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## Cowboys and Communists:

Cultural Diplomacy, Decolonization and the Cold War in French West Africa

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On July 4<sup>th</sup> 1950, the United States Consulate General in Dakar, the capital of French West Africa [AOF-*Afrique Occidentale Française*], opened a small library to great fanfare.<sup>1</sup> American representatives, weary of the "slightly suspicious French," ensured that both US and French flags adorned the building's new sign. Inside, French administrators and high-ranking officials—not one of whom was African—surveyed displays on American music and theater, presidential portraits and a section on "our common interests" featuring the successes of the Marshall Plan. The event was declared a triumph, save for one troubling incident: both nation's flags were ripped from the building during the night "apparently by aroused members of the RDA [the Rassemblement Democratique Africaine—a prominent West African nationalist party with communist affiliations]." Jane Ellis, the US Public Affairs Officer, explained, "It was for this possible eventuality that the window displays were purposefully kept general and cultural, with no

inducements to incite opposition from RDA factions, or undue attention from natives. It is also for this type of incident that we have steel shutters covering our display windows at night."<sup>2</sup>

Ellis' description of the steps taken to prevent provocation reveals both the intentions and the failings of US public diplomacy in this French territory during the early 1950s. "Natives" were not the target audience of such efforts; indeed, their attention was consciously avoided; and "general and cultural" displays were believed to be quite capable of seducing the French but void of a kind of political legibility that might inspire African or French opposition. The proclamations of both the US Consul General—Perry N. Jester—and the French High Commissioner in AOF—Paul Bécharde—reinforced American-French cooperation in the territory, with Jester particularly keen to emphasize the lack of infringement on the French way of life there: "We do not seek to impose any patterns of culture or thought upon any inhabitants of these territories."<sup>3</sup> In this context, the act of tearing down both flags was symbolic not only of the gathering pace of African nationalism but also of the way French and American authorities seriously underestimated "native" ability to respond to or appropriate "Western" cultural and political forms. Indeed, both countries mobilized specific ideas about national culture in formulating policy during the last years of colonial rule in AOF. This article examines the various terrains of these cultural clashes in the territory, clashes which were explicitly linked to racialized understandings of local populations and to Cold War politics.

In French West Africa, the dangers of communist infiltration were seemingly less pronounced than elsewhere in the French Union (as the French Empire was renamed in 1946). As the audience targeted by the new USIE library suggested, the American fear at the beginning of the 1950s was that France, not West Africa, would fall to communism. As Richard Kuisel writes, beginning in the late 1940s the US State department launched a "cultural offensive" to fight the Cold War on French soil. Here, a tradition of anti-Americanism combined with the relative popularity of communist politics made France "a country where the strategic and political stakes were extremely high."<sup>4</sup> Conversely, because French West Africa appeared distanced from immediate threats, clashes between French officials and American diplomats in the territory drew upon deeper cultural concerns and convictions: the "universalism" of French culture, global Americanization and the "backwardness" of the indigenous population. From the French perspective,

American officials in Dakar had a very shallow understanding of their brand of colonial rule, a problem compounded by the unofficial signs of American superficiality, particularly the endless stream of Hollywood movies and "les cowboys" who filled the cinema screens. American diplomats—perfectly aware of their "cowboy" image among the French—tread carefully, but nevertheless sought to extend cultural influence in the region in an attempt to curtail possible communist politics, gain the respect of the increasingly anti-American French, and create conditions for a sustained American presence in the region.

Set against the backdrop of Cold War divisions, the interactions of the two Western powers illuminate post-war insecurities that have elsewhere been examined in terms of purely metropolitan politics or the more obvious "hot-spots" of French decolonization.<sup>5</sup> Examining these conflicts in AOF, where French authorities eventually encouraged American economic support but absolutely refused US cultural programs, sheds new light on the extent to which French postwar power was predicated on the ability to maintain cultural hegemony in particular areas of the world. Further, despite their disagreements, both French and American onlookers shared a disdain for local cultures—a perspective that was grounded in related, but very different racial ideologies. These understandings could not imagine a nationalist movement that also used Western culture endeavors as political weapons. Such conceptual blind-spots, apparent at the edges of official French and American reports, also help elucidate the discursive and symbolic strategies mobilized by Africans in their demands for autonomy at the end of the 1950s.

By examining French postwar concepts of Empire and the proclaimed purpose of a US presence in AOF, this article begins by tracing both the shared suppositions and cross-purposes that shaped Franco-American cultural relations in the territory. The second part of the article turns to the specific strategies employed by both powers in AOF as they created libraries and cultural centers, film policies and educational programs. In practice, these undertakings had contradictory and unforeseen effects, particularly as African actors frequently politicized or highlighted the political implication of what French and American officials claimed to be purely "cultural" affairs.

## Speaking the Same Language?

Until recently, historians have located the formal beginning of the decolonization process in French sub-Saharan Africa in the 1944 Brazzaville conference.<sup>6</sup> During World War II, the French territory of AEF (*Afrique Equatoriale Française*-French Equatorial Africa), with its capital in Brazzaville, had been a vital outpost of the Free French campaign. From the outset, then, Charles de Gaulle's decision to hold discussions about the future of the French Empire in the city that symbolized the tenacity of French resistance to Nazi Germany signified the interconnection of Empire and the persistence of French power.

Brazzaville continued a process of liberalization in the imperial framework that had been initiated during the era of the Popular Front: the punitive *indigénat* (native) legal code was abolished, trade unions were authorized and freedom of association became legal. These measures were very much a product of the war years. They were "rewards" for the loyalty of colonial troops, a tacit indication of France's willingness to conform to the central tenets of the Atlantic Charter, and a means of recognizing that the Nazi regime had thoroughly discredited racial ideologies.<sup>7</sup> However, their implementation did not mean that decolonization would inevitably follow. In fact, in his opening speech in Brazzaville, de Gaulle emphasized the existence of "definitive links" between the "Metropole and its Empire."<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the conference set the pattern for the next twenty years by both democratizing the apparatus of Empire and underscoring the longevity of imperial ties. As Raymond Betts had written, "Brazzaville was indeed a turning point, the immediate question was: in which direction?"<sup>9</sup>

The ambiguity of this change of direction was reflected in a new language of imperialism institutionalized by the French after the war. The Empire was now a Union and colonies were renamed territories—a means of cementing links but implying a more consensual arrangement. According to Albert Sarraut, a prominent proponent of modernization in the overseas territories, the change in name was more than cosmetic. Speaking of the importance of the new terminology in 1946, he explained:

Empire evoked a masterly authority, a superior power which awarded rights and made the law. In contrast, the French Union indicates an association, a cooperative, a sharing of powers, a contractual union in which, without doubt, the role of the Metropolitan presidency dominates, but also where countries which were previously subjects are invested with a new right. They are now called upon to participate directly, as much with the local development of their own interests as with general acts concerning the destiny of this immense community represented by France and Overseas.... The paternalistic conception of yesterday gives way to a fraternal one.<sup>10</sup>

This new brotherly union was to be a substitute for, not a path to, "decolonization." The recasting of Sarraut's "*mise en valeur*" now accompanied by a massive investment in social and technical development in the territories and greater political participation for African political leaders was thought to be a sufficient means of stemming the tide of nationalist demands. By the middle of the 1950s, when French Indochina and Algeria collapsed into humiliating violence, this relationship with AOF was reassessed once more, with further attempts to both grant more localized power and retain loyalty.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, French policymakers remained convinced that they had already moved beyond the colonial relationship in sub-Saharan Africa. In their eyes, the issue was not propping up "colonialism" but ensuring a continued *presence française* on the African continent and thus retaining one of the remaining bases of French international power.

