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The Historical Aspects of Pan-Africanism: A Personal Chronicle

The history of Pan-Africanism as a movement to encourage mutual assistance and understanding among the peoples of Africa and of African descent goes back to the beginning of the twentieth century, but it was only after World War I—that calamitous folly of the so-called superior races—that the movement as a whole began to have the ultimate aim of some form of self-government for African peoples. The credit for conceiving the idea of the Pan-African Conference that met in London in July, 1900, belongs to H. Sylvester Williams, a young West Indian lawyer. Among his aims were to bring peoples of African descent throughout the world into closer touch with one another and to establish friendlier relations between the Caucasian and African races. That he did not envision self-government or independence in Africa is evident from another of his stated objectives, namely, “to start a movement looking forward to the securing to all African races living in *civilized countries* their full rights and to promote their business interests.” (my italics)

It was William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, as Chairman of the Conference’s Committee on Address to the Nations of the World, who transformed Williams’s limited conception of Pan-Africanism into a movement for self-government or independence for African peoples. He urged: “Let the British Nation, the first modern champion of Negro freedom, hasten to . . . give, as soon as practicable, the rights of responsible government to the Black Colonies of Africa and the West Indies.” Du Bois said nothing about the Spanish and Portuguese colonies, and he did not explicitly demand “responsible government” for the German and French colonies.

He did propose, however, that the Congo Free State should become a "great central Negro state of the world." He then advocated respect for "the integrity and independence of the free Negro states of Abyssinia, Liberia, Haiti, etc." He also expressed the hope that the inhabitants of these states, "the independent tribes of Africa, the Negroes of the West Indies and America, and the black subjects of all nations [would] take courage, strive ceaselessly, and fight bravely, that they may prove to the World their incontestable right to be counted among the great brotherhood of mankind." Thus, while Du Bois made a plea for the inclusion of Negroes in all parts of the world in "the great brotherhood of mankind," he specifically urged self-government or independence for at least some Africans. Hence, in my judgment, this Address to the Nations of the World includes the first published exposition of Pan-Africanism in the modern sense. To be sure, the world paid little heed to it. Du Bois has written that the 1900 conference put the word "'Pan-African' in the dictionaries for the first time." But the concept had no deep roots in Africa itself; the movement died for a generation, while Du Bois turned to other tasks at home in the United States.

Du Bois had formulated his concept of the worldwide aspects of race as early as 1892 while he was a student at the University of Berlin. Von Treitschke, Sering, Weber, and Schmoller made him "see the race problem in America, the problem of the peoples of Africa and Asia and the political development of Europe as one." In 1906, the eminent American anthropologist Franz Boas gave a new dimension to Du Bois's thinking by making him aware of the history of the black kingdoms in Africa south of the Sahara. But at the Races Congress held in London in July, 1911, Du Bois appears not to have developed either the theme of the worldwide aspects of race or that of the history of the black African kingdoms. Moreover, reports in the London *Times* indicated that none of the speakers at the congress discussed Pan-Africanism: Du Bois's own address was entitled "The Negro Race in the United States." However, the outbreak of World War I led to a restatement of his Pan-Africanism.

An article by Du Bois in the *Atlantic Monthly* for May, 1915, entitled "The African Roots of War" emphasized particularly the economic aspects of imperialism, with respect both to the war then raging and to possible future wars. In it, the author remarked that if a lasting peace were to be achieved, "we must extend the democratic ideal to the yellow, brown and black peoples." Africans must have land, and they must be

trained in modern civilization. "Lastly, the principle of home rule must extend to groups, nations, and races. The ruling of one people for another people's whim or gain must stop. . . . The domination of one people by another without the other's consent, be the subject black or white, must stop." Du Bois did not use the words "Pan-African" or "Pan-Africanism," but he developed more clearly than he had since 1900 the concept of self-government or independence for black Africans. Thus, World War I not only furthered the movement in general, it also revived Du Bois's personal quest for African freedom and gave him the opportunity to reach, through one of the most influential magazines in the United States, an audience that had probably not heard of the Pan-African Conference and the Races Congress.

