

Chapter 24

The end of the European empires

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

At the end of the Second World War in 1945, the nations of Europe still claimed ownership of vast areas of the rest of the world, particularly in Asia and Africa.

- *Britain's Empire was the largest in area*, consisting of India, Burma, Ceylon, Malaya, enormous tracts of Africa and many assorted islands and other territories, such as Cyprus, Hong Kong, the West Indies, the Falkland Islands and Gibraltar.
- *France had the second largest empire*, with territories in Africa, Indo-China and the West Indies. In addition, Britain and France still held land in the Middle East, taken from Turkey at the end of the First World War. Britain held Transjordan and Palestine and France held Syria. They were known as '*mandated territories*', which meant that Britain and France were intended to 'look after' them and prepare them for independence.
- *Other important empires* were those of the Netherlands (Dutch East Indies), Belgium (Congo and Ruanda Urundi), Portugal (Angola, Mozambique and Guinea), Spain (Spanish Sahara, Ifni, Spanish Morocco and Spanish Guinea) and Italy (Libya, Somalia and Eritrea).

Over the next 30 years, remarkable changes took place. By 1975 most of these colonial territories had gained their independence. Sometimes, as in the Dutch and French colonies, they had to fight for it against determined European resistance. The problems involved were often complex; in India there were bitter religious differences to resolve. In some areas – Algeria, Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda and Rhodesia – large numbers of whites had settled, and they were relentlessly hostile to independence, which would place them under black rule. Britain was prepared to grant independence when it was felt that individual territories were ready for it, and most of the new states retained a link with Britain by remaining in the British Commonwealth (a group of former British-controlled nations which agreed to continue associating together, mainly because there were certain advantages to be gained from doing so).

The main British territories which gained independence, sometimes changing their names (new names in brackets), were:

India; Pakistan – 1947

Burma; Ceylon (Sri Lanka) – 1948

Transjordan (Jordan) – 1946; Palestine – 1948 (see Sections 11.1–2)

Sudan – 1956

Malaysia; Gold Coast (Ghana) – 1957

Nigeria; Somaliland (became part of Somalia); Cyprus – 1960
Tanganyika and Zanzibar (together forming Tanzania) – 1961
Jamaica; Trinidad and Tobago; Uganda – 1962
Kenya – 1963
Nyasaland (Malawi); Northern Rhodesia (Zambia); Malta – 1964
British Guiana (Guyana); Barbados; Bechuanaland (Botswana) – 1966
Aden (South Yemen) – 1967
Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) – 1980

The other colonial powers were at first determined to hold on to their empires by military force. But they all gave way in the end.

The main territories gaining independence were:

French

Syria – 1946
Indo-China – 1954
Morocco; Tunisia – 1956
Guinea – 1958
Senegal; Ivory Coast; Mauretania; Niger; Upper Volta (later Burkina-Faso); Chad; Madagascar (Malagasey); Gabon; French Sudan (Mali); Cameroun (Cameroon); Congo; Oubangui-Shari (Central Africa); Togo; Dahomey (Benin from 1975) – 1960

Dutch

East Indies (Indonesia) – 1949
Surinam – 1975

Belgian

Congo (Zaire 1971–97) – 1960
Ruanda-Urundi (became two separate states: Ruanda and Burundi) – 1962

Spanish

Spanish Morocco – 1956
Guinea (Equatorial Guinea) – 1968
Ifni (became part of Morocco) – 1969
Spanish Sahara (divided between Morocco and Mauretania) – 1975

Portuguese

Guinea (Guinea-Bissau) – 1974
Angola; Mozambique – 1975
East Timor (seized by Indonesia later in 1975) – 1975

Italian

Ethiopia – 1947
Libya – 1951
Eritrea (became part of Ethiopia) – 1952
Italian Somaliland (became part of Somalia) – 1960

24.1 WHY DID THE EUROPEAN POWERS GIVE UP THEIR EMPIRES?

During the 1990s more documents dealing with decolonization became available, enabling historians to investigate more deeply the motives of the European powers in giving up their colonies and the different ways in which they carried out their withdrawals. The main debate that has developed is about the extent to which decolonization was caused by local nationalist movements, and how far it was brought about by outside political and economic considerations. Robert Holland, a leading exponent of what has become known as the '*metropolitan thesis*', believes that outside forces – metropolitan forces – were more important. He writes:

The great colonial powers divested themselves of their subordinate possessions, not because internal pressures within their colonies left them with no other choice, but in the wake of a revisionist process whereby imperial roles came to be seen as incongruent with more 'modern' goals in the fields of foreign and economic policy.

Other historians feel that more credit must be given to the strength of local nationalist movements, and they acknowledge that in some cases the imperial power was quite simply expelled by sheer force. For example, would the British have left East and Central Africa for purely 'metropolitan' reasons if there had been no nationalist movements in these areas? Of course there is no simple answer. What can be said with certainty is that all these factors were present in varying degrees in all colonial territories.

(a) Nationalist movements

These had been in existence in many of Europe's overseas colonies, especially those in Asia, for many years before the Second World War. *Nationalists* were people who had a natural desire to get rid of their foreign rulers so that they could have a government run by people of their own nationality. Although the European powers claimed to have brought the benefits of western civilization to their colonies, there was a general feeling among colonial peoples that they were being exploited by the Europeans, who took most of the profits from their partnership. They claimed that the development and prosperity of the colonies were being held back in the interests of Europe, and that most of the colonial peoples continued to live in poverty. In India, the *Indian National Congress Party* had been agitating against British rule since 1885, while in south-east Asia, Vietnamese nationalists began to campaign against French rule during the 1920s. However, nationalism was not so strong in other areas, and progress towards independence would have been much slower without the boost provided by the Second World War. There is no doubt, however, that after the war the strength of nationalist feeling in many cases forced the colonial power to grant independence long before they had intended to do so. This often had disastrous results because the new states had not been properly prepared for independence. This was true of the British in Nigeria, the Belgians in the Congo and Rwanda-Urundi, the Spanish in Spanish Sahara and the Portuguese in Mozambique and Angola.

