

“Primary Regard to the Wishes and Interests of the Native Inhabitants”; The First World War and National Self Determination in Tropical Africa.

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On 5 January 1918 the British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, set out his country's war aims. Although eventually overshadowed by United States' President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points address three days later, Lloyd George went far beyond the American leader in the attention which he paid to colonial, and specifically African, questions, and in his insistence that the principle of national self determination applied outside of Europe. Whereas Wilson would merely say that the interests of indigenous populations should be given equal weight with the claims of imperialist powers, Lloyd George made African wishes paramount¹:

The governing consideration, therefore, in all these cases must be that the inhabitants should be placed under the control of an administration acceptable to themselves, one of whose main purposes will be to prevent their exploitation for the benefit of European capitalists or Governments. The natives live in their various tribal organisations under chiefs and councils who are competent to consult and speak for their tribes and members, and thus to represent their wishes and interests in regard to their disposal.

Educated Africans were making very much the same point. They asked: “What difference is there in Germany trying to impose her authority over others and other nations trying to impose their rule upon Asiatics and Africans who have not yet learnt Europe's dominant philosophy of force. [?] Wrong for one, it cannot be right for others”. Application of the principle would²

mean that Africa will no longer be exploited by a ruling caste of European overlords, that natives will no longer be crushed under the heel of alien rule imposed by unrighteous force, that civilization of Africa by machine guns and bad gin will cease and that government

* This paper was originally conceived as part of a comparison which I hoped to develop with a then colleague at the University of Jos, Nigeria, between the application of self determination in Africa in the First and Second World Wars. Unfortunately this was never completed. I am thankful to AFSAAP for allowing me the opportunity to present a revised version of my bit as an independent paper. I should also thank Paul Nugent for helping me to rectify some of my more egregious errors with regard to Togo; those that remain are emphatically my own.

¹ David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, London, n.d. [1938], vol.2, pp.1510-17, quotation (including that used in the title), p.1515.

² *Lagos Weekly Record*, 5-12 Oct. 1918, quoted in Akinjide Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, London, 1979, p.88.

of the people by the people and for the people shall be the rule in Africa as in Europe.

As yet nationalist strategy was to confront British colonial administrations with the discrepancy between the principles which the home government professed, and used to justify the war effort, and the realities of colonial practice. The demand was for a degree of self government or home rule, rather than for outright independence; for greater participation in the Empire rather than for its overthrow³. Even so, the men on the spot and their administrative superiors in London could easily dismiss these as the opinions of a small unrepresentative élite of agitators or trouble-makers such as “the extremely able ex-convict [Herbert] Macaulay”⁴.

Disregarded in cities like London, such voices did not determine government policy. Lloyd George’s speech was in no sense a response to pressures from black Africa. Instead, it was a move in British wartime diplomacy, in particular, a response to the Bolshevik decision to make peace on the socialist principle of no annexations, no indemnities, and any transfer of territory to be on the basis of self determination, and also to Lloyd George’s own continuing attempt to detach Austria-Hungary from Germany. The speech was intended to “maintain our own public opinion and, if possible lower that of our enemy”, to be “in accordance with the democratic principles enunciated by the Bolsheviks and to some extent accepted by the enemy”, and to remove the impression “that we are merely trying to annex more territory to an over-gorged Empire”⁵.

This meant that the question of the Germany colonies would have to be very carefully addressed. The government wished to rule out their return to Berlin, but was chary of using the strategic arguments which carried most weight in the inner circle. Lloyd George’s influential private secretary, Philip Kerr, had already told Jan Smuts, whose draft formed the basis of the African section of the Prime Minister’s speech, that it would be “absolutely fatal to suggest that the German colonies must be retained because they are essential to British communications. The U.S.A. won’t look at that for a moment...”⁶ Instead, London relied on two main arguments: that German rule had been too unjust and repressive to allow its re-imposition, and that this was, in any case, strongly opposed by the indigenous populations. A black book of German atrocities was duly compiled, but the British were only too aware that even weightier indictments could be drawn up against their Belgian, Portuguese, and Australian allies⁷. Although many in the Cabinet

³ *Ibid.*, c.f. J. Ayodele Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa 1900-1945: A Study in Ideology and Social Classes*, Oxford, 1973, pp.117-120.