In the same year, 1915, Du Bois's little book *The Negro* popularized the history of the African kingdoms south of the Sahara, and Dr. Carter G. Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. Two of the four articles and one of the four book reviews in the first issue of the *Journal of Negro History* (January, 1916) dealt with Africa. Dr. Woodson, until his death in 1950, insisted through the *Journal*, the *Negro History Bulletin*, the annual meetings of the association, and Negro History Week upon a revision of African historiography. His book *The African Background Outlined* (1936) had a first-rate short account of the African kingdoms and included an excellent bibliography. Probably more than any other man, Dr. Woodson inspired among Negro Americans pride in their African past and a desire to know more about it. Also during World War I, William Leo Hansberry was beginning his studies of ancient and medieval African history, a topic that he taught to a large number of students, notably at Howard University. At a conference of Negro organizations that took place in Washington in May, 1917, Du Bois further developed his theory of the African roots of the war and of the relationship between permanent peace and the application of the principle of the consent of the governed to Africans as well as other peoples. Melville J. Herskovits began his teaching of anthropology in 1924 and made his first trip to Africa in 1931. Thus, Negro and other Americans became increasingly interested in Africa in a period when the colonial powers, by their misgovernment and quarrels among themselves, were beginning to dig the grave of imperialism.

In 1919, Du Bois convened the First Pan-African Congress in Paris. I do not accept the contention of Du Bois that the establishment of the

Mandates Commission of the League of Nations resulted from this congress. As early as 1917, George Louis Beer, who in 1919 was Chief of the Colonial Division of the American Delegation to Negotiate Peace, had prepared a memorandum on the subject that greatly influenced the thinking of Woodrow Wilson, the real architect of the mandate system in its final form. When Wilson and other Americans went to Paris at the end of 1918, the question of the future of the German colonies was already being discussed, and Jan Smuts had already published his proposals for a mandate system some months previously. My guess is that when the fifty-seven delegates to the First Pan-African Congress met in February, 1919, very few of them, except Du Bois himself, knew much about the various proposals for dealing with the colonies of former enemies. I think that in later years Du Bois read the events of the Second Pan-African Congress of 1921 back into those of the First Congress of 1919, but, of course, the Covenant of the League of Nations had already been established by 1921, and so could not have been affected by any resolutions of the Pan-African Congress of that year.

More important than the alleged role of the First Pan-African Congress in the establishment of the mandate system was one of the resolutions adopted by that congress. It stated:

The natives of Africa must have the right to participate in the government as fast as their development permits, in conformity with the principle that the government exists for the natives and not the natives for the government. They shall at once be allowed to participate in local and tribal government, according to ancient usage, and this participation shall gradually extend, as education and experience proceed, to the higher offices of the State; to the end that, in time, Africa shall be ruled by the consent of the Africans.

The proposal for self-government or independence was premature, since the colonial powers were not prepared to grant it and since the concept of the inherent inferiority of the Negro still prevailed. George Louis Beer, for example, wrote in a memorandum that "the negro [*sic*] race has hitherto shown no capacity for progressive development except under the tutelage of other peoples." Wilson, too, believed in the inherent inferiority of the Negro. He was a Southerner, and a Calvinist who sincerely believed that only a very few people were predestined for salvation; obviously, practically no Negroes were eligible for membership

in that restricted circle. He did not see the African situation in terms of human beings but as a problem in political science. Walter Lippmann, who was in Paris with Wilson, said that Wilson looked upon the continuation of the colonial system as a possible seed of war. That is, he was less concerned about the welfare of the African people than about his perfectly sound conviction that since colonies had been a cause of war in the past, they would be so in the future. If further proof of Wilson's attitude is required, I need only remark it was he who, at the urging of his first wife, made segregation the rule in the Federal departments in Washington. According to Du Bois, Wilson tried to prevail on Clemenceau, the French Premier, to send him (Du Bois) home from France in order to prevent the First Pan-African Congress from being held. Again according to Du Bois, Clemenceau called in Blaise Diagne, the black French Deputy from Senegal, who served as president of the congress, and said, "I want to ask you one question: does this Congress have as one of its goals sowing disaffection among African troops?" Diagne replied, "No," and Clemenceau said, "Go ahead with your congress." Diagne confirmed this story to me; although I do not know whether there is any written record of it, I am convinced that the incident happened.