Given these intentions, the growing American presence in French territories south of the Sahara seemed to be a clear threat to French post-war strategy. The American Consulate General in Dakar was the only U.S. diplomatic outpost in French West Africa during the 1950s. A limited United States Information Service (USIS) operation was established there in 1949 under the umbrella of the United States Information and Educational Exchange Office (USIE), followed by the formal inauguration of the library and reading room in 1950. The United States Information Agency (USIA) took over the administration of the Service upon its creation in 1953. If we accept the professed aims of USIA, which in the words of one of its employees "rested on the most elusive of human acts—changing someone's mind," then the presence of US cultural outposts in colonial and

especially decolonizing contexts raises the question of the intended recipient of "mind-changing"—the colonizer or the colonized.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, it is clear that USIA officials themselves vacillated in response to this question, perhaps as a consequence of witnessing a shift in power. This shift was evident in devolutions of power from France to its Overseas Territories in the mid-1950s as well as the successful appeal made by the Algerian independence movement to both the United States and the United Nations. In AOF, the French were the target audience of USIA efforts at the beginning of the 1950s, while Africans were addressed more directly by the end of the decade.

Just a few weeks before the USIS library opened in Dakar, Jester, the American Consul General, had requested important changes to the USIE's country plan for the entire territory of AOF. These alterations took stock both of the changing French notion of Empire and the purpose of an American cultural presence in AOF, forming the departure point for policy in the region for the next decade. Jester insisted that using media to win the "minds and loyalties of the French and of the indigenous peoples," especially by pressing the validity of the American way of life, was of the utmost priority. In this formulation, anti-communism came before anti-colonialism—no attempt would be made to challenge the political relationship between France and the territory: "Let us get Russia off our back, and see some results in the improvement of social and economic conditions in Africa, before we start tampering—ourselves being outsiders—with their [French] political controls."<sup>13</sup> However, American officials in Dakar also determined that they could not employ the full force of American anti-communist propaganda. In fact, while American authorities frequently monitored actual and potential communist activity in AOF—in Jane Ellis' words, the only "political target" for the USIE there—they also deliberately avoided the distribution of anti-communist material, for fear of provoking the communist-affiliated RDA.<sup>14</sup>

In general, the USIE in Dakar made the case for an American cultural policy that was completely consistent with French interests. Jester underscored the "distant" prospect of self-government in the territory and insisted that this prospect should not be alluded to in order to keep the French on side; thus the statement that the US should "encourage Western democratic patterns" was removed from the final version of the report. A new paragraph was added, stating that the US intended to help French integrate Africans into the "modern world." The biggest change was linguistic, Jester explained: "Wherever the word 'colonial' is used in this paper, it

should be replaced by 'territorial' or other similar description. The word 'colonial' is offensive to present French sensibilities and thinking." Perhaps the most telling part of the proposal was the discussion of the target audience of cultural efforts in the territory. Despite the opening statement that cited French and indigenous people as the desired recipients, Jester ended by dismissing the potential of reaching the latter group: "The large mass of primitive, illiterate and semi-illiterate elements of the native population must for the time being remain a secondary target." Indeed, initial experiments in lending to local people were quickly abandoned when items returned damaged, a phenomenon that was attributed to African inexperience with books.<sup>15</sup> American cultural endeavors could only indirectly be aimed at the majority of Africans through the Point IV program and possibly teacher training.<sup>16</sup> The overwhelming goal of the USIE in 1950, as the inauguration of the new library revealed, was to gain the support of French and African elites—the majority of the French West African population was excluded from this effort.

## The View from France

In many ways, Jester's USIE report was based on an accurate assessment of French fears. For French colonial policymakers, the most offensive part of the American attitude to sub-Saharan Africa—particularly after the announcement of the Point IV program—was the implication that the USA could provide to Africa in a disinterested manner. An anonymous note circulated in the French foreign ministry fixated on the apparent hypocrisy of this justification:

To show that cooperation in the name of Point IV has nothing in common with the "colonialist" action of European powers, the United States has insisted on the fact that it must be requested by the country to receive it, and that the governmental accord relative to the program is limited in time.... Despite these precautions, the assistance furnished is in large part derived from the "colonial" powers' forms of intervention.... The procedure is analogous to that which we pursue in our Overseas Territories.<sup>17</sup>

In other words, despite their avowedly anti-colonialist position, the American point IV program was barely any different from post-war incarnations of French colonial power.

Throughout the 1950s, the French diplomatic corps in the U.S. kept a watchful eye on the American press, looking for clues about American policy from a public that was perceived as increasingly interested in African affairs and increasingly able to influence their elected officials.<sup>18</sup> In these circumstances, discussions of American incursions into Africa barely disguised a growing belief that French postwar power relied on the maintenance of territories in sub-Saharan Africa and that the United States was the chief barrier to this project.

French politicians continually emphasized the necessity of Africa for the maintenance of French and European power more widely. Africa was unique in offering Europeans a power base, as one observer remarked: "A single continent remains in the European orbit: Africa...An old continent, which...offers neither the riches of the Americas nor of the Far East, but which remains our only domain."<sup>19</sup> US interest in Dakar was a particular concern to French administrators. Scrambling to react to American overtures in the area, French army officers and the foreign ministry denied a U.S. request for a U.S. Air-force liaison officer to be stationed in the city. The Minister of National Defense stated that the creation of such a post "risked the USA's interference in domains of responsibility that were specifically French."<sup>20</sup> For most of the 1950s, U.S. interest in the region was greeted with similar suspicion.

For the French, the issue became what the French Ambassador to the U.S. described as "conserving our initiative and authority in Africa, without having to share it, in fact, with the United States."<sup>21</sup> French policymakers did this by distinguishing their commitment to Africa from America's sudden interest. Thus the American brand of technical assistance was crucially different from the French in that it was "limited in time and space," that is, oriented toward short-term goals. Taking this stance enabled French officials to justify their acceptance of this "limited" economic aid from the United States to the African territories—especially via the Marshall Plan—even as they denigrated American motives. However, in order to retain French prestige, colonial officials frowned upon American cultural initiatives as they were perceived as the real threat to the *presence française*, undermining the long term basis of French power and thus the key to hegemony in the region.

## Cowboys

Perhaps the biggest problem facing the new USIE operation in AOF was that their



ability to convey US culture to locals was immediately compromised by the omnipresent representation of the "American way of life" in the territory: the Hollywood movie. As scholars have demonstrated, this was a problem that the United States confronted in postwar metropolitan France and elsewhere in Europe, where American films became the clearest sign of both a new form of imperialism and a pervasive consumerist impulse.<sup>22</sup> In their African territories, however, French authorities perceived a new danger. These officials believed Africans lacked the cognitive abilities to properly interpret the moving image and thus deemed films unfavorable to "social evolution" in the colonies.<sup>23</sup>

In West Africa, colonial officials often debated cinema alongside alcohol and imputed the African cinematic experience with similar dangerous and unavoidable consequences. American films in particular were viewed as deeply intoxicating, mixing flashy images and moral impropriety into an addictive package that Africans were unable to resist. Official estimations indicated that only 40% of audiences could understand the French dialogue in films. This was exacerbated by the incessant noise in cinemas: the viewer was frequently heard repeating the dialogue to his neighbor, thus obscuring the film's meaning still further.<sup>24</sup> Administrators believed that in these circumstances it was little wonder that Africans were whipped into frenzy by images they barely understood.

The postwar surge in American-made films was met in AOF with the first French concerted effort at a censorship policy for the territory. From the outset this policy was based on a series of assumptions about what African audiences were capable of understanding rather than what they might logically infer. This approach rested on the claim that Western technology remained essentially incomprehensible to colonized peoples. Unlike declarations of religious superiority that had propelled earlier forms of colonial expansion, the visible presence of science and technology in the late colonial period testified to a form of human capacity that could be "empirically demonstrated."<sup>25</sup> As a "measure of men," cinema provided hard evidence of Western superiority. Theoretically, film censorship thus had a very specific role in shoring up the French presence in West Africa; it continued to underscore African inability to engage fully with Western technologies, and, in its application to Hollywood films, often re-produced a metropolitan discourse about the vacuousness of American culture.

As with many colonial initiatives, however, the practice of censorship policy revealed a deep-seated anxiety about the precarious basis of rule. There were two main arguments for censorship. First, that films depicting immoral behavior (particularly of a violent or sexual nature) would be emulated by poorly educated colonial subjects and second, that negative images of France could be viewed by Africans. The latter case had particularly troubling repercussions because if audiences were able to discern such an unflattering message, then Africans *were* in fact grasping a Western technology that was said to be unfathomable to them. Censorship decisions always skirted this issue and continued to be justified as a differentiation between French and African powers of interpretation when confronting the technology of the cinema, even when it was clear that the real issue was the damage specific images could inflict in a colonial context.