(b) Effects of the Second World War

The Second World War gave a great stimulus to nationalist movements in a number of ways:

- *Before the war, colonial peoples believed it would be impossible to defeat the militarily superior Europeans by force of arms.* Japanese successes in the early part of the war showed that it was possible for non-Europeans to defeat European armies. Japanese forces captured the British territories of Malaya, Singapore, Hong Kong and Burma, the Dutch East Indies and French Indo-China. Although the Japanese were eventually defeated, the nationalists, many of whom had fought against the Japanese, had no intention of tamely accepting European rule again. After all, Britain, France and Holland had failed miserably to protect their subjects, thus destroying any claim to legitimacy they might have had. If necessary, nationalists would continue to fight against the Europeans, using the guerrilla tactics they had learned fighting the Japanese. This is exactly what happened in Indo-China (see Chapter 21), the Dutch East Indies, Malaya and Burma.
- *Asians and Africans became more aware of social and political matters as a result of their involvement in the war.* Some 374 000 Africans were recruited into the British armed forces. The vast majority of them had never left their homeland before, and they were appalled at the contrast between the primitive living conditions in Africa and the relatively comfortable conditions they experienced even as members of the armed forces. Some Asian nationalist leaders worked with the Japanese, thinking that after the war there would be more chance of independence being granted by the Japanese than by the Europeans. Many of them, like Dr Sukarno in the Dutch East Indies, gained experience helping to govern the occupied areas. Sukarno later became the first president of Indonesia (1949).
- Some European policies during the war encouraged colonial peoples to expect independence as soon as the war was over. The Dutch government, shocked that people were so ready to co-operate with the Japanese in the East Indies, offered them some degree of independence as soon as the Japanese were defeated. *The 1941 Atlantic Charter* set out joint Anglo-American thinking about how the world should be organized after the war. *Two of the points mentioned were:*

- Nations should not expand by taking territory from other nations.
- All peoples should have the right to choose their own form of government.

Though Churchill later said that this only applied to victims of Hitler's aggression, the hopes of Asian and African peoples had been raised.

- *The war weakened the European states*, so that in the end, they were not militarily or economically strong enough to hold on to their far-flung empires in the face of really determined campaigns for independence. The British were the first to recognize this because, as Bernard Porter pointed out:

The British Empire had always been a cheapskate affair. Governments had never wanted to spend money on it or commit more than the minimum of personnel to it, or trouble the British people with it too much. The best way to manage things was to devolve the ruling of colonial possessions (and the expense) to settlers, or local traditional rulers (chiefs). This had its advantages but it also diluted Britain's power.

Consequently the British responded by giving independence to India (1947). After that, British policy was to delay independence as long as possible, but to give way when the pressure became irresistible. At the same time the British concentrated on making their withdrawals 'look good'. It was important to give the impression that they were in control of the process, that it was something that they had intended all along, and that they were not 'scuttling away'. It was a further ten years

before the Gold Coast became the first British territory in Africa to win independence; this became a great source of inspiration for other African colonies. As Iain Macleod (British Colonial Secretary) later put it: 'we could not possibly have held by force our territories in Africa; the march of men towards freedom cannot be halted; it can only be guided'. The French, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese reacted differently and seemed determined to preserve their empires. But this involved them in costly military campaigns, and eventually they all had to admit defeat.

(c) Pan-Africanism

Early in the twentieth century there was an important development in African thinking which emphasized that all people of African descent, wherever they lived, were united by the same cultural and spiritual heritage. Pan-Africanism, as it became known, was first publicized by people of African origin living outside Africa. At the forefront were Marcus Garvey, a self-educated Jamaican who had founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association, and W. E. B. Du Bois, the first African American to earn a doctorate from Harvard. Gradually these ideas spread and by the end of the Second World War some African students, mainly from British colonies, had taken up pan-Africanism. Not only was it an encouragement to their ambitions of independence, it also inspired them to think beyond that. If all Africans shared the same social and cultural ties, it meant that the ultimate goal after independence must be to abandon the artificial frontiers set up by the Europeans and have a sort of federal United States of Africa along the same lines as the United States of America.

Kwame Nkrumah, who was to become the first prime minister of a semi-independent Gold Coast and then the first president of Ghana, was a strong believer in pan-Africanism. He wasted no time before organizing meetings and conferences of African leaders in which he pressed the advantages of African unification. Some states supported the idea, including Guinea, Mali and Morocco, but a majority were not impressed – having just won their independence, they saw little point in surrendering a large proportion of it by entering a huge political federation. Some of the other leaders suspected that Nkrumah was developing delusions of grandeur, seeing himself as the president of a federal Africa. Strongest in their opposition were Ethiopia and Liberia, which had been independent for generations, together with Nigeria, Sierra Leone and almost all the former French colonies. By 1963 the prospect of a United States of Africa had disappeared when a conference of African countries at Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) decided that the best way forward would be for them all to join an Organization of African Unity (OAU), a much less binding arrangement, while still displaying a sort of unity. But pan-Africanism had not been totally irrelevant – it had been an important influence on the rise of nationalist movements in many of the former colonies.

(d) Outside pressures

There were several outside pressures on the colonial powers to give up their empires. The USA, no doubt remembering that they had been the earliest part of the British Empire to declare independence (1776), was hostile to imperialism (building up empires and owning colonies). During the war, President Roosevelt made it clear that he took the Atlantic Charter to apply to all peoples, not just those taken over by the Germans. He and his successor, Truman, pressurized the British government to speed up independence for India. Peter Clarke points out that Churchill's imperialism irritated the Americans to such an extent that they were determined not to do anything that would help Britain to keep its

empire. One reason given by the Americans for wanting to see the end of the European empires was that delays in granting independence to European colonies in Asia and Africa would encourage the development of communism in those areas. While there was clearly some truth in this argument in the case of Asia, Bernard Porter was convinced that in the case of Africa, there was still comparatively little communist influence. More important was the fact that the Americans looked on the newly-independent nations as potential markets into which they could force their way and establish both economic and political influence. In the eyes of the USA, imperially protected markets gave the British and other Europeans an unfair advantage.

The United Nations Organization, under American influence, came out firmly against imperialism and demanded a step-by-step programme for decolonization. The USSR also added its voice to the chorus and constantly denounced imperialism. As well as putting the European states under pressure, this encouraged nationalists all over the world to intensify their campaigns.

Almost every case was different; the following sections will look at some of the different ways in which colonies and territories gained their independence.

24.2 INDIAN INDEPENDENCE AND PARTITION

(a) Background to independence

The British had made some concessions to the Indian nationalists even before the Second World War. The Morley–Minto reforms (1909), the Montague–Chelmsford reforms (1919) and the Government of India Act (1935) all gave the Indians more say in the government of their country. The Indians were also promised ‘dominion status’ as soon as the war was over. This meant becoming more or less completely independent, though still acknowledging the British monarch as head of state, like Australia. The Labour government, newly elected in 1945, wanted to show that it disapproved of exploiting the Indians and was anxious to press ahead with independence, on both moral and economic grounds. Ernest Bevin, the foreign secretary, had earlier toyed with the idea of delaying independence for a few years to enable Britain to finance a development programme for India. This idea was dropped because the Indians would be suspicious of any delay, and because Britain could not afford the expense, given its own economic difficulties. Bevin and Clement Attlee, the prime minister, therefore decided to give India full independence, allowing the Indians to work out the details for themselves.