Wilson's principal coadjutor in the establishment of the mandate system, Jan Smuts, held even stronger convictions about the Negro than did Wilson; Smuts was to say in Town Hall, New York City, on January 9, 1930, "the Negro is the most patient of all, next to the ass." My own opinion, which is based on considerable research, is that Smuts does not deserve the kudos that has been given him as the father of the mandate system. It was Wilson, more than Smuts, who originated the system in the form that finally appeared in Article XXII of the Covenant of the League of Nations. Smuts's well-known pamphlet of 1918 clearly revealed his racial attitudes; there have been attempts to portray Smuts as a liberal, but he can be described as such only by comparison with Verwoerd. He proposed that the mandate system be applied solely to former Turkish communities in the Middle East, which, apparently, he presumed to be "white"; he did not suggest mandates for former German colonies in Africa or in the South Pacific, and the line of demarcation was clearly one of race. It was Wilson, for all his bias, who expressed his views on colonialism with such determination that the mandate system as ultimately evolved included not merely the former Turkish communities in Asia, but also the former German colonies in Africa.

Nonetheless, the mandate system that was put into practice still mirrored the racial views of Beer, Smuts, and Wilson. Article XXII of the League Covenant clearly provided for the future independence of the former Turkish communities. But it is impossible to find in the provisions pertaining to the former German colonies in Africa any implied recognition of the possibility that they would one day be able to stand alone. In 1945, all the former Turkish communities that had been placed under mandates (with the exception of Palestine) were independent. By the same year, not one of the former German colonies in Africa—or any other colony in Africa—had gained self-government or independence.

My own long involvement with Pan-Africanism began in the early 1920s, partly as a result of the disillusionment I had experienced as a member of the American Armed Forces during World War I and of my admiration for W. E. B. Du Bois. In those days, Du Bois was for me, as for so many other young Negro Americans of my own and subsequent generations, an intellectual idol. In the summer of 1921, when I was living in Paris, I was therefore delighted to receive a letter from Miss Jessie Fauset, my former teacher of French at M Street High School in Washington, D. C., and a literary editor of *The Crisis*, the magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), telling me that Dr. Du Bois was coming to Paris to attend the Second Pan-African Congress. Miss Fauset asked me to meet him at the railway station, take him to the place where he was to stay, and serve as secretary-interpreter at the Paris session of the congress, all of which I was, of course, very happy to do. I can remember being more than a little surprised to find that the great man had traveled from New York third-class.

The Second Pan-African Congress met in London, Brussels, and Paris, the capitals of the three leading colonial powers, in August and September, 1921. Contacts with Africans were relatively slight; most of the participants were from non-African countries, and many of them were from the United States. The 110 delegates present included about 40 representatives of British, French, and Portuguese African colonies. Blaise Diagne presided at the Paris session, and it was on this occasion that he made his famous statement: "I am a Frenchman first, and a Negro African second."

One of the most outstanding participants, who was neither African nor American, was Dantès Bellegarde of Haiti, at that time just beginning his diplomatic career as Haitian minister in France. Later, he also came to

New York for the Fourth Pan-African Congress. It seems to me that Bellegarde took a broader view of Pan-Africanism than any of the rest of us, except perhaps Du Bois himself, for he keenly appreciated the movement's potential to help the colored populations of the West Indies as well as the peoples of Africa to gain autonomy or some form of self-government. Bellegarde's dignified presence and his moderation and eloquence made a very favorable impression upon the French-speaking people at the Second Congress and upon the French press. He is one of the few Pan-Africanists of the period, apart from myself, who is still alive. The only other prominent West Indian that I remember to have attended the Second Congress was Gratien Candace, Deputy from Guadeloupe, who later became vice-president of the French Senate. A noted participant in the Brussels session was Paul Panda from the Belgian Congo, whose Pan-African activities caused serious concern within the Belgian government and resulted in close supervision of the Brussels session by the authorities. The Americans at the Second Congress included Walter White, then assistant secretary of the NAACP, and Arthur B. Spingarn, then vice-president of the NAACP and chairman of its National Legal Committee (and now the organization's president); Jessie Fauset, whom I have already mentioned; and the scholarly Bishop Hurst of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Unfortunately, at any rate at the Paris session, which I attended, there was relatively little contact among the delegates from different countries outside the formal meetings. It was largely a question of time, and, of course, there was the language barrier.