In keeping with the initial assumption that African audiences simply did not understand the meaning of the moving image, films that had obvious political implications were screened to African audiences in AOF *before* the possible ramifications of such a screening were considered. Newsreels were a particular focus of this kind of retroactive action as they often provoked direct responses from their predominantly black viewers. Thus, in 1954, the Governor General of AOF informed a political advisor that he had "today banned the projection of a newsreel showing Viet-Minh troops entering Hanoi which had provoked regrettable demonstrations among audiences."<sup>26</sup> A later telegram confirmed that African audiences in the Senegalese city of Saint Louis had burst into applause at the images of the French defeat in Hanoi, signaling that they had fully comprehended the significance of this loss.<sup>27</sup>

More than any other genre of film, American Westerns and gangster films seemed most threatening to French observers because here, it was felt, the inability to disentangle fact and fiction coincided with a highly impressionable audience: African youth. The main concern was with the sheer volume of such films being shown—an anxiety which undoubtedly also reflected the French film industry's fear of having its markets flooded with cheap Hollywood adventures. To make matters worse, these films were more likely to be shown to impressionable African audiences than to their more discerning French counterparts, as the governor of Ivory Coast informed the governor general: "Certain cinemas, frequented especially by 'African society' are practically reserved for the

projection of Westerns."<sup>28</sup> Between January and October of 1954 of the 226 films examined by the local film commission in Senegal, 115 were American productions and most of these were Westerns.<sup>29</sup>

This French anxiety had a different focus among young Africans who used the presence of Hollywood films in AOF not as a means to critique American culture, but to highlight the plight of African children and the failings of the French colonial administration. A 1957 article published by a group of Catholic African students in their journal, *Jeunesse d'Afrique*, reported that thousands of people could be found at the twenty cinemas in Dakar every night. In the Medina, the authors had surveyed audiences and discovered that on average viewers were going to the cinema three times a week, and that in each cinema around twenty children could be found on a given evening. The article concluded by tying this practice to the rising incidences of juvenile delinquency—noting that approximately thirty children had been convicted of stealing in order to purchase cinema tickets during 1956.<sup>30</sup> A publication by the youth section of the RDA similarly pointed out that the censorship commission was allowing young, impressionable children to watch "immoral films."<sup>31</sup> This critique of film quality by these African elites, rather than the quantity that was so feared by colonial administrators, was levied at the colonial regime more than the easily influenced audience itself. As the nationalist movement gathered pace, this attack on an inept French administration that was incapable of protecting African children resonated with a wider discourse about the failures of the colonial system.

Conscious of the increasingly negative impact of American cinema in places like AOF, the USIA carried out a survey of reactions to Hollywood films in seventeen countries between 1959 and 1961. Only French respondents reported both not enjoying American feature films and gaining an overall bad impression of the United States from viewing them. In the same survey investigators found that among the population who could not read in Abidjan, the capital of Ivory Coast, 43% saw at least one film a month. In Dakar, this figure was 53%, far higher than the equivalent European figures. While acknowledging French antagonism, the USIA also concluded that these responses revealed the enormous tool that cinema might offer its programs in the developing world: "These studies point up the potential of motion pictures for reaching people who cannot be reached by newspapers or indeed any other mass medium."<sup>32</sup> Indeed, from the middle of the 1950s, American efforts in cultural diplomacy across the territory involved seeking

to use the cinema to access previously "inaccessible" audiences while simultaneously assuring the French that this work neither damaged the general precepts of the civilizing mission nor sought to undermine the content of French cultural mores.

## The Imperialism of Anti-Imperialism

In formulating their program of film screenings, the limited USIS program in Dakar faced not only official French disapproval but also the turmoil of American domestic politics. In the latter case, the ravages of domestic anti-communism, particularly during the McCarthy era, resulted in severe fluctuations in funding, as both the USIE and the USIA were frequently accused of being soft on communism. In the face of these limited resources, consular staff looked for alternative ways to reach a wider audience. In 1954, the American Consul General suggested the new French Culture Centers, designed in part as educative tools for local elites, as an ideal venue for the screening of USIA produced films. While Vaughan Ferguson Jr., Jester's successor, admitted that he had yet to broach this subject with local authorities, he explained to the state department that he had recently received a request for documentary films from the African head of the Cultural Center in Treichville, Abidjan, "since they were by far his most urgent requirement in bringing life to his organization."<sup>33</sup> The circumstances did indeed seem auspicious—neither the Government General in Dakar nor the Ministry of Overseas France in Paris had invested much in the production of documentaries for AOF:

It is hard to believe that the French will indefinitely neglect this most effective method of getting their message across to the Africans but I strongly believe that while this neglect continues, we have an opportunity that we should exploit to the hilt. I do not, of course, recommend that USIA provide services that should properly be performed by the French, but it does seem that we have a golden opportunity to get our message across...."<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, it was the ubiquity of American films and the limited resources of the colonial administration that made the French unable to compete with their American counterparts.<sup>35</sup> Given this situation, the new French Cultural Centers

seemed like the perfect venue for the screening of US-made documentary films. Here was an ideal site for the extension of American influence without incurring the wrath of the French.

In AOF, these French "Cultural Centers" were conceived of as an extension of metropolitan plans both to provide and control the usage of leisure time.<sup>36</sup> However, the "cultural" aspect of the houses took on a special resonance in West Africa where the culture in question was always ambiguous. Between 1954 and 1957, 170 cultural centers were opened in the territory, operating under a budget of 259 million francs.<sup>37</sup> Like their metropolitan counterparts, they were supposedly open to all but in practice were frequented by elites and designed—at least from the French point of view—as a place to diffuse potentially damaging political views which were most often articulated by *évolués*.<sup>38</sup> To this end, the board that oversaw the running of each center had to contain a local colonial administrator; most often this was a "*commandant du cercle*"—a low level bureaucrat in the territory. This presence made the growing number of youth groups who used the centers as meeting places feel as if they were being scrutinized by the authorities, unable to use the space as they saw fit. This lack of autonomy became the central point of contention in the battle over their administration.

The orientation of the centers reflected the multifaceted French approach to the idea of appropriate "culture" in the late 1950s. The activities were almost exclusively "African"—they were meeting places for local organizations and a theatrical competition among the different centers which encouraged productions that depicted indigenous traditions. Yet, at the same time, the material provisions were generally French: popular French magazines and journals ranging from *Paris-Match* to *Bingo* and *Miroir Sport* filled the libraries, and French newsreels were shown in attached *filmathèques*.<sup>39</sup> Guest speakers, like the itinerant team led by Lompolo Kone (the editor of the Cultural Centers' journal) offered a variety of presentations that catered to these dual imperatives. In a list disseminated to centers in Senegal and Mauritania, the group proposed lectures on Camara Laye's *L'enfant noir*, Albert Camus' *La Peste*, and talks entitled "Europe, Continent of the Mind," and "Poetry of Black Africa."<sup>40</sup> In essence, the centers sought to accomplish two tasks: to bind Africans to France and to offer opportunities for African cultural expression within the context of French culture, not as a separate entity.

For many young Africans in AOF, the "Franco-African" space represented by the Cultural Centers was perceived as nothing more than a ruse to maintain political control. Urban youth, especially as represented by the federal *Conseil de Jeunesse de l'AOF*, began pressing for change in the management and target audience of the centers as early as 1955; principally by changing as many as possible to "Houses of Youth and Culture," as they were named in the metropole, rather than cultural centers. Many politically engaged young people, including Alioune Paye, the leader of the RDA youth movement in Senegal (the RJDA), argued that the centers were merely another weapon in the arsenal used to alienate young Africans from their culture and divert them from their political destiny.<sup>41</sup> Here, young people refused the supposedly fluid cultural context established by the French, and clearly differentiated French and African cultural concerns and political ends. Indeed, it was young Africans' insistence on the irreconcilability of French control and African expression that made this group a growing concern for both the French government and American diplomats in AOF.