The reasons why the British decided to grant Indian independence have been the subject of lively debate. Official sources presented it as the culmination of a process going back to the Government of India Act of 1919 – a process by which the British carefully prepared India for independence. Some Indian historians, including Sumit Sarkar and Anita Inder Singh, have challenged this view, arguing that Indian independence was never a long-term goal of the British and that the Government of India Acts of 1919 and 1935 were designed not to prepare the way for independence but to postpone it. Independence was not a gift from the British, it was ‘the hard-won fruit of struggle and sacrifice’. Other historians have suggested that India was no longer of any value to Britain: instead of being a source of profit, it was now a drain on British resources. The aim of the government was therefore to get out of India in a way that did not look too much like a humiliation, and that kept India within the British financial network and Commonwealth.

Some writers have taken a middle view. Howard Brasted defended the Labour government against accusations that it made its policy up as it went along, and ended up running away from the problem. He showed that the Labour Party had drawn up a clear policy of withdrawal from India *before* the Second World War, and this was discussed by the party

leader, Clement Attlee, and Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian Congress leader, in 1938. Nehru and Gandhi knew that when Labour won the election of July 1945, Indian independence could not be far away. Sadly the progress towards independence turned out to be far more difficult than had been expected: the problems were so complex that the country ended up having to be divided into two states – India and Pakistan.

(b) Why was the partition of India necessary?

1 Religious hostility between Hindus and Muslims

This was the main problem. Hindus made up about two-thirds of the 400 million population, and the rest were mostly Muslims. After their victories in the 1937 elections when they won eight out of the eleven states, *the Hindu National Congress Party* unwisely called on *the Muslim League* to merge with Congress. This alarmed the Muslim League, who were afraid that an independent India would be dominated by Hindus. The Muslim leader, *M. A. Jinnah*, demanded *a separate Muslim state of Pakistan*, and adopted as his slogan ‘Pakistan or Perish’.

2 Compromise attempts failed

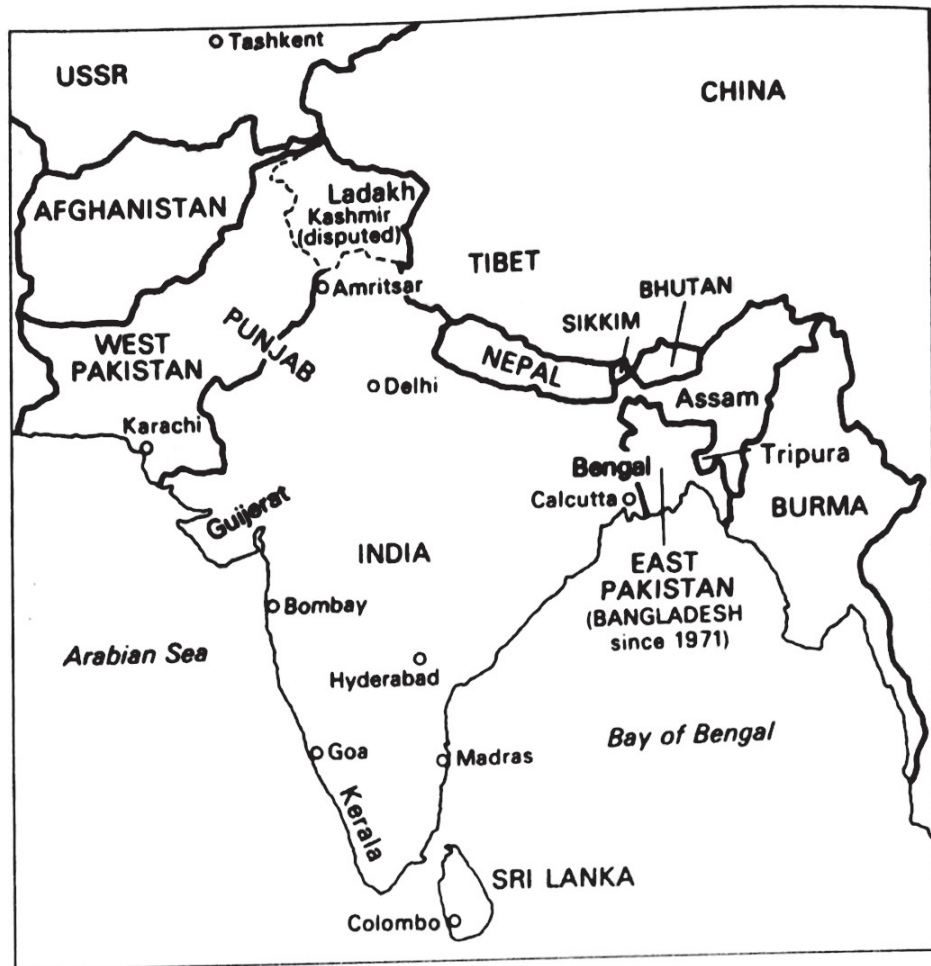
Attempts to draw up a compromise solution acceptable to both Hindus and Muslims failed. The British proposed a federal scheme in which the central government would have only limited powers, while those of the provincial governments would be much greater. This would enable provinces with a Muslim majority to control their own affairs and there would be no need for a separate state. Both sides accepted the idea in principle but failed to agree on the details.

3 Violence broke out in August 1946

This began when the viceroy (the king’s representative in India), Lord Wavell, invited the Congress leader, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, to form an interim government, still hoping that details could be worked out later. Nehru formed a cabinet which included two Muslims, but Jinnah was convinced that the Hindus could not be trusted to treat the Muslims fairly. He called for a day of ‘direct action’ in support of a separate Pakistan. Fierce rioting followed in Calcutta, where 5000 people were killed, and it soon spread to Bengal, where Muslims set about slaughtering Hindus. As Hindus retaliated, *the country seemed on the verge of civil war*.

4 Mountbatten decides on partition

The British government, realizing that they lacked the military strength to control the situation, announced early in 1947 *that they would leave India no later than June 1948*. The idea was to try to shock the Indians into adopting a more responsible attitude. *Lord Louis Mountbatten* was sent as the new viceroy, and he soon decided that partition was the only way to avoid civil war. He realized that there would probably be bloodshed whatever solution was tried, but felt that partition would produce less violence than if Britain tried to insist on the Muslims remaining part of India. Within six weeks Mountbatten had worked out a plan for dividing the country up and for the British withdrawal. This was accepted by Nehru and Jinnah, although *M. K. Gandhi*, known as the Mahatma (Great Soul), the other highly respected Congress leader, who believed in non-violence, was still hoping for a united India. Afraid that delay would cause more violence, Mountbatten brought the date for British withdrawal forward to August 1947.