An interesting incident that occurred at the Brussels session of the Second Pan-African Congress well illustrates the difficulties caused by language differences. Dr. Du Bois was presenting in English a set of resolutions that contained a statement to the effect "that the land in Africa ought to be returned to the commune." Blaise Diagne, who was presiding, knew just enough English to catch the one word "commune," which to him connoted a revolutionary uprising like those in Paris during the Franco-Prussian war. He promptly took control of the session away from Du Bois, and drew up his own set of resolutions. As a result, Diagne and Du Bois were at daggers drawn when they came to Paris for the meeting there. I had heard about what had occurred in Brussels before I came to act as interpreter at the Paris session, so I translated about one-half of what Diagne said into English and about one-half of what Du Bois said into French; in this way things were smoothed over, and they finally ar-

rived at some kind of accommodation. The Paris meeting was certainly the best attended of the congress sessions at which I was present, with, I should think, two or three hundred people taking part. In all, more than a thousand people must have attended the three sessions of the Second Pan-African Congress. At its close, Du Bois and a committee of delegates went to Geneva to present a petition to the League of Nations calling for increased recognition of Negro rights.

The Pan-African Association, which was formally established at the Second Pan-African Congress and which met periodically in Paris during 1921-1924, had for its officers three black Frenchmen and myself. Candace was president; Isaac Béton, a teacher from Guadeloupe who had studied in Paris and taught in a high school there, was secretary; and Commandant Camile Mortenol was treasurer; and my title was deputy secretary. The organization was small and poor; as officers we served without salary and contributed our own traveling expenses.

The Third Pan-African Congress met at London and Lisbon in November and December, 1923, and was a smaller gathering than the previous one. It was, however, attended by delegates from British West Africa and other colonial areas, as well as representatives of the United States and the Caribbean Islands. Dr. Du Bois had originally hoped to hold a third session in Paris and asked me to make arrangements for this with Blaise Diagne. Accordingly I went to Diagne's country house near Saint-Nazaire and persuaded him to return to Paris to preside at the meeting. But a French newspaper reporter gave the *coup de grâce* to the proposed session by writing that Du Bois was a disciple of Marcus Garvey. That frightened the French government so much that Diagne said he simply could not participate in a congress in which the most prominent man was associated with someone like Garvey, who was preaching, "Back to Africa, and kick the white man out." Du Bois then wrote asking me to serve as secretary and interpreter at the London session of the Third Pan-African Congress and, before that, to go to Lisbon and set up the Lisbon session. In Lisbon I reencountered José de Magalhaes, who had taken part in the Second Congress. He was president of the small group of Africans in Portugal who called themselves Liga Africana, and I left the organization of the Lisbon session in his hands. From Lisbon I went to the London session, where, I remember, the novelist H. G. Wells was one of the guests and the distinguished British socialist Harold Laski was among the speakers. But because of an automobile accident, I was unable

to be present at the Lisbon session.

By the time that the Third Congress was held, it was becoming clear that the Pan-African movement had not taken root in the United States and that little further financial support from American sources could be expected. At the urging of Dr. Du Bois, the NAACP had contributed the bulk of the costs of the first and second congresses—it had established a fund of \$3,000 for the Second Congress—but thereafter its support dwindled, for various reasons. One was a personal feud between Walter White and Dr. Du Bois. Another, perhaps more important, was that NAACP funds were limited, and the organization simply did not have the financial resources to support a movement in foreign lands in addition to its more pressing domestic concerns, such as lobbying for passage of an anti-lynching bill.

