the Africans in the French colonies; rewarding the Africans for their support to the French during World War II and to divert the growing strength of the African nationalism. The Brazzaville conference played a significant impact on the growth of African nationalism in the following ways:-

As a result of this conference, France established territorial parliaments in the colonies under its control. This was a major step in the political empowerment of the Africans. Africans used this parliamentary system as forum to discuss Africa's national issues and

to subsequently demand for the independent of their countries. The territorial parliaments further promoted unity by bringing together the nationalists from various corners of the countries to debate together.

The conference led to elections at some agreed time in the French colonies of Guinea Conakry, Congo Brazzaville and many others. These elections ushered in a new wave of changes and constitutional developments which in turn encouraged the growth of African nationalism. It was through these elections that the great West African nationalists like Ahmed Sekou Toure and Felix Houphouet Boigny came to prominence.

The conference decentralized French imperialism in Africa by reducing the strict French control over its territories. France gave these territories some elements of political freedoms by initiating some constitutional changes aimed at preparing the colonies for future independence. This galvanized the political sentiments of the Africans under the French rule.

The Brazzaville conference restored the political rights of the Africans in the French speaking countries especially the communes in Senegal. This opened the gate for further political agitations especially the right to vote and to be voted for.

The conference increased the political representation of the colonized people in the French National Assembly in Paris. The French sought to accommodate African interests by increasing their representation in the French parliament. This facilitated the level of political participation of the Africans, making them more conscious of their rights hence the growth of nationalism.

African parliamentarians in the French National Assembly gained much in order to fight for the rights of the people under the French rule in West Africa. For example they took advantage of their membership to create a class of French collaborators who were opposed to the continued French rule in Africa. This strengthened their effort in the fight against colonial rule.

The Africans used the French parliament as a platform to pile pressure on the French to decolonize. They attacked the French colonial regime and demanded for a speedy process of granting independence to the African people.

The Conference made France to increase its investment in its African colonies. The rationale behind this was to economically and politically emancipate the Africans under their rule. The Africans took advantage of this to enhance further their political interests.

The conference also recommended the extension of western civilization to the French West African colonies. French language was used as a medium of communication in

this effort. This move instead emboldened the Africans and made them ready to fight for their rights.

Forced labour in all French West Africa came to an end as a result of this conference. Ending forced labour in West African countries granted the Africans a chance to sit and discuss freely matters pertaining to the independence struggle in their territories.

The conference also ushered in fundamental changes. For instance, arrests and imprisonment without trial was abolished. This made the Africans free to organise political rallies and debates without hindrance thereby promoting the growth of nationalism.

In France, the fourth republic was declared under Charles de Gaulle. De Gaulle was emphatic to the African cause. The Brazzaville conference incorporated some of the constitutional provisions of the fourth republic like the rights and freedoms of all mankind and incorporated them in the constitutions of the colonized people. . La Loi Cadre (Enabling Laws) was issued by the French parliament. This allowed a wider participation of the Africans in the political affairs of their countries In this way the people were empowered..

Modern political parties in French West Africa were partly formed as a result of this conference. Parties like the Ressemblement Democratique Africaine (RDA) were offshoots of this conference. During and after this conference, the delegates agreed to form these parties so act as vehicles for political struggle and emancipation in their respective countries.

The 1944 Brazzaville Conference was partly responsible for the 1958 referendum in French West Africa. In this referendum, French West African countries were asked to vote whether or not they wanted to continue with the French rule. Guinea Conakry voted NO and was granted its independence. This inspired other African countries to demand for their independence as well.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE 1955 BANDUNG CONFERENCE TO THE GROWTH OF AFRICAN NATIONALISM

The Bandung Conference was a grand assembly held in 1955 and hosted by Indonesia under the leadership of Suharto with the help of Nehru of India. It took place at Bandung, a resort city located on Java Island which is part of Indonesia. Aimed at stimulating cooperation among the Afro-Asians, the conference was attended by 29 participants drawn from across the world. African delegates who attended the

conference came from Egypt, Sudan, Libya, Ethiopia and Liberia. Nationalists and observers from South Africa, Ghana and Algeria were also invited to attend. Communist China also attended. Although the meeting was called by President Suharto of Indonesia, it was chaired by the Chinese leader, Zhong Enlar.