Map 24.1 India and Pakistan

(c) How was partition carried out?

The Indian Independence Act was rushed through the British parliament (August 1947), separating the Muslim majority areas in the north-west and north-east from the rest of India to become the independent state of Pakistan. The new Pakistan unfortunately consisted of two separate areas over a thousand miles apart (see Map 24.1). Independence day for both India and Pakistan was 15 August 1947. Problems followed immediately:

- 1 *It had been necessary to split the provinces of the Punjab and Bengal, which had mixed Hindu/Muslim populations.* This meant that millions of people found themselves on the wrong side of the new frontiers – Muslims in India and Hindus in Pakistan.
- 2 *Afraid of being attacked, millions of people headed for the frontiers,* Muslims trying to get into Pakistan and Hindus into India. Clashes occurred which developed into near-hysterical mob violence, especially in the Punjab, where about 250 000 people were murdered. Violence was not quite so widespread in Bengal, where Gandhi, still preaching non-violence and toleration, managed to calm the situation.
- 3 *Violence began to die down before the end of 1947, but in January 1948 Gandhi was shot dead by a Hindu fanatic* who detested his tolerance towards Muslims. It was a tragic end to a disastrous set of circumstances, but the shock somehow seemed to bring people to their senses, so that the new governments of India and Pakistan could begin to think about their other problems. From the British point of view, the government could claim that although so many deaths were regrettable,

the granting of independence to India and Pakistan was an act of far-sighted statesmanship. Attlee argued, with some justification, that Britain could not be blamed for the violence; this was due, he said, 'to the failure of the Indians to agree among themselves'. V. P. Menon, a distinguished Indian political observer, believed that Britain's decision to leave India 'not only touched the hearts and stirred the emotions of India ... it earned for Britain universal respect and goodwill'. Howard Brasted agreed, pointing out that a less sensitive handling of the situation by the British government could have produced an even more catastrophic bloodbath. On the other hand, A. N. Wilson believes that there could have been less violence if Mountbatten had acted differently. He should have provided peacekeeping forces to protect the migrant populations, and he should have taken more care in deciding the frontiers. Wilson writes, perhaps a trifle unfairly: 'By his superficial haste, his sheer arrogance and his inattention to vital detail ... Mountbatten was responsible for as many deaths as some of those who were hanged after the Nuremberg trials.'

- 4 *In the longer term, Pakistan did not work well as a divided state*, and in 1971 East Pakistan broke away and became the independent state of Bangladesh.

24.3 THE WEST INDIES, MALAYA AND CYPRUS

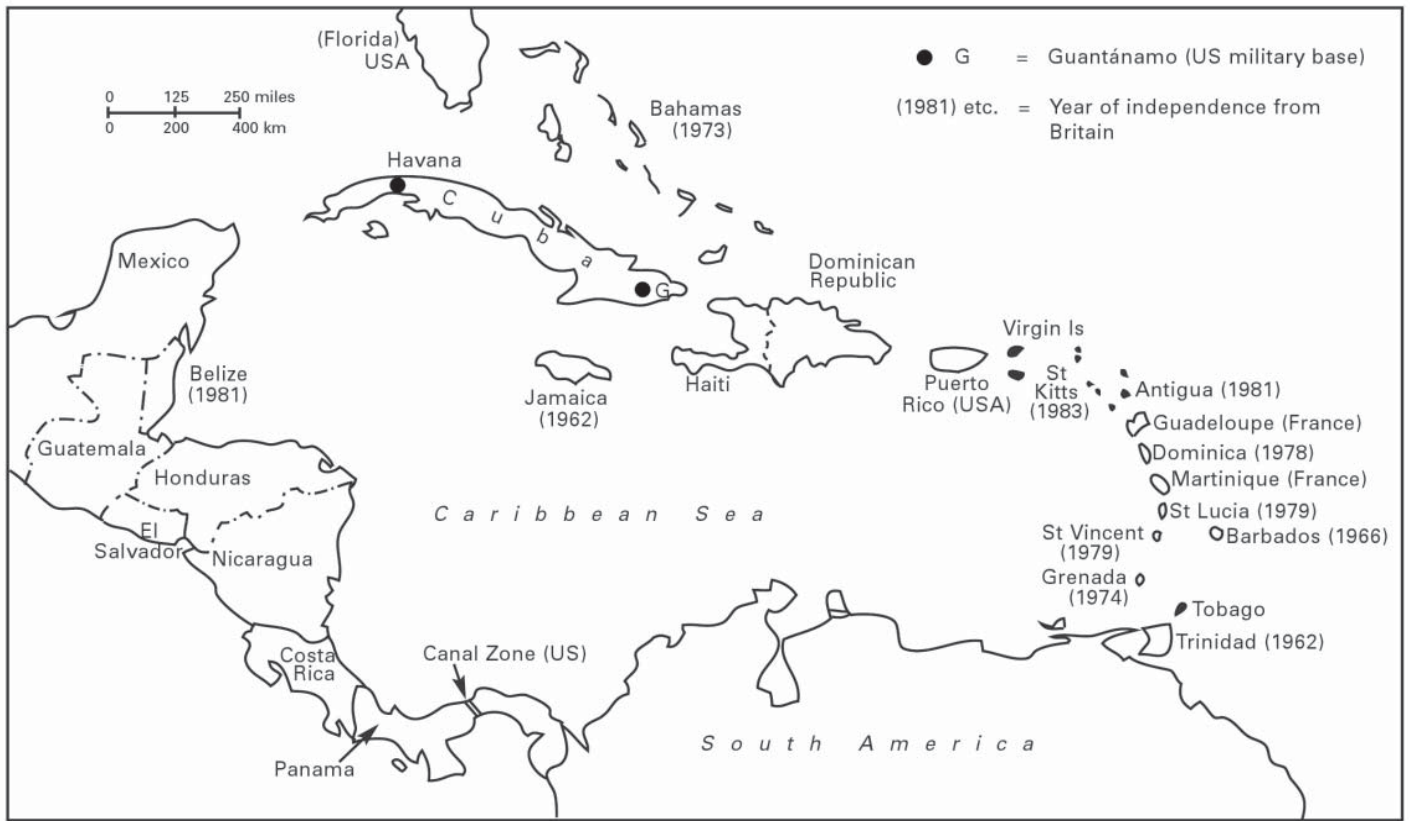
As these three territories moved towards independence, interesting experiments in setting up federations of states were tried, with varying degrees of success. A federation is where a number of states join together under a central or federal government which has overall authority; each of the states has its own separate parliament, which deals with internal affairs. This is the type of system which works well in the USA, Canada and Australia, and many people thought it would be suitable for the British West Indies and for Malaya and neighbouring British territories.