I came home from Europe in September, 1924, realizing that there was little future for the Pan-African Association at that time. Before my return, I approached Diagne and told him that I would like him to come to the United States on a lecture tour. At that time, of course, there were no Negroes in Congress, and I thought it would be an excellent idea for American Negroes to see an African Negro who was a member of the French Chamber of Deputies and an undersecretary of state. The idea appealed to Diagne, but when I got home and told Dr. Du Bois about it, the latter immediately opposed the scheme, and said American Negroes would not be interested in what I was trying to do. Despite this, I began organizing a number of small committees, each of which was to underwrite the expense of a meeting in a particular town. I then received a letter from Diagne, saying that Dr. Du Bois had advised him not to come on the lecture tour. So, being young and energetic, I took a quick trip to Paris and obtained a written promise from Diagne that he would come; but he soon wrote again, saying that he definitely would not make the trip. Possibly he considered that it was politically inadvisable since France was then engaged in delicate negotiations with the United States about the repayment of the war debt.

Diagne, as I have already noted, was deeply attached to the interests of France as he conceived them. He was even accused by some of having been paid by the French government to recruit black cannon fodder from the French African possessions during World War I. I have no idea whether there was any truth in the accusation, and Diagne brought a libel suit against the writer who made it, but the fact that it could be made at

all throws an interesting light on his character. I don't know what motivated his involvement in the Pan-African congresses; probably he participated in the movement for as long as he thought he could control it in what he considered to be the best interests of both the Africans and the French. But I am certainly not accusing him of seeing the Pan-African congresses solely as an instrument of French colonial policy. I believe he saw the possibility that the congresses might promote some limited steps toward self-government.

After 1923, interest in the Pan-African movement continued to decline, and Du Bois himself lost some of his enthusiasm for it. Following the Third Congress, he met in Sierra Leone with members and promoters of the Congress of West Africa, founded by the Gold Coast lawyer and elder statesman Joseph Casely Hayford in 1920. But there seems to have been little rapport between the Pan-African Congress and the Congress of West Africa; the latter became inactive after Hayford's death in 1930. Despite his waning interest, Du Bois took part in planning and served as General Chairman of a fourth Pan-African Congress, which was held in New York in 1927, largely as a result of the determination of a group of women headed by Mrs. Addie W. Hunton and Mrs. Addie Dickerson. Once again, I served as secretary and interpreter. The principal speakers included Bellegarde, Hansberry, and Chief Amoah III, a rich cocoa grower from the Gold Coast. Chief Amoah contributed more to the expenses of that Congress than did any other individual. There were 208 delegates present at the Fourth Congress, and a total attendance of about 5,000 people.

The opposition of the French government to a fifth congress in Tunisia in 1929, followed by the stock-market crash later in the same year, virtually silenced the Pan-African movement in the United States. Soon afterwards, Dr. Du Bois became a professor of sociology at Atlanta University, and in 1934 he resigned from the NAACP. In the 1930s, I repeatedly urged him to call a new Pan-African congress, but in vain. He had apparently come to the conclusion that there was not enough interest on the part of American Negroes in Pan-Africanism to justify another congress, and that there were more pressing matters to be dealt with here at home. Moreover other interests had engaged his attention. His *Black Reconstruction in America* appeared in 1935. From 1931 to 1945, he was editor and coeditor of a projected encyclopedia of the Negro, of which only a preparatory volume of proposed topics and bibliographies

was ever published. His strained application of Marxism to Reconstruction made him increasingly interested in the Soviet Union, and he joined the Communist Party in 1961. His last couple of years were spent in Ghana, where he died, aged 95, in 1963.

What then, did the first four Pan-African congresses actually accomplish, and what did their leaders hope for? In the first place, I emphatically reject the idea, which is sometimes advanced, that the first four congresses were not truly concerned with African interests because they were organized by light-skinned, bourgeois, intellectual American Negroes (though many of the participants were teachers). We were at least as much interested in promoting self-government and independence (and independence was not at first in question) as were, in the same period, any of those who now claim that it was not until 1945 that Pan-Africanism really meant Pan-Africanism. At the second, third, and fourth congresses resolutions were passed demanding a voice in their own government for all Negro peoples and immediate responsible government for certain specific colonies. We also demanded educational and economic reforms. I think we were realistic in believing that the African people were not ready for independence in the early 1920s; we advocated self-government for the African people when they became prepared for it.