⁴ Sir Frederick Lugard (Governor-General, Nigeria) to Colonial Office, 25 Sept. 1917, quoted in Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, p.93.

⁵ Minutes of British War Cabinet nos. 311, 312, 2 & 3 Jan. 1918, CAB23/5, Cabinet papers, The National Archive, Kew, England.

⁶ Kerr to Smuts, 14 Dec. 1917, GD40/17/219, Marquess of Lothian [Kerr] papers, Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh, Scotland.

⁷ Gaddis Smith, “The British Government and the Disposition of the German Colonies in Africa, 1914-1918”, in Prosser Gifford & Wm. Roger Louis with assistance of Alison Smith, eds., *Britain and Germany in Africa, Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, New Haven, 1967, pp.284, 287; W.R. Louis, *Great Britain and Germany’s Lost Colonies*, Oxford, 1967, pp.99-100; Viscount Buxton (High Commissioner, South Africa) to C.O., 4 Nov. 1918, Af7604/7604, FO371/3501, Foreign Office papers, N.A. (Portugal’s “indefensible methods of misgovernment”); C.O. to F.O., received 16 Oct. 1917 and Earl of Drogheda (Junior Clerk, Commercial and Sanitary Department, F.O.) minute, 18 Oct. 1917 (Belgian Force Publique

had qualms, emphasis on indigenous wishes and application of the principle of self determination appeared to be the best card to play to prevent any restoration of Germany's overseas empire⁸.

As Lloyd George spoke, the Colonial Secretary, Sir Walter Long, despatched telegrams to the concerned Dominions and colonies calling for evidence of native anxiety to live under British rather than German rule. In Togoland, Kamerun, and East Africa this was duly supplied⁹. As a colonial administrator in East Africa subsequently remarked: "Even Africans are not so simple as to tell the victor that they prefer to be ruled by the vanquished"¹⁰. Getting satisfactory replies from the territories conquered by Australia and New Zealand in the South Pacific was more difficult. In German South West Africa the Governor-General had to fall back on the argument that "thanks to the Germans there are comparatively few natives", and that applying self determination to the German settlers, whose existence Lloyd George had overlooked, would be "politically disastrous". Nevertheless, the opinions which could be used to support the British cause were collected and issued as a White Paper in November 1918¹¹.

The principle of self determination was advanced by London in an attempt to rule out any return of African or Pacific colonies to Germany. The lines of the eventual settlement would be determined by the imperatives of European diplomacy rather than by African wishes. In several cases where these were known, and indeed were strongly expressed, they were overridden. Paradoxically, in doing so the British were not trying to force protesting Africans into the Empire against their will, but rather to ensure that they were, with the least degree of fuss, handed over to France or South Africa in pursuit of a wider imperial strategy.

London saw tropical Africa primarily as an area where concessions might readily be made to establish good-will for negotiations covering more important parts of the world. Such thinking particularly appealed to Lloyd George. In the first year of his premiership he had been quite willing to contemplate the restoration of colonies to Germany if this were to prove the price for a satisfactory peace in Europe¹². His abandonment of that strategy in January 1918 may have been because he now could tempt Berlin with

had "committed every sort of atrocity"), Af198268,199346/5271, FO371/2857; V.H. Rothwell, *British War Aims and Peace Diplomacy, 1914-1919*, Oxford, 1971, p.290 (C.O. considered Australian record in New Guinea execrable).

⁸ The Colonial Secretary, Sir Walter Long, was particularly worried about the possible application of the principle to Egypt, India, and Cyprus. Lloyd George's explanation that his statement was a war measure intended to detach Germany's allies, and that its terms would in any case be unacceptable to Berlin, was too cynical for his colleagues, who insisted on amending the passage on self determination "so as to apply not to all races indiscriminately, but merely to the settlement of the New Europe". W.C. 313, 314, 3 & 4 Jan. 1918, CAB23/5. Lloyd George seems simply to have ignored this recommendation, but there was no subsequent recrimination.

