Issues of Decolonization: 
Views from the Colonies

[Case Studies of Settler Colonies]
“Where settlers were many ... the road to independence was soaked in blood.”

[B Davidson, Modern Africa, p. 148]
“Settler Colonies”:

- all colonial powers controlled colonies with large populations of white settlers

- most in Central, East and Southern Africa

- plus Algeria in North African
Local Issues: Settler Societies

Britain:    - Northern, Southern Rhodesia
           - Nyasaland
           - Kenya [see Video, Readings+Resources]

France:    - Algeria [lecture notes, video, film, Resources]

Portugal:  - Angola, Mozambique, Guinea
           Bissau [lecture notes, Case Study]

Belgium:   - Congo [lecture notes, Case Study]
Local Issues: Settler Societies

Issues shaped both by Settler Presence and Economy:

- presence of Europeans ensured frustrations not only ‘legal’ and ‘administrative’ (West Africa) but personal, immediate

- ‘demands’ articulated in context of strongly felt racial discrimination
Local Issues: Settler Societies

Economy:
- most settler colonies, economy based on exploitation commercial agriculture: required alienating Africans from the land

- Congo exception: resources largely mineral, agriculture supported business

- all required forcing Africans to work in European enterprises
Local Issues: Settler Societies

“Issues”:

- return of land

- right to ‘freedom’ (as elsewhere) – including freedom of religion/ideology

- education

- overcoming racial discrimination
Local Issues: Settler Societies

Problem:

- ‘colonizer’ was not only colonial power: local white settlers had their own

- colonial powers facing demands of settlers as well as Africans

- even as Britain, France moved towards decolonization in West African colonies [see lectures Feb. 10, 12], Settlers’ voices elsewhere competing successfully
Belgium, Portugal:
- not considering reforms to colonies at all
- post-war era knew ‘second colonization’

France:
- treated Algeria as exception to other colonies: no intention of letting go
Algeria and Mozambique: Key Common Issues
- resistance led to full-scale civil wars, direct intervention of metropolitan country

- ideology played central role

- international involvement (or potential involvement) catalyst

- ‘colonial war’ played key role in ‘domestic’ politics metropolitan country
Local Issues: Portuguese Colonies

Portugal was itself poor and underdeveloped; 40% of the population was illiterate, the result of over twenty years of fascist dictatorship.

The regime could not afford to be flexible, nor did it have the power to force compromise from African nationalists.
Local Issues: Portuguese Colonies

Regime had Nazi-like Youth movement, to which Church closely allied through State.
Local Issues: Portuguese Colonies

Portuguese policy Post-WWII opposite to decolonization everywhere (except South Africa):

- colonial policies intensified

- large emigration movement encouraged

- settlers provided with land through program land alienation (as earlier in Rhodesia, Kenya)
Local Issues: Portuguese Colonies

Complicated ‘issues’ further:

- African peasants lost extensive land

- population local *mulattoes* and *assimilados* affected

-*Mulattoes*: descendants generations of Portuguese-African ‘mixed’ marriages

-*Assimilados*: Africans adopting Catholicism, speaking Portuguese, moving into middle social ranks
Local Issues: Portuguese Colonies

- older ‘settlers’ (those who had come in the interwar years), local elite: both lost social, economic position vis-à-vis new settlers

- new ‘settler regime’ created (again, like early 20th century Rhodesia, Kenya)

- strongly racist: rejected ‘mixing’ with Africans, discriminated against assimilados, enacted repressive policies
Local Issues: Portuguese Colonies

Forced labour continued to be underpin Settler Economy under new emigration of 1950s.

Not until early 1970s was system reformed.
Local Issues: Portuguese Colonies

Picture from 1960s could have been taken 30 or even 40 years earlier!
Under the circumstances:
- resistance to be expected
- Africans being ‘re-colonized’
- local settler society ‘displaced’ and disadvantaged

Between 1961-63, struggle became armed warfare in Mozambique [see Case Study Mar. 19-24] ; also in Angola (and West African Guinea Bissau, though not ‘settler regime’
Local Issues: Algeria

Algeria:

- oldest colony: *Algerie Francaise* since 1830 – colony considered ‘part of France’

- climate, land attracted 1 million settlers (among 7 million Algerians)

- 1950: held 23% best land

- known as ‘*colons*’ and ‘*pieds-noirs*’
Local Issues: Algeria

Colons:

- descendents French settlers (some from 19\textsuperscript{th} c.)