The conference was organised to discuss three main things:- the dispute and ideological differences between USA and China because such a dispute would have a spill over effects on the Asian nations and other weaker states; the maintenance and preservation of world peace and security; and to find ways of combatting and stopping imperialism in Africa and the rest of the world. The Bandung Conference was important in the development of nationalism in Africa in the following ways:-

The conference provided a political platform to the colonised people from Africa and other parts of the world to pressurise the imperialists around the world to grant freedom the oppressed African people. The African nationalists took advantage of this platform to condemn and to castigate imperialism in the strongest terms.

The Bandung Conference gave birth to and led to the consolidation of Afro-Asian solidarity. This brought together the oppressed Blacks and Arabs in a solidarity which aimed at dealing with the imperialists collectively. The Arabs gave a lot of support to the African nationalists as a result of this.

The Bandung Conference ended Western imperialism in Asia. This solidarity indeed marked the beginning of the real Asian support to the Africans in the fight against imperialism. On attainment of independence Asian countries offered moral and financial support to the African nationalists who were fighting for their independence. They equally offered military support to the African national movements which spearheaded the struggle for independence.

At the conference, African and Asian delegates jointly condemned the presence of colonialism in Africa and in the Third World countries. Both independent African and Asia states offered their support to set Africans free. The conference therefore provided the African delegates the forum to attack colonialism which was still active in their continent. Both Africa and Asia nationalism joined together for a common purpose of eradicating foreign rule.

The conference declared support for the idea and the ideals of self-rule for those countries which were still languishing under the colonial yoke in Africa and other parts of the world. It was through the efforts of these Asian nations that countries like Kenya, Ghana got their independence

The conference became a source of encouragement. In this conference the participants encouraged the Africans and made them feel that they were not alone in the struggle and the fight against imperial rule. This was a big moral boost to the nationalists in Africa.

The Bandung conference led to the September 1961 Belgrade Conference in Serbia. This was yet another grand anti-imperialist conference which brought together nationalists from across the globe. The conference promoted the growth of African nationalism by calling for an immediate end of colonial rule in Africa.

The conference laid a foundation for a bold action at the United Nations and other world organizations. Through the solidarity which had already been built, the members who attended this conference were able to increase their diplomatic weight and to use this to challenge colonial rule in Africa and the world over, hence the growth of nationalism.

The Bandung conference led to the birth of the idea of Non Alignment. Non Alignment is a concept of positive neutrality, the belief that countries should not side with any of the world powers during the Cold War era. The idea was born in the 1950's by Jawahar Nehru of India and other countries like Egypt, Indonesia and many others. Since its inception, the Non Aligned movement has been at the forefront in the fight against colonialism in all its manifestations.

Since the conference, the policy of non-alignment has been taken by many independent African states. Nearly all of them adopted the pursuit of non-aligned policy. To prove the importance of non-aligned policy, president Nasser of Egypt organised a conference of non-aligned countries in Cairo in 1957. Two years after the Bandung conference, in 1963, the OAU was formed with the cardinal aim of ending colonialism in Africa hence the growth of nationalism

Following this conference, China gained support and made advances in Africa. Many African states accepted China as a dependable ally against colonial rule. In order to help Africa in its struggle against colonialism, China went ahead and devoted many of its radio programmes and propaganda towards spreading its ideology of communism. This ideology condemned colonialism in the strongest terms and demanded for its immediate end.

It was in this conference that the major conflicts and differences between USA and China were sorted out. The delegates at the conference took up issues with the UNO and using their diplomatic strength they were able to influence the admission of China to the world body. China later used that chance to oppose colonialism in the whole world.

The conference was used as a forum to condemn racism. Racism is a belief founded on the wrong assumption that some races especially the whites are superior to the rest simply because of the pigmentation of the skin. It was majorly practised in South Africa. Delegates in the conference vowed to put an end to this evil and to liberate the people of South Africa from the same.

Revision Questions:

- 1) How far did the Bandung Conference of 1955 contribute to the decolonisation of Africa?
- 2) Assess the contribution of the Brazzaville Conference of 1844 to the decolonization of Africa
- 3) Examine the role played by the 1941 Atlantic Charter in the rise of Africa nationalism

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