⁹ Louis, *Germany's Lost Colonies*, p.97.

¹⁰ Sir Charles Dundas, *African Crossroads*, London, 1955, p.106.

¹¹ Louis, *Germany's Lost Colonies*, pp.97-8, quotation at p.97; Rothwell, *British War Aims*, p.290.

¹² Peter J. Yearwood, "Great Britain and the Repartition of Africa, 1914-19", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol.18 (1990), pp.326-7. In February 1916, before becoming Prime Minister, Lloyd George had supported the transfer of Kamerun to the French, as "in the event of an indecisive victory for the Allies, [they] naturally wanted something to bargain with", War Committee 73, 22 Feb. 1916, CAB22/6.

ratification of its Baltic conquests, a far more alluring prospect¹³. At the peace conference in 1919 there was no longer any question of finding something to offer Germany, but Lloyd George would be more than ready to offer to Rome a vast empire in East Africa in an attempt to divert it from dreams of expansion in the Adriatic¹⁴.

Over one part of Africa neither the Prime Minister nor any other British statesman could contemplate concession either to European powers or to indigenous inhabitants. The South African conquest of German South West Africa had to be irreversible. The British war effort heavily depended on the willing participation of the white Dominions. Therefore London had to underwrite the sub-imperialisms of Wellington, Melbourne, and Pretoria. This was particularly the case with South Africa, where the Prime Minister, Louis Botha, had faced a serious Afrikaner rising as he brought his country into the war. German South West Africa offered his followers cosy administrative jobs and opportunities for settlement¹⁵. Therefore London paid no attention to the protests of the Rehoboth Basters, a distinct, well-organised community claiming an independence recognised by treaty with Germany, who had nevertheless refused to fight against the invading South Africans. Well aware of what rule by Pretoria was likely to mean, they wanted to run their own affairs in the same way as Swaziland, Basutoland, and the Bechuanaland Protectorate. However, London refused to contemplate the establishment of another imperial enclave in southern Africa¹⁶. All of German South West Africa would pass under South African control.

Pretoria had further expansionist aims which were reflected in its largely taking over the hitherto hopelessly mismanaged East African campaign in 1916. Although Smuts managed to launch a successful invasion, he failed to defeat the German commander, von Lettow Vorbeck. Smuts would eventually go on to London and enter the Imperial War Cabinet, but the heavy fighting in East Africa would be done very largely by black African, especially Nigerian, troops¹⁷, and von Lettow would still have his army in being at the end of the war. Even in 1916 London had been lukewarm toward the idea of German East Africa as a new area of Afrikaner settlement¹⁸. It would continue to toy with ideas of territorial readjustment involving the Portuguese colonies, but at the peace conference it would leave such negotiations largely in the hands of Smuts and Botha,

¹³ Rothwell, *British War Aims*, p.152. As Rothwell points out, Lloyd George's primary purpose was to underline to the Bolsheviks the consequences of pulling out of the war. However, the discussions of a particularly secret meeting of the War Cabinet on 28 Dec. 1918 (misdated 31 Dec. in Rothwell's footnotes) show that the government was seriously considering the terms which might have to be accepted in a general peace treaty if the military and naval advisers could not guarantee victory. Lloyd George was not ready to endorse a separate peace between Germany and Russia, as then "there is no compensation you can give them [the Germans]. It is war to the end". W.C. 307A, 28 Dec. 1917, handwritten notes, CAB23/44B. Policy towards Russia was the major point of difference between Lloyd George's speech and Wilson's Fourteen Points address.

¹⁴ Yearwood, "Repatriation of Africa", p.334.

¹⁵ W.K. Hancock, *Smuts, The Sanguine Years 1870-1919*, Cambridge, 1962, p.401.