- French citizens, saw themselves as culturally ‘French’, belonging to overseas province;

Postcard (right)

“I am sending you a package to be picked up at the railway station. The babies are doing well; they have just taken a walk by the beach. I shall write you shortly at greater length. Warm kisses to all of you.”

Martha
Local Issues: Algeria

pieds-noirs: (literally ‘black feet’):
- no single European origin
- generally descended from emigrants to Algeria since 19th C. from Spain, Italy, Germany, Malta, other European countries
  - many of Jewish faith, included professionals, small shopkeepers, merchants
  - others laborers, farmers
- spread into throughout Algerian society
- acquired French citizenship, ‘became’ French in Algeria
Algeria:
- fewer racial tensions than some other settler regimes
- Algerian workers, intellectuals moved in and out of France: Berber, Arab cultures
- part of French metropolis: better policed, more military presence
Educated Elite:

- small educated elite formed through colonial education

- in inter-war years constituted body of ‘nationalists’ (similar to groups elsewhere Francophone Africa – e.g. Senegal)
Local Issues: Algeria

- differed to extent that they also identified with larger Arab, Muslim ‘nationalist’ movements stretching across North Africa

- rooted in growing Egyptian nationalist, Muslim identity

- Ideology not contained or defined by colony, regional ethnicity: ISLAM was universal
Local Issues: Algeria

France:

- aligned with *colons’/pieds-noirs* interests

- openly repressed local inhabitants (in Morocco, Tunisia as well)

- colonies turned to United Nations to censure French policies: failed

- French position hardened in face of attempted ‘external’ (UN) interference
Local Issues: Algeria

French let Morocco & Tunisia go: held on to Algeria!

- Resistance in Algeria led by *Front de Liberation National* (FLN)
- issued ‘Proclamation’ 1954 [Resources – Algeria]

- Guerilla warfare and terrorism took place in both countryside and city
War in Countryside

Peasants fleeing War
(left)

Prisoner of War,
farmer’s pig shed
(right)
War in Algiers

Key Battle: Battle of Algiers

- fought in capital city of Algiers 1954-57
- as intended by FLN: brought international attention to situation in Algeria
- immortalized in film of same name made in France, 1967 (directed by Gillo Pontecorvo)
Saadi Yacef *
and
a Brief History
of the
Algerian-French War

[You Tube
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tg_b7CUnXdg
Shown in Class]

* plays himself in film (below)
“The Battle of Algiers”
(1966 - reissued 2003)

[see Algeria, ‘Videos’. Link to full film posted.]

If possible watch 10:00 – 55:00]

Also several readings discussing/pertaining to widely acclaimed and still respected film
War in Algiers

Battle highlights role of Islam:

- defining who was ‘with’ – and who was not ‘with’ -- the liberation movement

- came to define the liberation movement itself ‘values’ and politics
Islam seen by French and *colons/pieds-noirs* as:

- synonymous with resistance (fed into earlier fears, prejudices of ‘Islamic’ revolts)

- with ‘being Arab’ (caricatured in film but relevant nevertheless)

- and with terrorism (this ‘legacy’ lives on…)

[see Resources, Algeria – Videos: ‘Facing the past on the screen’ and ‘Who is really French?’]
Belgium:

- “King Leopold’s Ghost”: title of recent book articulating history of Congo

- harkens back to Conference of Berlin (1884-5), importance of King of Belgium in pushing ‘Scramble for Africa’
Local Issues: Belgium Congo

Colony ‘unique’ in Africa:

- ‘feudal fief’ first of King, then of Government-sanctioned companies

- looked like ‘settler colonies’ elsewhere in that settler community was attracted to manage companies, commercial agriculture

- post-WWII colonization evident
Local Issues: Settler Societies

White European Settlers:
1901  1,187
1910  1928
1920  3,615
1930  17,676
1939  17,536

Post War Influx:
1950  39,006
1955  69,813
1959  88,913
Local Issues: Belgium Congo

- similar in complexity: ‘local settler’ government vs ‘imperial/metropole’ government

- sense that ‘decolonization’ not on horizon

- low level of educational/training provided for Africans
- Spatial segregation (living, working)
- ‘Domestic servant’ situation
- All positions of power in ‘settler’ hands
Local Issues: Belgium Congo

As ‘settler colony”, how well developed was Congo?