- *The West Indies Federation was the first one to be tried*, but it proved to be a failure: set up in 1958, it only survived until 1962.
- *The Federation of Malaysia*, set up in 1963, was much more successful.
- *The British handling of independence for Cyprus unfortunately was not a success* and the island had a troubled history after the Second World War.

(a) The West Indies

Britain's West Indian possessions consisted of a large assortment of islands in the Caribbean Sea (see Map 24.2); the largest were Jamaica and Trinidad, and others included Grenada, St Vincent, Barbados, St Lucia, Antigua, the Seychelles and the Bahamas. There were also British Honduras on the mainland of Central America and British Guiana on the north-east coast of South America. Together these territories had a population of around six million. Britain was prepared in principle to give them all independence, but there were problems.

- *Some of the islands were very small, and there were doubts about whether they were viable as independent states.* Grenada, St Vincent and Antigua, for example, had populations of only about 100 000 each, while some were even smaller: the twin islands of St Kitts and Nevis had only about 60 000 between them.
- *The British Labour government felt that a federation could be the ideal way of uniting such small and widely scattered territories, but many of the territories themselves objected.* Some, like Honduras and Guiana, wanted nothing to do with a



Map 24.2 Central America and the West Indies

federation, preferring completely separate independence. This left Jamaica and Trinidad worried about whether they would be able to cope with the problems of the smaller islands. Some islands did not like the prospect of being dominated by Jamaica and Trinidad, and some of the smallest were not even sure they wanted independence at all, preferring to remain under British guidance and protection.

Britain went ahead in spite of the difficulties and established the West Indies Federation in 1958 (excluding British Honduras and British Guiana). But it never really functioned successfully. The one thing they all had in common – a passionate commitment to cricket – was not enough to hold them together, and there were constant squabbles about how much each island should pay into the federal budget and how many representatives they should each have in the federal parliament. When Jamaica and Trinidad withdrew in 1961, the federation no longer seemed viable. In 1962 Britain decided to abandon it and grant independence separately to all those that wanted it. By 1983 all parts of the British West Indies, except a few tiny islands, had become independent. Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago were first, in 1962, and the islands of St Kitts and Nevis were last, in 1983. British Guiana became known as Guyana (1966) and British Honduras took the name Belize (1981). All of them became members of the British Commonwealth.

Ironically, having rejected the idea of a fully-fledged federation, they soon found that there were economic benefits to be had from co-operation. The Caribbean Free Trade Association was set up in 1968, and this soon developed into *the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM)* in 1973, which all the former British West Indies territories (including Guyana and Belize) joined.

(b) Malaya

Malaya was liberated from Japanese occupation in 1945, but there were two difficult problems to be faced before the British were prepared to withdraw.

- 1 *It was a complex area which would be difficult to organize.* It consisted of nine states each ruled by a sultan, two British settlements, Malacca and Penang, and Singapore, a small island less than a mile from the mainland. The population was multiracial: mostly Malays and Chinese, but with some Indians and Europeans as well. In preparation for independence it was decided to group the states and the settlements into *the Federation of Malaya (1948)*, while Singapore remained a separate colony. Each state had its own legislature for local affairs; the sultans retained some power, but the central government had firm overall control. All adults had the vote and this meant that the Malays, the largest group, usually dominated affairs.
- 2 *Chinese communist guerrillas led by Chin Peng, who had played a leading role in the resistance to the Japanese, now began to stir up strikes and violence against the British,* in support of an independent communist state. The British decided to declare a state of emergency in 1948, and in the end they dealt with the communists successfully, though it took time, and the state of emergency remained in force until 1960. Their tactics were to resettle into specially guarded villages all Chinese suspected of helping the guerrillas. It was made clear that independence would follow as soon as the country was ready for it; this ensured that the Malays remained firmly pro-British and gave very little help to the communists, who were Chinese.

The move towards independence was accelerated when the Malay Party, under their able leader *Tunku Abdul Rahman*, joined forces with the main Chinese and Indian groups to



Map 24.3 **Malaysia and Indonesia**

form *the Alliance Party*, which won 51 out of the 52 seats in the 1955 elections. This seemed to suggest stability and the British were persuaded to grant full independence in 1957, when Malaya was admitted to the Commonwealth.

The Federation of Malaysia was set up in 1963. Malaya was running well under Tunku's leadership, and its economy, based on exports of rubber and tin, was the most prosperous in south-east Asia. In 1961, when the Tunku proposed that Singapore and three other British colonies, North Borneo (Sabah), Brunei and Sarawak, should join Malaya to form the Federation of Malaysia, Britain agreed (see Map 24.3). After a United Nations investigation team reported that a large majority of the populations concerned was in favour of the union, the Federation of Malaysia was officially proclaimed (September 1963). Brunei decided not to join, and eventually became an independent state within the Commonwealth (1984). Although Singapore decided to leave the Federation to become an independent republic in 1965, the rest of the Federation continued successfully.

(c) **Cyprus**

The British Labour government (1945–51) considered giving Cyprus independence, but progress was delayed by complications, the most serious of which was the mixed population – about 80 per cent were Greek-speaking Christians of the Orthodox Church, while the rest were Muslims of Turkish origin. The Greek Cypriots wanted the island to unite with Greece (*enosis*), but the Turks were strongly opposed to this. Churchill's government (1951–5) inflamed the situation in 1954 when their plans for self-government allowed the Cypriots far less power than Labour had had in mind. There were hostile demonstrations, which were dispersed by British troops.

Sir Anthony Eden, Churchill's successor, decided to drop the idea of independence for Cyprus, believing that Britain needed the island as a military base to protect her interests in the Middle East. He announced that Cyprus must remain permanently British, though the Greek government promised that Britain could retain her military bases even if *enosis* took place.

The Greek Cypriots, led by *Archbishop Makarios*, pressed their demands, while a



Map 24.4 Cyprus divided

guerrilla organization called *Eoka*, led by General Grivas, waged a terrorist campaign against the British, who declared a state of emergency (1955) and deployed about 35 000 troops to try to keep order. British policy also involved deporting Makarios and executing terrorists. The situation became even more difficult in 1958 when the Turks set up a rival organization in support of dividing the island.

Eventually, to avoid possible civil war between the two groups, Harold Macmillan, Eden's successor, decided to compromise. He appointed the sympathetic and tactful Hugh Foot as governor and he negotiated a deal with Makarios:

- The Archbishop dropped *enosis* and in return Cyprus was granted full independence.
- Turkish interests were safeguarded, Britain retained two military bases and, along with Greece and Turkey, guaranteed the independence of Cyprus.
- Makarios became the first president with a Turkish Cypriot, Fazil Kutchuk, as vice-president (1960). It seemed the perfect solution.