¹⁶ F.O. to A.J. Balfour (Foreign Secretary and Peace Conference delegate) despatch 3533, 2 June, giving account of deputation from the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society, 27 May 1919, 732/1/1/11684 FO608/216; letters from Mr Schreiner to Lord Milner (Colonial Secretary) and Statement by Lord Buxton during visit to Rehoboth, Sept.-Oct. 1919, box C702, additional Milner papers and box 380, Milner papers, MS Eng .hist., Bodleian Library, Oxford, England.

¹⁷ Hew Strachan, *The First World War*, vol.1, *To Arms*, Oxford 2001, pp.626-7.

¹⁸W.C. 104, 1 Aug. 1916, CAB22/35.

without, apparently, itself putting any pressure on Lisbon. By then it was more concerned with limiting Belgian claims in Ruanda-Urundi so as to preserve a route for a Cape-to-Cairo railway¹⁹, and with considering proposals for East Africa to become area of Indian settlement, if not an actual Indian colony²⁰.

In assessing relative importance London always placed German South West Africa at the top, followed by German East Africa. West Africa, by contrast, appeared as a zone where concessions might, and should, be made to French wishes. Therefore, after the Lloyd George speech of 5 January with its emphasis on self determination, the Colonial Office noted that it did not want “evidence to show that the natives prefer the British to the French, which we could hardly publish”²¹. The provisional partition of Togoland had been made by the local authorities in August 1914. It had favoured the British in giving them Lomé and the railway system. Metropolitan priorities were more clearly revealed in Kamerun, as the decisions were made in London. In the provisional partition of February 1916 the French were allowed to draw a line which gave them eighty percent of the country, and restricted the British to a narrow strip along the eastern border of Nigeria. The Colonial Office negotiator pointed out that, as this line did not extend north of the Benue, it therefore awarded to France German Borno (the Dikwa Emirate) which the British had held since the beginning of the war. The French negotiator conceded this, but no more. Bound by a Cabinet decision to give the French as much as they wanted, the British negotiators could not press for anything else. In subsequent years the Colonial Office and the Lagos authorities would examine in great detail possible improvements to the 1916 line. They accepted that in the south it would be largely unchanged, but hoped to gain the Adamawan sub-emirates stretching north from Yola to Madagali, and then Mandara, which would fill the gap to German Borno. Although the Bornoan claim to Mandara was weak, this was an area that the French were less likely to contest than the territories along the Shari, to which Bornoan claims were stronger. While Lagos would also have liked to press Adamawan claims along the Benue to Garua, the Colonial Office knew that the French were most unlikely to concede any riverine territory²². The strenuous activities of the Emir of Yola in the British cause would be very poorly rewarded.

In the final discussions at the peace conference the French said that they would be very demanding in Togoland but generous over Kamerun. By this they meant that they wanted all of Togoland, but would continue to let the British have some of Kamerun. The poorly informed French negotiator of 1916 had let the British adjust the boundary south of the Benue so as to include what was generally considered to be the only route along which a railway might be pushed to Lake Chad. Now Paris insisted on having it. London would lose even more in the south. In the north the British would finally get the string of sub-emirates from Yola to Madagali, but only one third of Mandara. Pique at having had to surrender so much seems to have been the only reason why the British, who had previously stressed the unity of Mandara, insisted on hanging on to that third. The line

¹⁹ Yearwood, “Repartition of Africa”, pp.330-1.

²⁰ Max Beloff, *Imperial Sunset*, vol. 1, *Britain’s Liberal Empire 1897-1921*, London, 1969, pp.198-9, 283-4.

²¹ Charles Strachey (Principal Clerk, Niger Department, C.O.) minute, 31 Jan. 1918, CO649/15/5141, Colonial Office archives, N.A.

²² P.J. Yearwood, “‘In a Casual Way with a Blue Pencil’: British Policy and the Partition of Kamerun, 1914-1919”, *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol. 27 (1993), pp. 222-7, 229-31.

was recognised to be unsatisfactory, but Paris could be blamed for it, and that was good enough for London. Neither indigenous wishes, nor even what might be considered indigenous interests, were considered in what was clearly one of the worst parts of the settlement²³.