- Human Resources very underdeveloped:
  - no African army officers
  - 3 African managers in civil service
  - 30 University Graduates
Local Issues: Belgium Congo

- first Congolese in Belgian universities: 1950s

- first universities in Congo:
  - 1954 (Catholic)
  - 1956 (lay), graduating 16 by the time of independence
Local Issues: Settler Societies

Catholic Cathedral of Jesuit Mission (Lower Congo)
Local Issues: Belgium Congo

Mineral resource industries, well developed:

- copper, gold, tin, cobalt, diamonds, manganese, zinc
- all attracted massive investments from West
- economy dominated by mining:
  70% controlled by Belgian Societe Generale
  (also controlled river and rail transport)
Copper in Katanga

Local Issues: Belgium Congo

Cash crops almost as much product of Western investment as mining:

-35%-40% commercial agriculture: controlled by *Huileries du Congo Belges* (subsidiary Anglo-Dutch Unilever Co. – also active in West Africa)

-dominated palm-oil production
Local Issues: Belgium Congo

Cash crops almost as much product of Western investment as mining: i.e. Cotton

-ran plantations covering hundreds of thousands of acres

-labour varied from poorly paid wage to forced
Local Issues: Settler Societies

African Farmers with Cotton Crop -- 1950s
Local Issues: Settler Societies

African Farmers with Cotton Crop -- 1950s
Local Issues: Settler Societies

African Workers in Belgian Cotton Factory – 1950s
Local Issues: Belgium Congo

Urban Growth: dramatic even by post-war African standards

- mostly workers, many of them migrants

- growth African urban associations, ethnically based

- African newspapers flourished
Overall:
- adjunct to western industrial system
- lacked any indigenous capital or internal capital generating market

[see ‘Belgian Congo, 1950s – newsreel n.d., Readings]
Local Issues: Belgium Congo

Settlers did not demand the semi-autonomy neighbouring colonies did (e.g. Southern Rhodesia): colonialism ‘works’!

- ‘intense’: number white officials, para-military forces, agricultural officers enforcing drastic programmes of compulsory cultivation
Local Issues: Belgium Congo

Anachronistic rhetoric about ‘paternalism’:

- aim to create Middle Class who would eventually attain full citizenship in some form of Belgo-Congolese community

“Cartes de merite civile”: so rarely given out that they became yet another source of grievance
Local Issues: Belgium Congo

Education:
- primary education in hands of Christian Missionaries
- Evangelism successful: 600 Congolese priests, 500 ministers c.1956
- 16 million Congolese: 3 ½ million Catholics; 1 ¾ millions Protestants
Education:

- 1950s: more secular education policies, missionaries rallying converts in support of church

[Excellent novel “Poisonwood Bible”, based on this ‘moment’ although missionary in novel was American. See short excerpt in Resources- Congo]
Local Issues: Belgium Congo

1957 Paper announcing Need for ‘independence plan’ in 30 years:

- hailed in Catholic journal, *Conscience Africaine*

- followed by handful educated Congolese

- included young postal worker, Patrice Lumumba
Local Issues: Belgium Congo

- responded by deferentially requesting that Congolese elite be consulted in drafting plan

- first of Congolese University graduates also emerging 1957/58, engaging with idea
Local Issues: Belgium Congo

The process of ‘decolonization’ as we know it simply did not exist in Belgian Congo.

- 1957 Belgian academic proclaimed independence would have to be prepared for – in 30 years
“...there is something else you should bear in mind and that is:... You cannot serve two masters.”