Ultimately, the arguments made by Senegalese youth for the conversion of cultural centers into youth and cultural houses were successful. As early as 1955, the Governor of Senegal had noted that the administration found itself in a "precarious" position as a consequence of the "Marxist agitation" against the centers. This agitation, was not in itself "Marxist," but was primarily articulated by the RJDA—an organization that espoused communist ideas. The Governor of Senegal believed that direct intervention would merely alienate the "extremists" further and that there was no viable opposition from young people themselves. Furthermore, the Youth Centers which did exist had seemingly confirmed the administration's worse fears as they frequently attracted radical groups like the RJDA, who then used them as places for political organization.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, the political repercussions of not bowing to young peoples' demands were deemed greater than submitting to them. In January of 1956, the first African *Maison des Jeunes et de la Culture* was inaugurated in Dakar. It included a library of over 500 books, a games room, as well as basketball and volleyball courts. The director announced that in its first three months of operation between three and four hundred young people had come to the House, of whom 90% came from the Medina and 99% were Africans. Thus the clientele of these new facilities was far from what the elites envisaged for the cultural centers. Circulars sent out by the

*Conseil de Jeunesse* in Senegal in 1957 praised the administration's "understanding" and simultaneously celebrated this victory against Cornut-Gentille's "paternalist" cultural centers.<sup>43</sup>

As this battle over the goals of the centers raged on between young Africans and the colonial administration, American diplomatic staff increasingly saw these institutions as ideal locations for film screenings in an environment that would be non-threatening to French administrators. Ferguson was quick to observe the importance of these centers to the French imperial mission and he remarked upon the absolute urgency with which they were being pursued by the French government. Reporting to the state department in 1954, he explained that the High Commissioner of AOF, Cornut-Gentille, had ordered the eight territorial governors in "extraordinarily strong language to see that the program was carried out immediately...needless to say cultural centers are appearing as if by magic at the moment." Ferguson remarked upon the increasing need for French officials to reach African youth, adding that this need explained why territorial administrators, such as the Governor of Dahomey, viewed USIA films as "the ideal teaching media for large groups of Africans."<sup>44</sup> During the 1950s, several other Governors enthusiastically embraced the use of USIA films, particularly on health and educational subjects, in the new Cultural Centers.

However, an American plan to open its own Cultural Center in 1958—operating outside the French cultural orbit—was another matter entirely. In a confidential letter, Lucien Paye, the rector of Dakar's *Institut des Hautes Etudes*, informed the High Commissioner of AOF that American means were "powerful" and that their influence on African youth should be monitored.<sup>45</sup> When this note was passed onto the Ministry of Overseas France, the following message was added: "While French influence and culture in AOF does not appear threatened, at least not in the immediate future, it must remain the object of our vigilant preoccupation..."<sup>46</sup> At the opening of the American Cultural Center in 1958, local American officials believed that such cultural "vigilance" was being mobilized in order to thwart the American presence in AOF. Although the center was eventually popular among local French and African populations, it was initially greeted by what the consul general euphemistically described as a "second coat of paint" and local newspapers reported as the work of young African graffiti artists.<sup>47</sup> The American Consulate interpreted these actions as just the latest in a long line of French-

sanctioned anti-American actions which had gathered pace in the late 1950s following Dien Bien Phu, the outbreak of the Algerian War, and American intervention in the Suez Crisis.

In this case it seems unlikely that the graffiti was officially approved given the context of a youth movement increasingly intent on contesting the presence of foreign "cultural centers" in general. In fact, the American suspicion of French involvement in this incident was again suggestive of the imaginative failings of a US diplomatic corps that could not recognize an autonomous political statement on the part of young Africans. Nonetheless, the later 1950s did see a rise in French verbal attacks on the United States in AOF. This increase was a consequence of the threat the United States appeared to pose to France globally, but was also precipitated by regional events. By 1957, American sympathy to the Algerian cause appeared to be growing, and that same year Vice-President Richard Nixon visited newly-independent Ghana which bordered AOF. Here he spoke of the bright future of independent Africa and promised a greater American presence on the continent. The following year the vice-President's pledge was made concrete with the creation of a Bureau of African Affairs within the state department.<sup>48</sup> The French response to this perceived American interference in colonial matters was to label it as a new kind of pernicious imperialism and promptly banned film footage of the visit from AOF's cinemas. Nixon's Africa bureau and the American cultural centers were interpreted as further evidence of the American cultural and political attempt to dominate West Africa.

U.S. Ambassador Mallory Browne had begun to send reports of growing anti-American sentiment in AOF back to the State Department at the end of 1956. In November of that year a French newspaper in Dakar, *L'indépendant*, published a full-page article attacking the anti-colonialist position of the US, and accusing them of denouncing Britain and France (a reference, no doubt, to American interventions in the Suez crisis) in order to benefit themselves from colonial territory for raw materials and minerals. Browne attributed great significance to the publication because it was the first major anti-American article for over a year and suggested a wave of opposition in AOF which was reflective of a larger upsurge within France itself.<sup>49</sup> Such perceptions were seemingly confirmed when the High Commissioner for AOF referred to the United States and the Soviet Union as "twin Imperialisms" in a 1957 radio address.<sup>50</sup>



Compounding the claim that the U.S. was acting as an expansionist nation (the very claim that the United States made against their Soviet enemy) was a related charge that had specific ramifications for American policy in Africa. French officials often spoke of the hypocrisy of American action to promote democracy in Africa when African-American citizens remained persecuted within the United States. Indeed, "hypocrisy" was the charge most frequently levied by French administrators against their American counterparts. In his reports to the Minister of Overseas France throughout the 1950s, the French Ambassador in Washington commented frequently on race relations in the United States—an interest which implicitly and sometimes explicitly led to comments about the double-standards of American anti-colonialism.<sup>51</sup> In formulating their country plan for AOF and in Africa more generally, the USIE had struggled with the best means of addressing the "negro problem," eventually concluding that like anti-communism it should be a category of material that was avoided altogether.<sup>52</sup>

Despite this avoidance by the USIE, the State department took a more proactive stance by organizing tours by "expert" individuals in French West Africa. Specially selected African-American scholars who visited the federation under this program often emphasized the progress made by the Civil Rights movement. In February 1953, for example, Dr. Frank Martin Snowden, Director of Classical Studies at Howard University, addressed an audience of approximately 120 Africans and 80 Europeans at the *Institut Français de l'Afrique Noire* in Dakar. Dr. Snowden spoke about the great progress that had been made in the United States since the Civil War and emphasized that although there were some contradictions between the "democratic principles" of the Federal government and "everyday life" in the South, the situation was not as bad as many people had been led to believe.<sup>53</sup>

However, a visit to the territory by Josephine Baker at the end of the 1950s undermined the State Department's message that domestic race relations were improving. Born in St. Louis, Missouri, Baker famously left for France at a young age to perform on the Parisian stage and take advantage of a more congenial racial atmosphere.<sup>54</sup> By the 1950s, having served France during World War II, Baker had obtained French citizenship and embarked on a global tour, which included a stop in Dakar, during which she drew attention to continued racial persecution within the United States.

According to U.S. Ambassador Browne, Baker's visit to Dakar in 1957 gave unexpected impetus to the "anti-American press campaign being waged in West Africa through the local press, with the tacit approval if not material support...of the French government... ." Indeed, she clearly echoed the dominant concerns of the French colonial regime. Browne then continued: "Especially taken to task was American aid for underdeveloped areas which, in the words of Miss Baker, was merely a cloak to disguise the real twin motives of the United States: cultural domination of the populations and the economic exploitation of their lands." The performer consistently linked this new form of imperialism to continued discrimination against African-Americans, describing vice-President Nixon's recent visit to Africa as a forerunner of "the dire things that would befall Africans" if left to the United States with its "lynchings and double standards where black people are involved."<sup>55</sup> As Mary Dudziak has written, Baker could not be controlled in the same way as other African-American performers who spoke out against U.S. racism in the early Cold War because she traveled on a French passport.<sup>56</sup> It was both Baker's Frenchness and Americanness which empowered her as simultaneously an "outsider" and an "insider" in AOF.