In Togoland the French did not in fact get everything. Their acquisition of Lomé and the railway was balanced by a revision of the line to favour Great Britain in the north. This was justified on ethnic lines, and was the result of some indigenous pressure, for instance by the chiefs of Kete-Kratchi, who “want it [the new border] to be made so that we and our brothers who sit across the White River (Volta) be united, because we and they were separated long ago”²⁴. Northern Togoland was the only area in Africa where indigenous wishes were seriously considered and significantly influenced the final making of the frontier. However, metropolitan attention still focussed more on coasts and their great commercial cities than on the interior. Here the advantage was all with the French. They kept Douala and gained Lomé. As the British Colonial Secretary, Lord Milner, noted: “The settlement is generous to France and ... we can well afford to take credit for it in any other negotiations with the French about territorial adjustment – in Syria for instance....”²⁵

Satisfying the French meant ignoring the wishes of the indigenous commercial élites of Lomé and Douala. These had longstanding connections with Great Britain, and had demonstratively welcomed British conquest in 1914²⁶. While Douala had passed to French control in 1916, Lomé remained British throughout the war. Each feared the implications of incorporation within a French empire which would impose direct taxation and redirect trade to France. When, at the end of 1918, the French authorities tried to get the Douala chiefs to sign a petition in favour of French rule, the chiefs consulted the British Government Agent, an elderly trader named E.C. Holder, who told them “that everything will have to be settled at home, and to sign nothing here, and they are only praying and appealing to His Most Gracious Majesty King George to take this Colony over”. Holder thought that there would be an exodus of the indigenous population if French rule were finally imposed. His views were endorsed by the British Association of West African Merchants, of which he was a member, and by John Holt, who wanted Great Britain to take over everything north of the Nyong river. His agent in Kamerun reported, “the natives wish to see the British here and they thought they would be permitted to send delegates to a conference to voice the views of the people”²⁷.

None of this had the slightest impact on London. As one of the British officials at the peace conference minuted on Holt’s letter, “we cannot hope to take into the British sphere all the people in the world who would doubtless like to enter it”. Holder was discounted as a man of little education, low social standing, and no experience in

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 232-4.

²⁴ Deputy Governor, Gold Coast to C.O., 24 Jan. 1919, covering petition of Kete Kratchi chiefs 737/1/1/7257 FO608/216.

²⁵ Milner memo, 29 May 1919, box 389, Milner papers.

²⁶ Paul Nugent, *Smugglers, Secessionists & Loyal Citizens on the Ghana-Togo Frontier; The Lie of the Borderlands Since 1914*, Oxford, 2002, pp.27-8; Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, p.187.

²⁷ Holder to F.O., 22 Dec.1918, to C.O. telegram, 3 Jan. 1919, A.W.A.M. to F.O., 12 Feb., covering several documents including one from “a member” who is clearly Holder, Holt to C.O., 25 Jan.1919, L. Shuttleworth to John Holt, 23 Dec. 1918 in Holt to F.O., 4 Feb. 1919, 719/1/1/2050,290,2910.995,1951, FO608/215.

consular work. He was warned to give no advice “which could possibly be interpreted as encouraging them [the chiefs] to ask for British rather than French protection”²⁸. They would eventually send to the peace conference a petition calling for Kamerun to be placed under a self-selected power and for communal self-government in Douala.²⁹ However, by August 1919 the Treaty of Versailles had already been signed, and London and Paris had long since settled the partition of Kamerun.

The Lomé protest was better organised, but developed in a significantly different direction. At the end of the war a delegation met the commander of the British occupation forces. It was led by the most distinguished of the indigenous businessmen, Octaviano Olympio, who had been educated in England. The delegation hoped that “the British Government will continue to protect us and we wish to tell them that Togoland must not be divided when peace is made”. This claim for respecting the integrity of the pre-war colonial boundaries was substantially in line with that made by the Douala elite. However, one of the delegation’s members, A.D. Mensah, of the Anecho community in Lomé, put forward an argument which could lead in a significantly different direction:³⁰

Our country has never been divided except by the Germans; from Anecho to the Volta River all the natives including the Awuna [Anlo] and Peki peoples speak the Efe [Ewe] language and we are all related to each other; we have the same fetishes and the same dislike for German rule. We ask that we be now united under the English. Lome cannot live without food from Anecho and the Efe peoples can never develop properly if they are again put under different flags.