[from letter from Mau Mau fighters to teacher Karai Njama, cited B Freund, *Contemporary Africa*, p. 167]
Local Issues: Kenya

Post-war era:

- liberalizing of restrictions on African political and union activities (as elsewhere)

- both flourished in Kenya

- union activities: large strikes 1947-50 [see also context of Dakar-Niger Railroad Strike]
Local Issues: Kenya

Kenya African Union (KAU): 1946
- initially led by Harry Thuku (of former Young Kikuyu Association)
- needed more modern, less ethnically based leadership
- Jomo Kenyatta: returning from 17 years in England

[see BBC Story of Africa, “Case Study: Kenya, Resources - ‘Jomo Kenyatta’ for biography]
Kenyatta: toured country to ...  
  - politicize and attract members  
  - overcome ethnic divisions between Kikuyu, Luo, Meru, Masaii  
  - to address disadvantaged groups:  
    landless: principally Kikuyu, based in highlands where settlers concentrated  
    migrant agricultural workers: unemployed in Nairobi, Mombassa
Local Issues: Kenya

Ultimate Goal:
- seeking large enough political base to force negotiation with settler government

Settlers refused:
- sporadic clashes from union, political party activities

- increasing levels of violence
Local Issue: Kenya

KAU leaders arrested:

- 1000s fled to nearby hills, forests: formed “Land and Freedom Army”


- war broke out with guerilla fighters: “Mau Mau” as termed by British
Local Issues: Kenya

Video Presentation:

Basil Davidson
“Africa: Rise of Nationalism”

[YouTube, ‘Additional Readings’
Kenya 16:00 – 22:40]

[For Supporting Material, see also Reid, 275-7 and ‘British Atrocities in Kenya’, Readings; “Kenyatta, ‘KAU is not the Mau Mau’ and BBC Story of Africa: Case Study Kenya, Resources]
Kenyatta: “We are not the Mau Mau”
[see Resources, “Struggles for Independence”]

- compare with “oath” [cited in “Mau Mau from Within: the oath”, Resources]

- army’s “oath” drew on Kikuyu religion: strongly ethnically rooted (Kikuyu main group affected by land losses)

- simultaneously, tried to espouse ‘national’ aims
Local Issues: Kenya

Mau Mau:

- capitalized on white, settler fear of African power and traditional religion: deliberate atrocities committed on isolated farms

- many Africans also drawn in by fear: feared Army’s retribution more than the British!

[“The Oath of Unity” and “The Prophets”, Resources]
Local Issues: Kenya

Mau Mau:

- raided farms, slaughtered animals, threatened settlers [see ‘British Atrocities in Kenya’, Readings]

- lived off supplies from farmers/villages: not always voluntarily provided!

- targeted British administration and police centres: theft of arms and ammunition
Local Issues: Kenya

British response:

- scorch and burn: imprison farmers ‘for own good’ (internment camps)

- ‘Home Guards:’ Africans brought in from other parts of Kenya to police district (fighting took place around Nairobi – guerillas set up camps in surrounding hills)

- Samburu nomadic pastoralists ‘recruited’ as guides [see Davidson, ‘Rise of Nationalism – Kenya’]
Local Issues: Kenya

Mau Mau:

- took four years to draw last of fighters from hills

- defeated in large part by hunger

- British sent 100,000 troops and armed police: aerial bomb attacks needed to end war

[see Resources, “The Prophets”]
Local Issues: Kenya

Mau Mau:

- African Deaths: 10-13,000 died; 80,000 kept in detention camps [see ‘Mau Mau Veterans…’ and Mau Mau Torture Case…’ (re: Hola Camp), Resources]

- 32 British died: but financial costs huge

- victory: broke settler power

- Britain forced to negotiate independence in spite of settlers’ aims
Local Issues: Kenya

1960: Kenya African National Union formed

- 1961 Jomo Kenyatta released from prison: formed KANU

- Kenya Africa Democratic Union (formed same time, 1960)

- 1963 coalition (KANU-KADU) won democratic elections, Kenyatta president

[see BBC Story of Africa, Case Study Kenya, Resources – especially audio clips ‘Cheering Crowds’, ‘Independence…’]