Unfortunately it only lasted until 1963 when civil war broke out between Greeks and Turks. In 1974 Turkey sent troops to help establish a separate Turkish state in the north, and the island has remained divided since then (Map 24.4). Turks occupy the north (roughly one-third of the island's area) and Greeks the south, with UN troops keeping the peace between the two. Many attempts were made to find agreement, but all failed. In the mid-1980s the UN began to press the idea of a federation as the most likely way of reconciling the two states, but this solution was rejected by the Greeks (1987). In April 2003 the checkpoints along the frontier between the two states were opened so that both Greek and Turkish Cypriots could cross the partition line for the first time since 1974. The island was still divided in May 2004 when the Republic of Cyprus (Greek) joined the European Union. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus also voted to join, but since it was only recognized as an independent state by Turkey, it was not part of the accession agreement.

24.4 THE BRITISH LEAVE AFRICA

African nationalism spread rapidly after 1945; this was because more and more Africans were being educated in Britain and the USA, where they were made aware of racial discrimination. Colonialism was seen as the humiliation and exploitation of blacks by whites, and working-class Africans in the new towns were particularly receptive to

nationalist ideas. The British, especially the Labour governments of 1945–51, were quite willing to allow independence, and were confident that they would still be able to exercise influence through trade links, which they hoped to preserve by including the new states as members of the Commonwealth. This practice of exercising influence over former colonies after independence by economic means became known as *neo-colonialism*; it became widespread in most of the new states of the Third World. Even so, the British intended to move the colonies towards independence very gradually, and the African nationalists had to campaign vigorously and often violently to make them act more quickly.

The British colonies in Africa fell into three distinct groups, which had important differences in character that were to affect progress towards independence.

WEST AFRICA: Gold Coast, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the Gambia

Here there were relatively few Europeans, and they tended to be administrators rather than permanent settlers with profitable estates to defend. This made the move to independence comparatively straightforward.

EAST AFRICA: Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika

Here, especially in Kenya, things were complicated by the ‘settler factor’ – the presence of European and Asian settlers, who feared for their future under black governments.

CENTRAL AFRICA: Nyasaland, Northern and Southern Rhodesia

Here, especially in Southern Rhodesia, the ‘settler factor’ was at its most serious. This was where European settlers were most firmly entrenched, owning huge and profitable estates, and confrontation between white settlers and African nationalists was most bitter.

(a) West Africa

1 The Gold Coast

The Gold Coast was the first black African state south of the Sahara to win independence after the Second World War, taking the name *Ghana* (1957). It was achieved fairly smoothly, though not without some incident. The nationalist leader, Kwame Nkrumah, educated in London and the USA and since 1949 leader of the *Convention People’s Party* (CPP), organized the campaign for independence. There were boycotts of European goods, violent demonstrations and a general strike (1950), and Nkrumah and other leaders were imprisoned for a time. But the British, realizing that he had mass support, soon released him and agreed to allow a new constitution which included the vote for all adults; an elected Assembly; and an eleven-man Executive Council, of which eight were chosen by the Assembly.

In the 1951 elections, the first under the new constitution, the CPP won 34 seats out of 38. Nkrumah was released from prison, invited to form a government and became prime minister in 1952. This was self-government but not yet full independence. The Gold Coast had a small but well-educated group of politicians and other professionals, who, for the next five years, gained experience of government under British supervision. This experience was

unique to Ghana; had it been repeated in other newly independent states, it might possibly have helped to avoid chaos and mismanagement. In 1957 Ghana, as it became known, received full independence.

2 Nigeria

Nigeria was easily the largest of Britain's African colonies, with a population of over 60 million. It was a more difficult proposition than Ghana because of its great size, and because of its regional differences between the vast Muslim north, dominated by the Hausa and Fulani tribes, the western region (Yorubas) and the eastern region (Ibos). The leading nationalist was *Nnamdi Azikiwe*, popularly known to his supporters as 'Zik'. He was educated in the USA and for a time worked as a newspaper editor in the Gold Coast. After his return to Nigeria in 1937 he founded a series of newspapers and became involved in the nationalist movement, soon gaining enormous prestige. In 1945 he showed he meant business by organizing an impressive general strike, which was enough to prompt the British to begin preparing Nigeria for independence. It was decided that a federal system would be most suitable; in 1954 a new constitution introduced local assemblies for the three regions, with a central (federal) government in Lagos, the capital. The regions assumed self-government first and the country as a whole became independent in 1960. Sadly, in spite of the careful preparations for independence, tribal differences caused civil war to break out in 1967 when the Ibos declared the eastern region independent with the name *Biafra* (see Section 25.3).

The other two British colonies in West Africa achieved independence without serious incident – Sierra Leone in 1961 and the Gambia in 1965 (see Map 24.5).