Baker's visit to AOF and Nixon's to Ghana occurred within months of each other, highlighting the United States' ambiguous relationship to West Africa as it entered the era of independence, as well as the potency of mutual Franco-American suspicion that veered on paranoia. As the French Union became a short-lived Community in 1958, this concern showed no signs of abating, with reports from Dakar to the U.S. State Department confirming that French administrators were warning African workers to stay away from the American Consulate staff. By the end of the 1950s, the amorphous threat of American culture in the territory had become more pernicious in French eyes; there was a real chance that newly independent African nations would align politically with the United States rather than their former colonial ruler.

## Capturing Hearts and Minds: Students and the Communist Threat

As colonial ties weakened, young Africans appeared to pose the most direct threat to the maintenance of continued French influence AOF. Discussions over the prevalence of Hollywood movies and the prospect of American Cultural Centers revealed that the places that attracted young people were highly suspicious,

particularly where the dominance of French culture might be challenged. This cultural concern was complicated by political factors, and particularly by the (often exaggerated) claim in both France and the United States that these young people were also those most likely to align themselves with communist politics. American diplomats and French officials employed cautious and sustained attempts to secure the goodwill of the small number of young, educated Africans who officials believed to be the key to future influence in West African states. Their efforts to attain the loyalty of a particular section of the colonized population indicate the high stakes involved in this battle for hearts and minds, a battle which became wider than Cold War alignments, striking at the core of both nation's futures on the African continent.

For France, the most controversial and troubling element of the USIS program in AOF was the suggestion that young Africans travel to the United States for periods of study. American officials in Dakar were completely aware of this French reticence, with Jester reporting to the State Department that such American-sponsored programs were "Probably the most touchy subject of all...in FWA, this subject is scarcely to be mentioned if USIS is to ingratiate itself on an acceptable basis."<sup>57</sup> While educational exchanges were one of the cornerstones of the USIS program globally, few Africans from AOF were able to participate because of concerns that they would fall under the influence of American anti-colonial activists. As "proof" of this possibility, French officials frequently cited the experience of Ghanaian nationalist Kwame Nkrumah, who had studied in the United States before leading the Gold Coast into independence, concluding in one report that "the development of independent states in West and East Africa has been accelerated by Africans educated in America."<sup>58</sup>

French colonial officials were not prepared to risk the prospect of another "Nkrumah" returning to AOF, radicalized by American influence. But as U.S. officials recognized early in the 1950s, the French fear was not confined to American influence. Increasingly, French colonial officials were ambivalent about sending African students to metropolitan French universities, fearing an anti-colonialism grounded not in the democratic principles and revolutionary history espoused by the United States, but rather in the anti-Western stance of communist politics:

The great majority of French officials here appear convinced...that certain American educational institutions have preached African nationalism. Many French are even doubtful of the desirability of sending Africans to France for their education and prefer creating greater educational opportunities on the spot in the Overseas Territories where Africans can obtain appropriate education without being subjected to harmful influences, particularly communist, which seek them out in the Metropole."<sup>59</sup>

At one level this observation perfectly captured the French perspective—an increasing feeling of unease with any form of overseas education, which in turn helps to explain the creation of the University of Dakar by the French in 1958, their first sub-Saharan African University. At the same time, this analysis revealed American willingness to buy into the colonial language of an easily duped African youth and their susceptibility to "harmful influences" when it suited the American anti-communist enterprise. Similar claims had earlier led to the conclusion that communist influences on African students in France was likely to become more of a problem and potentially require US intervention in European France rather than in Africa.<sup>60</sup>

French politicians were therefore conflicted about the value of increasing the number of African students within the hexagon. According to the Minister of National Education, only by training "as great a number as possible...in our faculties" could African loyalties to France be guaranteed, as Francophone universities in Africa would not remain exclusively aligned with the former metropole.<sup>61</sup> However, the postcolonial presence of African students in France also had unforeseen and ironic repercussions on the attempt to secure the loyalty of African governments. In 1961, Maurice Herzog, who would go on to be Secretary of State for Youth and Sports in France, wrote a note to the Prime Minister on French-speaking African students.<sup>62</sup> The note responded specifically to a request from the Ivory Coast government asking his office to pass on the information that fifty Ivorian students in France could now go to the United States to study. He had informed the Ivorian Ambassador that the French government would not undertake this task but the episode had forced Herzog to "express his concerns for the future," specifically that most former territories would send their students to

the United States. The exceptions to this were Mali and Guinée, which had the most vehemently anti-colonial leaders and the most connections to communist politics and yet continued to want their elite trained in France. Herzog explained:

This paradoxical fact should not escape us. The more African governments distance themselves from the Western world the more they continue to send their students to Paris. The more they remain pro-Western, the more they remain close to France, the more they have the tendency to flee French universities. It is a fact, in my opinion, that the majority of African political leaders do not want their students to return to lead political agitation against the current political elite.<sup>63</sup>

Against the backdrop of the Cold War worry of Herzog was that the relative tolerance for communist politics in France and the continued threat of student radicalization there was forcing African governments to send their students to other Western nations, and thus out of France's direct sphere of influence. The Director of Cooperation, Stephane Hassel, responded that the phenomenon might be better interpreted as a technical rather than a political issue: the French system was probably better for training the "higher" professions such as doctors and judges, rather than "subaltern" positions like engineers, who were really needed in the new states. Nevertheless, Hassel explained that they had to keep "certain metropolitan political parties" away from African students in France and ensure that material conditions were kept as favorable as possible.<sup>64</sup> The potential communist threat that French-educated students had posed to both France and the United States had now also been transferred to France-friendly independent states with potentially disastrous consequences for Franco-African relations.

American reports on this activity added to French concern. In 1956, the French Ambassador to the United States reported this troubling phenomenon on an US News and World Report article: "if they remained in their home countries, these students would rarely have the opportunity to meet a communist, while in France and notably in Paris, they find themselves in an environment [milieu] where communists are numerous..."

In the late 1950s, American officials revisited the prospect of implementing exchange programs designed to offset this communist influence, and importantly targeted future political leaders as they emerged at the end of the decade. The

"Foreign Leader Program" program established by the American government in 1950 was a global initiative which, through the USIA's country reports, selected local "opinion leaders" for a three-to-four month period of stay in the United States. The explicit aim of these grants could scarcely have been more in conflict with French goals, as they sought to both further cultural and scientific cooperation between the United States and the leader's country of origin and help achieve the ends of American foreign policy. The latter included the conversion of those deemed to be "wavering in their political alignment."<sup>66</sup>

Predictably, French territories were off-limits for this program until the 1956 loi-cadre devolved some political power to the individual territories. Even so, when an American diplomat in Dakar suggested the RDA leader Gabriel D'Arboussier as a recipient for one of the first Leader Grants in the territory in 1958, a hand-written note on the bottom of the telegram commented that it was "too controversial—this year...perhaps a Frenchman..."<sup>67</sup> A more formal response by Secretary of State Dulles approved Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow—Senegalese Minister of Education and Culture—and Ernest Boca, Minister of Education for the Ivory Coast for leader grants, but reiterated that d'Arboussier was a "controversial personality," suggesting that the third grant go to the (white) Frenchmen Theodore Monod, the director of the Institut Francaise d'Afrique Noire in Dakar or Lucien Paye, President of the University of Dakar.<sup>68</sup>

Boca and Mbow were precisely the kinds of potential "opinion shapers" the leader program sought to target. The nomination for Boca focused on his education in France, which qualified him as "one of the first of that new generation of leaders...who will represent the new elite in the future... He can be expected to exert considerable influence in the future development of the details of legal and constitutional arrangements between this territory, other territories and the Metropole."<sup>69</sup> By 1958, as independence seemed a likely possibility, the American diplomatic corps turned their attention away from careful dealings with France and instead focused on this new group of leaders who represented "a sort of bridge between the older political leaders...and the younger leaders who have already started to assume power."<sup>70</sup> French officials were notified about American selections for Leader Grants, but this did not imply any form of French control over the grantees.