This was an ethnic claim: that the original partition had divided the Ewe peoples – a year later this would become “the Ewe-speaking tribe”³¹ -, that this unity had been partially restored by the British conquest of Lomé, and that it should be completed by including the rest of the Ewe cultural area within the British zone. Asked to comment on the representations from Lomé, Governor Clifford of the Gold Coast stressed that Togoland was “not a natural Geographical or tribal area such as for instance Ashanti but is instead a purely artificial creation of European diplomacy ...,” and that “If the Colony is regarded and treated as a separate entity without reference to its tribal or ethnological connections a very grave injustice will be perpetuated which the tribes now ask should be rectified.”³²

²⁸ G.S. Spicer (Senior Clerk, F.O.) min., 29 Jan., Strachey min., 15 Feb., Senior Naval Officer, West Coast of Africa, to Admiralty, 26 Feb. 1919, 719/1/1/995,2050,4002, FO608/215, General Sir Charles Dobell (British Commander in Kamerun) min., 1916, 19369 CO649/9; Strachey min., 15 Feb., Peace Conference Delegation to F.O., 19 Feb. 1919, 719/1/1/2050, FO608/215.

²⁹ Ralph A. Austen & Jonathan Derrick, *Middlemen of the Cameroons Rivers, The Duala and their Hinterland, c.1600 - c.1960*, Cambridge, 1999, p.148.

³⁰ Sir Hugh Clifford (Governor, Gold Coast) to C.O., 17 Dec., enclosing Lt. Col. Rew (C.O., British Forces, Togoland) to Accra, 22 Nov., with notes of meeting with the delegation, 19 Nov. 1918, 737/1/1/2239, FO608/216.

³¹ Petition from President of Committee on Behalf of Togoland Natives via the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, 12 Dec. 1919, CO724/1, cited in Nugent, *Smugglers, Secessionists & Loyal Citizens*, p.148. Nugent argues that Olympio and his colleagues were really thinking about the coastal peoples, and that the northern Ewe were “still located at the margins of their cognitive map ...,” (p.149), but the Peki were specifically included among the Ewe speaking peoples when the Committee had presented its case in 1918.

³² Clifford to C.O., most urgent tel. rec’d 1 Feb. 1919 732/1/1/7257 FO608/216.

The process of assimilation, adaptation, and indigenisation of originally European patterns of political organisation in Africa would be neither simple nor straightforward. Many possibilities were open. The decisions of the peace conference could be contested either because they violated the right of self determination of the entire colony, for which urban élites might be considered spokesmen, or because they divided an indigenous ethnic entity whose wishes had to be respected. The principle of self determination could be used to support each of these potentially conflicting claims. Much subsequent history, in Togoland especially, would be about which of them would ultimately prevail. The Lomé élite tried to create and appeal to a wider sense of Ewe identity which could be used to reinforce their case for remaining within the British Empire. As the language of the petitions suggests, this identity was in the first instance linguistic. Politically such a move had the advantage of linking the Lomé cause with that of the Pekis of the Gold Coast, who had claims over lordship over the Krepi areas to the northwest of Lomé, which had also enthusiastically welcomed the British in 1914³³. As Paul Nugent has recently reminded us, too much weight should not be placed on this early attempt to construct an Ewe identity³⁴, but it did provide a precedent which later politicians could and would, though largely unsuccessfully, exploit.