As for Pan-African unity, at that time it was a visionary ideal, since self-government and then independence would have to precede any conception of a United States of Africa or anything of that sort. Nor do I think that anyone at that time envisaged bypassing the formation of separate independent states in favor of the immediate creation of a continent-wide government. To suggest that such a concept of Pan-Africanism then existed is to read back into history something that was not there.

With regard to the American racial situation, one could, of course, hardly talk about self-government for Africans without at least thinking about self-government for American Negroes. But what we had in mind was fuller participation in the normal political life of the country (hence my desire to familiarize American Negroes with the career of Blaise Diagne), not the visionary nonsense about a Negro forty-ninth state that was later in circulation in some quarters. I should also like to make the point that there was no evidence of Communist infiltration at any of the inter-war congresses; I can say quite positively that none of the leaders had any Communist leanings at that time, and, as far as I know, there was not even any attempt made to infiltrate from the floor.

But it was only when Pan-African ideas, in whatever guise, began to attract outstanding Africans that the movement became of real significance for Africa. Kwame Nkrumah has given credit to Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey, assistant vice-principal and the first African member of the staff of Prince of Wales College in the Gold Coast, as it then was, for first arousing in him the idea of African nationalism. Even at that early date, about 1926, Nkrumah rejected Aggrey's famous analogy about the need to play both black and white keys on a piano in order to achieve harmony. Nkrumah, who was at one time strongly influenced by Marcus Garvey, chose to play only on the black keys: He accepted Garvey's principle of "Africa for the Africans." On the other hand, it was Nkrumah's great admiration for Aggrey that first led him to think of continuing his studies in the United States, where he went in 1935.

In the United States, Nkrumah fortified his own thinking on Pan-Africanism, and his interest in the movement increased. He helped to organize an African Studies section at the University of Pennsylvania and the African Students' Association of America and Canada. The association published a newspaper, the *African Interpreter*, in order to revive a spirit of African nationalism. The philosophy of Marx and of Lenin impressed him as being best adaptable to the solution of colonialism. But it was *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, published in 1926, that most inspired his enthusiasm for "Africa for the Africans." Today, when one reads this balderdash, based in part upon Garvey's opposition to "social equality" and upon his fears that the Negro in the United States would not be able to ameliorate his plight, one wonders that Nkrumah could have accepted Garvey's aberrations as fully as he did. Nkrumah evidently brushed them aside because of the attraction Garvey's fixed idea of "Back to Africa" had for him. During his sojourn in the United States, Nkrumah also supported the concept of West African unity as a necessary prelude to a Pan-African movement for the liberation of the whole African continent.

I have selected a relatively unknown factor as significant in the Pan-Africanism of Nnamdi Azikiwe, whose studies at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania and at Howard University contributed to the crystallization of his views on that topic. On the eve of World War II, Azikiwe had expressed his "love" for British institutions, but England's apparent desire to appease Hitler by dangling before him the bait of the return of some of the former German colonies in Africa soon disillusioned him. This dis-

illusionment increased as the result of rumors that England might even cede Nigeria to Hitler. Zik also feared possible aggression by Mussolini against African territories, especially after *Il Duce's* invasion of Ethiopia. Thus, Zik's Pan-Africanism stemmed in considerable measure from his fear that European diplomats might use a new "rape of Africa" to maintain or restore peace in Europe. Azikiwe, like many other African nationalists, also based his Pan-Africanism upon the first part of the third clause of the Atlantic Charter of August 24, 1941, which stated: "They [Roosevelt and Churchill] respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they live." Even though Churchill later made a statement in the House of Commons that seemed to exclude British colonial peoples from the charter, African nationalists and their supporters insisted that "all" meant all.

The two world wars, however, probably did more than any individual leader to contribute to the establishment of Pan-Africanism as a powerful force in Africa. After World War I, the colonial powers were so impoverished that they could not measurably promote the welfare of their colonial or mandated subjects; the consequent failure to make colonialism sufficiently palatable drove a few nationalists to demand its abolition.