Preparations for M'Bow's stay in the United States revealed too that dances around French cultural preoccupations had metamorphosized into crude attempts at cultural sensitivity toward their African successors. M'Bow, who would become Senegal's Minister of Education at independence in 1960 and later lead UNESCO, was described by the Consul General in 1958 as lighter-skinned than the "typical Senegalese" and "much easier imagined in a Paris salon than in an African village of the interior."<sup>71</sup> A later note from the Consulate General in Dakar advised the State Department about appropriate behavior for the upcoming visit: "[M'Bow] should not be asked to wear his native robes because there are none in Senegal for men. Neither should he be asked to sing native songs or dances [sic] because he probably knows neither! He is Moslem by religion but does not wear this piously. He refuses alcoholic beverages, preferring fruit juice and probably would not relish eating pork."<sup>72</sup> M'Bow's visit in the summer and fall of 1958 was politically and culturally instructive for his American hosts. Commentators noted his impressive demeanor and observation that political change had happened much quicker than he envisaged in AOF, with independence only being a short step away. He explained, to great interest, that English was now compulsory in Senegal's secondary schools, a curriculum fueled by the nationalist conviction that there would one day be a United States of West Africa.<sup>73</sup> Reportedly charming all those he met, M'Bow also enquired about possible United States technical aid to Senegal and the provision of educational materials to schools in the territory.<sup>74</sup> Given that Senegal continued to be a territory of AOF, these initial overtures toward the United States were seen as positive indicators by American diplomats but could not yet receive an official response.

Both of these Leader Grantees had been educated in France prior to their journeys to the United States—M'Bow at the Sorbonne and Boca at the University of Grenoble. Indeed, it was precisely because of these men's connections to French politics and culture that they were attractive candidates to the American Consulate General in Dakar. Their status as *évolués* meant that they were sufficiently "Westernized" to act as conduits for American interests. As American discussions with the "socialist" M'Bow indicate, these grants were about more than containing the spread of communist politics. Indeed, the American Ambassador to France produced a vehement argument for American exchange programs with French sub-Saharan Africa because of the future role the United States wished to play on the continent: "Even in the absence of the communist effort, it would be highly desirable that means be made available for these future

leaders of independent or autonomous African countries to have direct contact with the United States."<sup>75</sup> While Cold War political divisions aligned French and American efforts to guide the political affiliations of African young people, they were simultaneously divided by their attempts at engineering specific loyalties to their own nation-states.

## Conclusion

The American challenge to the French presence in West Africa represented a clear blow to the sentiment that underpinned the colonial mission: the idea not only that the uncivilized African could be brought into Western modernity but that they could specifically be cultured as Frenchmen and women. What seemed apparent to American eyes in the era of decolonization is that France had not succeeded in either of these tasks. Moreover, the demands of impending independence prompted Ambassador Browne to reflect on the kinds of adaptation required by the vast population of AOF:

The area, which is almost two-thirds the size of the United States, contains some 18 million people, the overwhelming majority of whom are suddenly finding themselves precipitated almost overnight into twentieth century life from Stone Age primitivism. Perhaps few areas in the world today offer so much human raw material—and we mean raw—that needs the benefits of a modern education can provide if they are to survive in this hopped-up age. They are not going to be able to cope with the demands of a frenzied modern world by applying Stone Age techniques, the only techniques known to them.<sup>76</sup>

Again, Browne adopted a form of colonial rhetoric, insisting that Africans were not yet prepared to make the great leap into Western modernity. At the same time, this statement employed a racial discourse also prevalent in the United States, a reminder of the immense and potentially insurmountable distance between First and emerging Third World, between white and black. Nonetheless, given French reticence, which Browne characterized as an "almost pathological fear" of educational exchanges, he instead proposed cultural activities which would both enlighten Dakar and assuage French distaste for American culture symbolized by the Hollywood film:



This French attitude might be broken down through gentle, successive and carefully considered cultural exchanges. This area is particularly barren culturally. Years at a time go by without the appearance of a single concert performer, much less that of a ballet or opera company, an orchestra or orchestral group, theatrical company or art exhibit. While it is apparent that the demand for any of these things is virtually non-existent, their appearance here could not help but jar this city particularly, but also any area in which they performed, out of its cultural apathy and intellectual indifference.

It was precisely this kind of cultural intervention, at once a suggestion that French colonial culture was not enough and that it could and should be supplanted, that the French wanted to avoid at all costs.

When independence occurred, it was clear that American diplomats understood the French outlook quite well. In preparation for a series of talks on Franco-American relations in Africa during the early 1960s, the American delegation drafted a statement on the anticipated French position by reflecting on the years running up to decolonization:

The traditional French attitude has been one of welcoming US financial participation in major economic development projects; of some reserve toward US technical assistance, depending on its form; and of distinct coldness toward any US assistance in cultural fields.<sup>17</sup>

The report concluded that the French had expressed willingness to see the United States play a more active role in the region "except in cultural matters" and that the US should attempt to allay French fears that "we are engaged in 'cultural imperialism'." "Culture," the mainstay of the French civilizing mission, remained the key to French influence in West Africa after independence. Therefore, American cultural intervention in the region—a key part of that nation's Cold War Strategy—was seen as a general menace to French prestige and a specific threat to continued French influence on the African continent.

The geopolitical stakes of a significant presence in West Africa were not solely based on Cold War concerns; both countries looked at the region with visions of their own future national interests. The "new relationship" produced between France and the former AOF post-independence had to be founded upon cultural affinity, with the French retaining control of areas such as Higher Education well into the 1960s. Decolonization supposedly forced France to acknowledge that its culture was not universal, but as Naomi Schor intimates, the idea of a Francophone commonwealth "built on the ruins of the French colonial Empire" has allowed the idea of cultural universalism to live on through the very events that supposedly signified its demise.<sup>78</sup>

French postcolonial intervention in Africa was a concrete means of maintaining this fiction of cultural universalism and global political power. As Donal Cruise O'Brien argues, French investment in its former colonies could never be justified for purely economic reasons, and rather was a way of maintaining "French national prestige."<sup>79</sup> The neo-colonial relationship that was a clear outgrowth of this has led several scholars and political commentators to reframe Félix Houphouët-Boigny's positive incarnation of the relationship *Françafrique* in a more cynical light—often as *France à fric*. One consequence of this has been to shed light on French machinations in various African countries, including French support of corrupt leaders and implication in the Rwandan genocide.<sup>80</sup> Even in the 1960s, it was clear that much of this investment was about being seen to have power; an American journalist commented on the luxuries of Houphouët-Boigny's palace in the Ivorian capital in 1964: "The French government spends \$50 million a year on aid to its former colony in order to make Abidjan a showcase of French influence."<sup>81</sup>

If the imperial enterprise was the clearest demonstration of French political and cultural power in the nineteenth and twentieth century, the specter of Americanization was the major threat to this power. Moreover, there was a direct link between the French colonial mission and the ubiquitous references to the United States as an unstoppable imperial power. As their own Empire collapsed in the post World-War Two period, the French frequently referred to themselves as being "colonized" by the United States. Some leaders of the African youth movement capitalized on this appearance of French weakness, with one

representative of the student movement in Dakar declaring in front of a crowd of 200 that the United States was a special kind of colonial country because it possessed only one colony: France.<sup>82</sup>

For French commentators, the most offensive aspect of the American global presence was its denial of imperialist characteristics; as Philippe Roger puts it, "it was the ultimate trick of the most modern of imperialisms, in their eyes, to pretend not to be an empire."<sup>83</sup> Roger's observation was borne out in the cultural clashes between France and the United States in AOF, but here French administrators interpreted American anti-Imperialist pronouncements and diplomatic endeavors not just as a "modern imperialism" but as an inferior version, less committed than their own. Hollywood films, American cultural centers, and exchange programs were threats within metropolitan France in the fifteen years after World War Two, but in West Africa these threats were magnified by the possibilities of independence and also what both great powers viewed as a backward, "easily duped" population.

At the same time, both French and American reports on local responses to their cultural projects—from the tearing of the flags, to the applause at anti-colonial cinema and the graffiti on the cultural center—reveals African politics that remained all-but "invisible" to Western onlookers. French anxiety and American cautious determination exposed the racial suppositions underpinning each nation's overseas policies while their fraught attempts to use cultural tools to consolidate national power unwittingly captured the failings of the imperialist enterprise.