At the time, despite the strong support of the British men on the spot, the Lomé protest had no more impact on London than the Douala agitation had. In March, Olympio petitioned the peace conference in favour of the continuation of British administration. Inspired by Nelu Gaba, from an important Anecho family who had been deported to Kamerun for having criticised the German administration, the Anecho community in Lagos also petitioned for the extension of British rule to Anecho on the coast at the east of the French zone, and for the need to consult local populations before any decision was made concerning Togoland. Similarly, the African shipper James A. Dawson of Quittah in the Gold Coast, in a letter passed on and largely endorsed by the British West Africa Association, of which he was a member, stressed that it would be cruel if Togoland and Douala were handed over to the French without taking into account the wishes of the local population.³⁵

The C.O. officials at the peace conference dismissed all this as “perfectly useless”³⁶; just as they discounted Garveyite proposals that the German colonies should “become a Negro National Home and Government” as “ridiculous”. In 1919 they were largely correct in claiming that Garvey then had “certainly no following in Africa”³⁷, but, as Dawson’s letter shows, the grievances of Lomé and Douala received a sympathetic

³³ Nugent, *Smugglers, Secessionists & Loyal Citizens*, p.29.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.117-9, 145-6.

³⁵ Olympio to C.O., tel., rec’d 1 April, Acting Governor Gold Coast to C.O., 8 June, B.W.A.A. to C.O., 7 May 1919, 737/1/1/6643.14587,19754, FO608/216.

³⁶ Strachey min., 23 April 1919, 737/1/1/8113, FO608/216.

³⁷ Mallet (Panama City) desp. 20, 19 Feb. 1919, covering petition from Association of Universal Loyal Negroes, 4 Dec. 1918; Strachey min., 18 April 1919, 732/1/1/7128, FO608/216. Strachey’s minute was in response to one by H. Knatchbull-Hugesson of the F.O. (15 April), who thought that the Association might “in course of time have to be reckoned with”. Lloyd George had earlier read a Garveyite telegram to the Imperial War Cabinet, presumably as a curiosity, as there is no record of any discussion. I.W.C. 37, 20 Nov. 1918 (shorthand notes), CAB23/43. A year later Garvey was beginning to attract followers in Africa, and a branch was established in Lagos, Langley, *Pan-Africanism*, pp. 89-94.

hearing in the other coastal and commercial cities. When the National Congress of British West Africa met for the first time in Accra in March 1920, it resolved:³⁸

That the Conference views with alarm the right assumed by the European powers of exchanging or partitioning Countries between them, without reference to, or regard for the wishes of the people, and records the opinion that such a course is tantamount to a species of slavery.

That the Conference condemns specifically the partitioning of Togoland between the English and the French Governments and the handing over of the Cameroons to the French Government without consulting or regarding the wishes of the peoples in the matter.

Little immediately came of this. The Congress did not long survive the economic collapse of 1920, which particularly affected the African business élite. In the interwar years the weakness of African nationalism would be more apparent than its strength. The Dualas and the Anlos had to adjust to French rule, though they did not forget their experience of petitioning. The colonial system would not be seriously challenged for a generation. Above all, 1919 revealed how little African wishes counted in the European scheme of things. Although Lloyd George had ostentatiously placed it at the centre of British war aims, self determination had not shaped the peace settlement, and the forcefully expressed opinions of those best placed to reach European ears had been disregarded. Therefore the feeling persisted that the 1919 partitions were particularly unjust. While other colonial borders would acquire a greater degree of legitimacy, those defining Togo and the Cameroons remained much more open to challenge. Nationalist rhetoric in Togo before the Second World War³⁹, and in Cameroun/Cameroons after it, would base itself on the premise that German colonialism had created a valid political space which had to be restored. In the south of Cameroun/Cameroons this was done. In Togo the main postwar political challenge would again be in terms of asserting the claim of an Ewe tribe which had been unjustly divided. This claim would ultimately fail. The 1919 partition would be maintained, with the British portion absorbed into independent Ghana and the French portion becoming an independent state. In these decisions the wishes of the people concerned would be consulted, and would, at last, be respected.

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³⁸ Quoted in Langley, *Pan-Africanism*, p. 130.

³⁹ Nugent, *Smugglers, Secessionists & Loyal Citizens*, pp. 152-7.