(b) East Africa

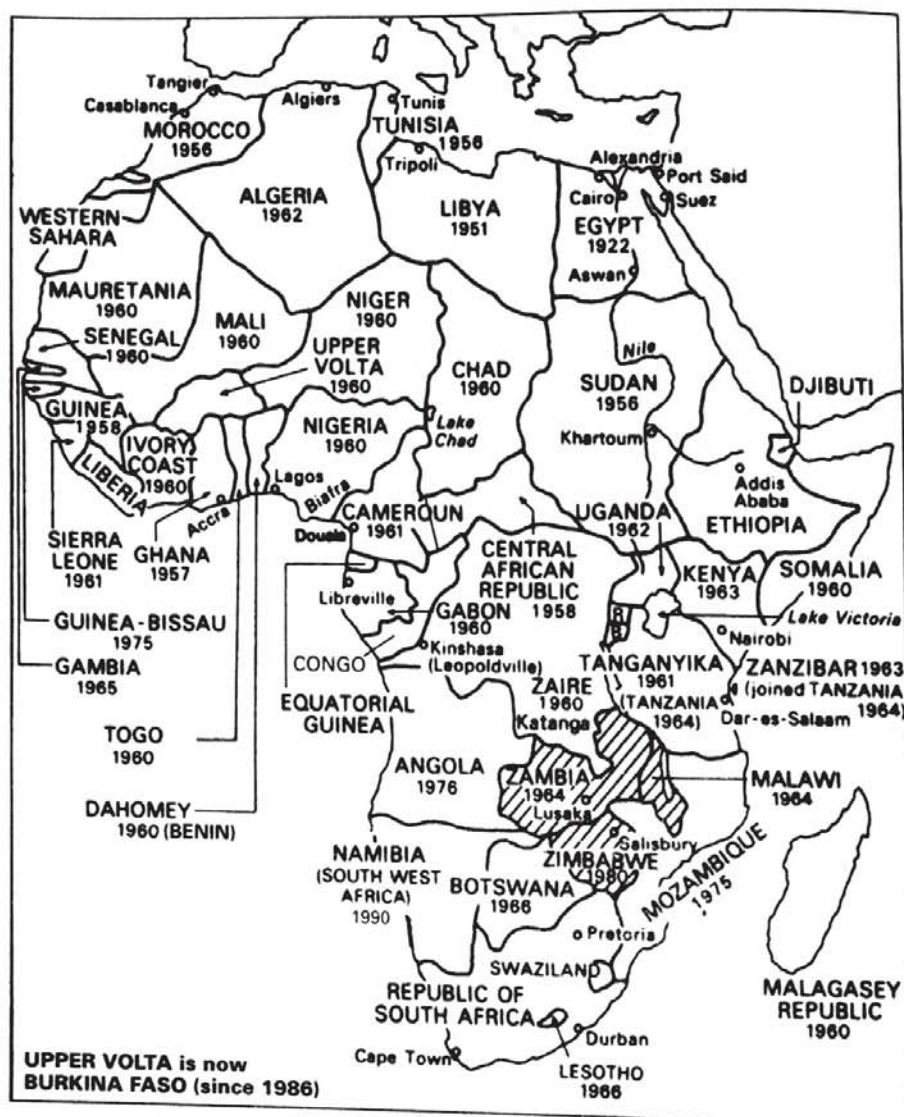
The British thought that independence for the colonies of East Africa was not so necessary as for West Africa, and that when independence did come, it would be in the form of multiracial governments, in which the European and Asian settlers would play a significant part. But during Harold Macmillan's government (1957–63) *an important change took place in British policy towards both East and Central Africa*. Macmillan had come to realize the strength of black African nationalist feeling; in a famous speech in Cape Town in 1960, he said: 'the wind of change is blowing through the continent. Whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact, and our national policies must take account of it.'

1 Tanganyika

In Tanganyika the nationalist campaign was conducted by *the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU)* led by *Dr Julius Nyerere*, who had been educated at the University of Edinburgh. He insisted that the government must be African, but he also made it clear that whites had nothing to fear from black rule. Macmillan's government, impressed by Nyerere's ability and sincerity, conceded independence with black majority rule (1961). The island of Zanzibar was later united with Tanganyika, and the country took the name Tanzania (1964). Nyerere was president until his retirement in 1985.

2 Uganda

In Uganda independence was delayed for a time by tribal squabbles; the ruler (known as the kabaka) of the Buganda area objected to the introduction of democracy. Eventually a solution was found in a federal constitution which allowed the kabaka to retain some powers in Buganda. Uganda itself became independent in 1962 with *Dr Milton Obote* as prime minister.



Map 24.5 Africa becomes independent

3 Kenya

Kenya was the most difficult area of East Africa to deal with because of the presence of a significant non-African population. As well as the 10 million Africans, there were some 66 000 white settlers who were violently opposed to black majority rule. There were also around 200 000 Indians and 35 000 Muslim Arabs. But it was the white settlers who had the political influence over the British government. They pointed out that they had worked hard and devoted their lives to making their farms successful, and that they now saw themselves as white Africans, and that Kenya was their homeland.

The main Kenyan African leader was *Jomo Kenyatta*; born in 1894, he was a member of the Kikuyu tribe and a veteran among African nationalists. He spent some time in Britain during the 1930s and returned to Kenya in 1947, becoming leader of the *Kenya African Unity Party (KAU)*, which consisted mostly of members of the dominant Kikuyu tribe. He hoped to win African majority rule gradually, first of all gaining more African

seats on the Legislative Council. However, the more radical wing of his party – calling themselves the Forty Group – wanted to drive the British out by force, if necessary. The main African grievance was the land situation: the most fertile farming land was on the highland plateau, but only white settlers were allowed to farm there. Africans also resented the discrimination and the colour bar between blacks and whites, under which they were treated as inferior, second-class citizens. This was especially unacceptable, since many Africans had served in the army during the Second World War and had received equal treatment and respect from whites. Moreover it was clear that the whites expected to keep all their privileges even if they had to agree to independence.

The white settlers refused to negotiate with Kenyatta, and were determined to prolong their rule. They provoked a confrontation, hoping that violence would destroy the African Party. The British government was under pressure from both sides, and the white settlers were supported by certain big-business interests in Britain; even so, it did not handle the situation with much imagination. The KAU was able to make little progress, the only British concession being to allow six Africans to join the Legislative Council of 54 members.

In 1952, African impatience burst out in an uprising against the British, with attacks on European-owned farms and on black workers. It was organized by the *Mau Mau* secret society, whose members were mainly from the Kikuyu tribe. A state of emergency was declared (1952); Kenyatta and other nationalist leaders were arrested and found guilty of terrorism. Kenyatta was kept in jail for six years although he had publicly condemned violence and insisted that the KAU had not been involved in organizing the rebellion. In 1954 the British launched Operation Anvil in which 100 000 troops were deployed to flush out the terrorists (the Africans regarded themselves as freedom fighters, not terrorists).

There was a scandal in 1959 with revelations of brutal treatment of prisoners at the Hola detention camp, where savage beatings left 11 dead. However, the British government managed to hide from people at home the scale of what was going on in Kenya. It was only in 2005 that the full horrifying details were revealed in two separate books by historians David Anderson and Caroline Elkins. During the period of the emergency the British hanged more than a thousand Kikuyu, and killed some 20 000 in combat. In addition up to 100 000 died in detention camps, where there was a culture of brutality, routine beatings, killings and torture of the most grotesque kinds. One police chief later admitted that conditions in the camps were far worse than he had suffered as a prisoner of war in Japan. By contrast, less than a hundred whites were killed.

The uprising had been defeated by 1960, but by then, ironically, the British, encouraged by the 'wind of change' and by the expense of the anti-terrorist campaign, had changed their attitude. Harold Macmillan, who became prime minister in January 1957, faced up to the fact that it was impossible and indefensible to continue trying to prolong the privileged position of a group which made up no more than 5 per cent of the population. He decided to move Kenya towards independence. Africans were allowed to settle in the fertile highland plateau; restrictions were lifted on what the Kikuyus could grow, and as a result, coffee became one of the main crops. Attempts were made to increase the political role of the Africans; in 1957 elections were held for eight African seats in the Legislative Council, and the following year plans were announced to increase African membership of the council. In 1960 Africans became the majority group on the council and were given four out of ten seats in the Council of Ministers. In 1961 Kenyatta was at last released.