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## Footnotes

- <sup>1.</sup> The federation of AOF was composed of the present day countries of Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal.
- <sup>2.</sup> American Consul General, Dakar (hereafter AMCONGEN) to State Department, August 5, 1950, 511.51t/8-550, 3, Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park MD. (hereafter cited as RG59, NARA).
- <sup>3.</sup> AMCONGEN, Dakar to State Department, August 5, 1950, 511.51t/8-550, 15, RG59, NARA.
- <sup>4.</sup> Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French: the Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) 21, 24.

**5.** See, for example, Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies; Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996); Kuisel, *Seducing the French*, Christopher Endy, *Cold War Holidays: American Tourism in France* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004) and Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

**6.** I employ John Hargreaves' definition of decolonization, which he describes as "measures intended to terminate formal political control over colonial territories and to replace it with some new relationship." John D. Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa* (New York: Longman, 1996), xvii.

**7.** This is despite the fact that the racial ideology of the collaborative Vichy regime in AOF was little different from the pre-World War II incarnation of French colonial rule. Ruth Ginio, *French Colonialism Unmasked: The Vichy Years in French West Africa* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

**8.** Quoted in Joseph Roger de Benoist, *L'Afrique Occidentale Française de 1944 à 1960* (Dakar: Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1982), 25.

**9.** Raymond Betts, *France and Decolonisation, 1900-1960* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 60.

**10.** Albert Sarraut, Bulletin d'information, *Cercle de la Metropole et d'Outre Mer*, February 21 1952, Archives Nationales du Sénégal, Dakar (hereafter ANS) 18G 207. Sarraut published the foundational work calling for increased investment in the colonies—as they then were—in the interwar period: *La mise en valeur des colonies françaises*, Paris: Payot, 1923. He was at that time Minister of Colonies. In 1951, he was appointed president of the Assembly of the French Union.

**11.** The French loi-cadre of 1956 was the most prominent moment of this devolution; providing greater self-rule but also putting individual territories into competition with each other for French funds. This act, according to African leaders such as Leopold Sedar Senghor, constituted a deliberate "balkanization" of AOF—leading to individual countries that remained dependent upon France. Historians continue to debate the meaning of the loi-cadre, with Frederick Cooper and Tony Chafer essentially agreeing that it was a deliberate attempt at balkanization and thus a foreshadowing of neocolonialism; Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France's Successful Decolonization?* (New York and Oxford: Berg, 2002). James E. Genova's assessment implies that the law's implementation essentially marked the end of French rule in sub-Saharan Africa, *Colonial Ambivalence, Cultural Authenticity, and the Limitations of Mimicry in French-Ruled West Africa, 1914-1956* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004). Alexander Keese traces the internal debates about the prospect of sweeping reform in sub-Saharan Africa, arguing that a complete lack of consensus indicates that the law was a much less deliberate strategy than Cooper and Chafer state; indeed, Keese explains that French officials believed African elites *wanted* the dissolution of the AOF as a federation. Keese, "Quelques satisfactions d'amour-propre: African elite integration, the Loi-cadre, and involuntary decolonisation of French Tropical Africa," *Itinerario*, 27, 1 (2003).

**12.** Wilson P. Dizard Jr., *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the United States Information Agency* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers 2004), 5.

**13.** USIE Country Paper on French West Africa: Suggested Revisions, AMCONGEN Dakar to Department of State April 26, 1950 (Original Paper dated April 5), 511.51T/4-2650, RG59, NARA.

**14.** Jane Ellis, Semi-Annual USIE report for the period ending November 30, 1950, AMCONGEN to State Department, January 11 1951, 511.51t/1-1151, RG59, NARA.

**15.** Perry N. Jester to State Department, January 7, 1952, 511.51T/1-752, RG59, NARA.

**16.** The "Point IV program" was announced in Truman's inaugural address of 1949. It aimed to provide American aid for the "underprivileged peoples of the earth" and was implemented especially through technical assistance programs.

**17.** Note interne, Ministère de la F.O.M., March 1, 1954, "La Neo-Colonisation Americaine," Centre des Archives d'Outremer, Aix-en-Provence, France, Affaires Politiques (Hereafter CAOM AP) 2183/5.

**18.** See for example notes to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Africa-Levant section) from the French Ambassador to the United States: "Evolution des esprits à l'égard du problème colonial," July 27, 1956, CAOM AP/2183/6 and Secret note for the Director of Political Affairs at the Ministry of Overseas France stating that the American public is very sensitive to

colonial questions and has a great influence on the American government, May 6, 1950, CAOM AP/2224/3.

**19.** Anonymous note: "La coopération Européene en Afrique," n.d. (1952?), CAOM AP/2316/4.

**20.** Ministère de la Défense au Ministère des Affaires étrangères, May 22, 1953, CAOM AP/2224/3.

**21.** Ambassador of France to the United States, confidential note in preparation for a conference on Africa with the United States, n.a., n.d, CAOM AP/2224/3.

**22.** Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century*, Europe (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006). Uta Poiger, *Jazz, Rock and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) and Ross, *Fast Cars*.

**23.** Bulletin du Conseil Economique de l'AOF, troisième année no.34, October 26, 1949, CAOM AP/2149.

**24.** Rapport de l'ACTOM, May 1960, Centre des Archives Contemporaines, Fontainebleau, France (hereafter CAC) 19780596/73.

**25.** Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 7.

**26.** Circulaire confidentiel: Gouverneur Général aux gouverneurs des territoires d'AOF n.d. (1954), ANS 21G 190.

**27.** Télégramme: Gouverneur Général au Ministre de la F.O.M., December 14, 1954, ANS 21G 190. On several occasions French administrators interpreted such audience approval for scenes of French defeat as evidence that African population did *not* understand what they were viewing.

**28.** Gouverneur de la Côte d'Ivoire au Gouverneur Général, February 4, 1955, ANS 21G 193.

**29.** CCC du Sénégal, rapport du octobre 1954, ANS 21G 195.

**30.** "Alterte au cinéma," *Jeunesse d'Afrique*, no.13, February 1957.

**31.** RJDA "Rapport moral" n.d., [1956] ANS 21G 213.

**32.** USIA, Office of Research and Analysis, July, 1961, *The Impact of Hollywood Films Abroad*, 3, Program and Media Studies -50 (1956-1962), RG 306, NARA.

**33.** J. Vaughan Ferguson Jr. AMCONGEN Dakar to State Department, July 16 1954, RG59 NARA, 51.51T/7-1754.

**34.** Information program in West Africa, AMCONGEN Dakar to State Department, July 17, 1954, RG59 NARA 511.51T/6-2955.

**35.** This absence is all the more striking given the hundreds of thousands of dollars the French government spent on propaganda designed to influence American audiences during the Algerian War. See Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution*, 128.

**36.** On the metropolitan Cultural Centers see Richard Jobs, *Riding the New Wave: Youth and the Rejuvenation of France after the Second World War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

**37.** Serge Nedelec, "Les centres culturels en AOF: ambitions et échec de la politique culturelle coloniale française," in Charles Becker, Saliou Mbaye and Ibrahima Thioub, eds., *AOF: réalités et héritages societes ouest-africaines et ordre colonial, 1895-1960 -Tome II*, (Dakar: Direction des Archives du Senegal, 1997), 761.

**38.** "Evolués" was the French term for those Africans who had achieved a certain level of education, often in France. In the colonial lexicon they were those who had "evolved."