More to the point, however, is that the inter-war policies of the great powers made World War II inevitable; and that conflict sounded the death knell of colonialism, not only in Africa but also in many other parts of the world. This conclusion, which is not original, seems to me inescapable. Black colonial and Negro American troops played a not insignificant role in the overthrow of Italy and Germany, and they, like French colonials and Negro Americans in World War I, lost most of their illusions about the "superior races." At the same time, the war took many colonial settlers and administrators from their posts, and in their absence those Africans who remained at home began to think about shifting for themselves. To these factors must be added the further weakening and impoverishment of the colonial powers and a growing demand by some powers for a new colonial policy; all these things presaged the demise of colonialism.

It was natural, therefore, that the Pan-African movement should enjoy a revival in 1945. In that year, I attended a press conference organized for Dr. Du Bois in San Francisco. It was very well attended since it had a kind of quasi-official status, and Du Bois was given every opportunity to say what he wanted. In September, 1945, I remember going to a small meeting in the NAACP office in New York to discuss whether

or not the NAACP should be represented at the Fifth Pan-African Congress, shortly to be held in Manchester, England. The decision was that we should send Dr. Du Bois as a representative; I was invited to go but was unable to do so.

The Fifth Pan-African Congress took place in October, 1945. On that occasion Du Bois, Nkrumah, Padmore, Kenyatta, and others drafted resolutions for self-government or independence in Africa, and the meeting had a greater impact on world opinion than had any of the previous, for in the meantime imperialism had dug deeper its own grave. At the same time, it is always hard to determine the extent to which intellectual concepts influence the actual course of events, and it would be extremely difficult to ascertain the effect of the Fifth Pan-African Congress on the actions of particular African leaders. I doubt that it had much influence on the nationalists in the French African colonies; such intellectual, philosophical influence as there was seems to me to have been largely confined to the Gold Coast until the Pan-African congresses began to be held on African soil. Moreover, there is a sense in which it was colonialism itself that did the most to foster communication between Africans and the desire for independent nationhood. European- or American-style education opened the classical Western literature of revolution and independence to an African elite, while participation in colonial legislative bodies and administrative systems provided a few Africans with some experience of modern forms of government in the Western tradition. And to this day, European languages remain a major means of communication among African peoples—and are often the only means by which their representatives can make themselves understood in, say, an international conference. But when all is said and done, the almost unbelievable rapidity with which African nations have become independent in recent years would scarcely have been possible without the long, slow maturation of Pan-Africanism since 1900.

In a context of independent nations, Pan-Africanism takes on a wider meaning, but in my opinion, the probability of Pan-African unity will remain very slight for some time to come. Certainly, I defy anybody to see in the Organization of African Unity (OAU) the basis of a United States of Africa. The necessary executive, legislative, and judicial powers are simply not there, even though unity is proclaimed as the ultimate goal. Looked at realistically, however, the present structure of the OAU is about as far as the African nations can go at this time in the direction

of unity. The physical difficulties of communication between the various states are still enormous, except for the small minority of the population who can travel by air. People have got to be able to come together and talk about their problems before they can have some sense of unity, and it seems to me that this sense of unity must exist before any unified political structure can become meaningful. Then, too, there is the problem of rivalry among the various African leaders. In any case, many responsible African statesmen are convinced that they had better solve the problems of their own countries before beginning to consider even regional organizations. To my mind, this is a wise decision: The more stable, well-governed, and prosperous the individual states become, the sooner it may be possible to develop an interstate political structure, and the sooner the idea of Pan-African unity will be accepted not only among the leaders but also by the people at large. And, of course, there is no easy way to obliterate in a decade, or even in a few decades, the several distinct colonial traditions or the well-established differences between West Africa and East Africa. Regional federations may develop, but then there is the question whether they will promote or retard Pan-African unity. The history of various attempts to create such federations has not so far been very encouraging; and even if they are successfully established, conflicts among regional organizations of states may make the achievement of continental unity even more difficult than before.