**39.** Listings of the films shown can be found in ANS O 657; journal subscriptions are detailed in ANS O 656.

**40.** Gouverneur Général aux Gouverneurs du Sénégal et de la Mauritanie, March 30, 1956, ANS O 657.

- 41.** Alioune Paye, "Rapport Moral du RJDA," February 22, 1956, ANS 21G 211. On the critique of the centers also see Amadou N'Dene N'Daw, Vice President du CJS, "Centres Culturels ou Maisons de Jeunes?" *Jeunesse Liaison: Bulletin Mensuel de des Associations Membres du Conseil de la Jeunesse du Sénégal*, n.d. (1954?), ANS O 671.
- 42.** Gouverneur du Sénégal au Gouverneur Général, Confidential a/s Centres Culturels, March 14, 1955, ANS O 657.
- 43.** Conseil de la Jeunesse du Sénégal, December 17, 1956, ANS 17G 612.
- 44.** Vaughan Ferguson Jr. AMCONGEN to State Department, July 17, 1954, 51.51T/7-1754, RG59, NARA.
- 45.** Lucien Paye au Haut Commissaire d'AOF, January 15, 1958, CAC 19770641/8.
- 46.** Gouverneur Général au Ministre de la F.O.M., 25 janvier 1958, CAC 19770641/8.
- 47.** Donald Dumont AmConGen Dakar to Mrs Ona B Forrest, UN Economic Affairs NYC, August 28, 1958 "Our new Cultural Center was opened on Avenue de la République on Monday the 18th, and the following day some local artists manifested their support of U.S. cultural endeavors by giving a second coat of paint to the exterior of the premises." Bureau of African Affairs, West Africa Country Files 1951-1963, Senegal NARA and *Paris-Dakar*, August 30 1958.
- 48.** New York Times, April 7, 1957, CAOM AP/2183/6.
- 49.** "Article attacking United States anti-colonial policy illustrates increased anti-American sentiment," AMCONGEN Dakar to State Department, November 21, 1956, 61151T/11-2156, RG59, NARA.
- 50.** Discussions with French officials on anti-Americanism, AMCONGEN to Department of State, June 27, 1957 611.51T/6-2758, RG59, NARA.
- 51.** See note on absence of African-Americans in American anti-colonial youth movement, November 8, 1958, CAOM, AP/2183/6.
- 52.** "USIE Semi-Annual Evaluation Report for Period Ending May 31, 1952," M. Williams Blake, AMCONGEN Dakar to State Department, 511.51T/7-252, RG59, NARA. This USIE decision in AOF was reflective of a wider concern about how domestic race relations would compromise the US mission overseas. A significant body of research has recently traced the connections between the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement, revealing that discrimination was thought to be excellent material for communist propaganda. See, for example, Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) and Azza Salama Layton, *International Politics and Civil Rights Policies in the United States* (Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 2000). In AOF, as French reports made clear, it was French officials, as much as communist agitators, who sought to highlight the inconsistencies of American democracy.
- 53.** AMCONGEN Dakar to State Department, February 25, 1953, 511.51T3/2-255, RG59, NARA.
- 54.** Baker's extraordinary life has been much-studied. See Jules-Rosette Bennetta, *Josephine Baker in Art and Life: The Icon and the Image* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007).
- 55.** Anti-American Propaganda in French West Africa, AMCONGEN Dakar to State Department, June 7, 1957, 611.51T/6-757, RG59, NARA.
- 56.** Mary Dudziak, "Josephine Baker, Racial Protest and the Cold War," *Journal of American History*, Vol.81, No.2 (September 1994), pp. 543-570.
- 57.** Jester, AMCONGEN Dakar to State Department, June 3, 1950, 5, 511.51T/6-350 RG59, NARA.
- 58.** Annex du SDECE [Service de la Documentation Extérieure et du Contre-Espionnage], Secret note de l'information, "Vues de l'American Assembly sur l'Afrique," November 8, 1958, CAOM AP/2183/6.
- 59.** AMCONGEN Dakar to State Department, July 1, 1954, 511.51T3/10-154, RG59, NARA.
- 60.** AMCONGEN Dakar to State Department, January 7, 1952, 2, 511.51T/1-752, RG59, NARA.
- 61.** Verbier, Ministère de l'Education Nationale, Note à l'attention de M.Capdecombe, Directeur Général de

l'Enseignement Supérieur, March 29, 1961, CAC 19770510/1.

**62.** Maurice Herzog, Haut Commissaire de la Jeunesse et aux sports, note pour le Premier Ministre, June 1, 1961, CAC 19770508/53.

**63.** Maurice Herzog, Haut Commissaire de la Jeunesse et aux sports, note pour le Premier Ministre, June 1, 1961, CAC 19770508/53.

**64.** Hassel à Didier, June 28, 1961, CAC 19770508/53.

**65.** French Ambassador to Pineau, February 3, 1956 CAOM 1AP/2183/6.

**66.** On the Leader Program see Giles Scott Smith "Building a Community around the Pax Americana: the US Government and Exchange Programs in the 1950s," in Helen Lavelle and Hugh Wilford eds. *The US Government, Citizen Groups and the Cold War: The State-Private Network* (Oxford and New York, Routledge, 2006), pp. 93-96.

**67.** Donald Dumont, AMCONGEN Dakar to State Department, March 18, 1958, 511.51T/3-1858, RG59, NARA.

**68.** Dulles to AMCONGEN Dakar, March 18, 1958, 511.51T/3-1858, RG59, NARA. D'Arboussier was eventually approved for the 1959 Leader Grant Program, Lucien Paye took the third spot in 1958.

**69.** Candidate for Foreign Leader Grant under Public Law 402: Mr. Ernest Boka, AMCONGEN Dakar to State Department, April 29, 1958 511.51T3/4-2958, RG59, NARA. Boka died in detention in 1963; the Houphouët-Boigny regime claimed it was a suicide.

**70.** Candidate for Foreign Leader Grant under Public Law 402: Mr. Ernest Boka, AMCONGEN Dakar to State Department, April 29, 1958 511.51T3/4-2958, RG59, NARA.

**71.** Candidate for Foreign Leader Grant under Public Law 402: Mr. Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, AMCONGEN Dakar to State Department, April 30, 1958, 511.51T3/4-3058, RG59, NARA.

**72.** Visit to the United States of first US Leader Grantee from FWA, Senegal Minister of Education Amadou Mahtar M'Bow, AMCONGEN Dakar to State Department, August 1, 1958, 511.51T3/8-158, RG59, NARA.

**73.** Department of State Memorandum of Conversation: Amadou Mahtar M'Bow Minister of Education of Senegal and first US Leader Grantee from French West Africa, August 10, 1958, 511.51T3/8-1058, RG59, NARA.

**74.** M'Bow's charm evidently did not endure. As Director-General of UNESCO from 1974-1987, M'Bow championed the "New World Information and Communication Order." This media policy, designed to make global media representation more equitable, suggested limitations being placed on freedom of the press and ultimately precipitated the withdrawal of the United States from UNESCO in 1984. My thanks to the anonymous reviewer for *The Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* for this point.

**75.** John F. Emerson, Counselor of Embassy to State Department, May 16, 1958, 511.5T3/5-1658, RG59, NARA.

**76.** Semi-Annual Report on International Educational Exchange Program, AMCONGEN Dakar to State Department, February 17, 1956 511.5T3/2-1756 RG59, NARA.

**77.** Anticipated French position, Bureau of African Affairs, June 28 and 29, 1961, West African Country Files 1951-1963.

**78.** Naomi Schor, "The Crisis of French Universalism," *Yale French Studies*, No.100, (2001), 45.

**79.** Donald B. Cruise O'Brien, "The Showman and the State in Francophone Africa: the Legacy of Charles de Gaulle," in *Symbolic Confrontations: Muslims Imagining the State in Africa* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 143.

**80.** François-Xavier Verschave, *La Françafrique, le plus long scandale de la République* (Paris: Stock, 1999). More recent works on this subject have questioned the extent to which *Françafrique* continues to exist: Tony Chafer, "Chirac and *la Françafrique*: No longer a Family Affair," *Modern and Contemporary France*, Vol.13, No.1 (February 2005):7-23 and Antoine Glaser and Stephen Smith, *Comment la France a Perdu L'Afrique* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2005).

**81.** "Ivory Coast: Juju Justice," *Time*, April 24, 1964.

**82.** Amady Dieng, "Youth Attitude to the Colonial Problem," February 22, 1956, RJDA Surveillance, ANS 21G 213.

**83.** Philippe Roger, "Cassandra's Policies: French Prophecies of an American Empire from the Civil War to the Cold War," *Journal of European Studies* 38:2 (2008), 101-120. Roger refers to the French image of American Empire as a "layering of panicked discourses." Decolonization furthered this panic.

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