Progress towards independence was held up by rivalry and disagreement between the different tribal groups. While Kenyatta had been in prison, new leaders had emerged. *Tom Mboya* and *Oginga Odinga*, both members of the second largest ethnic group, the Luo, formed the *Kenya African National Union (KANU)*, which largely succeeded in uniting the Kikuyus and Luos. When Kenyatta was freed, so great was his prestige that he was immediately recognized as leader of KANU; both Kikuyus and Luos co-operated

well together, and they wanted a strong, centralized government which would be dominated by their tribes. However, there were a number of smaller tribes who did not relish the idea of being controlled by Kikuyus and Luos. Led by Ronald Ngala, they formed a rival party – *the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU)* – and they wanted a federal form of government which would enable them to have more control over their own affairs.

Both parties worked together to form a coalition government (1962), in preparation for elections to be held in May 1963. KANU won a clear majority in the elections and Kenyatta became prime minister of a self-governing Kenya. It was decided to abandon the idea of a federal system of government; Kenya became fully independent in December 1963. A year later it became a republic with Kenyatta as its first president and Odinga as vice-president. To his great credit, in spite of his harsh treatment by the British, Kenyatta favoured reconciliation; whites who decided to stay on after independence were fairly treated provided they took Kenyan citizenship, and Kenya became one of the most pro-British of the former colonies. Sadly, the tribal differences continued to cause problems after independence; the Luos believed that Kikuyus were receiving special treatment from the government and Kenyatta and Odinga fell out. Mboya was assassinated in 1969 and Odinga was sacked and spent two years in prison.

(c) Central Africa

This was the most troublesome area for Britain to deal with because this was where the settlers were most numerous and most deeply entrenched, particularly in Southern Rhodesia. Another problem was that numbers of well-educated Africans were much smaller than in West Africa because the settlers had ensured that very little money was spent on further and higher education for black Africans. Missionaries did their best to provide some education, but their efforts were often frustrated by the white governments. Alarmed at the spread of nationalism, the whites decided that their best policy was to combine resources. They persuaded Churchill's government (1953) to allow them to set up a union of the three colonies – Nyasaland and Northern and Southern Rhodesia, to be known as *the Central African Federation*. Their aim was to preserve the supremacy of the white minority (about 300 000 Europeans out of a total population of about 8.5 million). The federal parliament in Salisbury (the capital of Southern Rhodesia) was heavily weighted to favour the whites, who hoped that the federation would soon gain full independence from Britain, with dominion status.

The Africans watched with growing distrust, and their leaders, Dr Hastings Banda (Nyasaland), Kenneth Kaunda (Northern Rhodesia) and Joshua Nkomo (Southern Rhodesia) began to campaign for black majority rule. As violence developed, a state of emergency was declared in Nyasaland and Southern Rhodesia, with mass arrests of Africans (1959). However, there was much support for the Africans in Britain, especially in the Labour Party, and the Conservative colonial secretary, Iain Macleod, was sympathetic. *The Monckton Commission (1960) recommended votes for Africans, an end to racial discrimination and the right of territories to leave the Federation.*

1 Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia

The British introduced new constitutions in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia which, in effect, allowed the Africans their own parliaments (1961–2). Both wanted to leave the Federation, which was therefore terminated in December 1963, signalling defeat for the settlers. *The following year Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia became fully independent, taking the names Malawi and Zambia.*

2 Southern Rhodesia

Southern Rhodesia took much longer to deal with, and it was 1980 before the colony achieved independence with black majority rule. It was in Rhodesia, as it was now known, that the white settlers fought most fiercely to preserve their privileged position. There were fewer than 200 000 whites, about 20 000 Asians and 4 million black Africans, but *the Rhodesia Front*, a right-wing white racist party, was determined never to surrender control of the country to black African rule. The black African parties were banned.

When Zambia and Malawi were given independence, the whites assumed that Southern Rhodesia would get the same treatment, and put in a formal request for independence. The British Conservative government refused and made it clear that independence would be granted *only if the constitution was changed to allow black Africans at least a third of the seats in parliament*. Ian Smith (who became prime minister of Southern Rhodesia in April 1964) rejected this idea and refused to make any concessions. He argued that continued white rule was essential in view of the problems being faced by the new black governments in other African states, and because the Zimbabwe nationalists seemed bitterly divided. Harold Wilson, the new British Labour prime minister (1964–70), continued to refuse independence unless the constitution was changed to prepare for black majority rule. Since no compromise seemed possible, Smith declared Southern Rhodesia independent, against the wishes of Britain (a unilateral declaration of independence, or UDI), in November 1965.

There were mixed reactions to UDI:

- *At first there seemed very little Britain could do about it*, once the government had decided not to use force against the illegal Smith regime. It was hoped to bring the country to its knees by economic sanctions, and Britain stopped buying sugar and tobacco from Rhodesia.
- *The UN condemned UDI* and called on all member states to place a complete trade embargo on Rhodesia.
- *South Africa, also ruled by a white minority government, and Portugal, which still controlled neighbouring Mozambique, were sympathetic to the Smith regime* and refused to obey the Security Council resolution. This meant that Rhodesia was able to continue trading through these countries. Many other countries, while publicly condemning UDI, privately evaded the embargo; the USA, for example, bought Rhodesian chrome because it was the cheapest available. Companies and businessmen in many countries, including British oil companies, continued to break sanctions, and although the Rhodesian economy suffered to some extent, it was not serious enough to topple the Smith regime.
- *The Commonwealth was seriously shaken*. Ghana and Nigeria wanted Britain to use force, and offered to supply troops. Zambia and Tanzania hoped that economic sanctions would suffice; relations with the British became extremely cool when it seemed that they were deliberately soft-peddling sanctions, especially as Zambia was suffering more from them than Rhodesia. When Wilson twice met Smith (aboard HMS *Tiger* in 1966 and HMS *Fearless* in 1968) to put new proposals, there was a howl of protest in case he betrayed the black Rhodesians. Perhaps fortunately for the future of the Commonwealth, Smith rejected both sets of proposals.
- *The World Council of Churches* set up a programme to combat racism (1969), and this gave encouragement and support to the nationalists both morally and financially.

In 1970 Rhodesia declared itself a republic, and the rights of black citizens were gradually whittled away until they were suffering similar treatment to that experienced by blacks in South Africa (see Section 25.8). In 1976 the first signs began to appear that the whites would have to compromise. *Why did the whites give way?*

- 1 *Mozambique's independence from Portugal (June 1975)* was a serious blow to Rhodesia. The new president of Mozambique, Samora Machel, applied economic sanctions and allowed Zimbabwean guerrillas to operate from Mozambique.
- 2 *The 'front-line states'* – which included Zambia, Botswana and Tanzania, as well as Mozambique – *supported the armed struggle* and provided training camps for the resistance movement. Thousands of black guerrillas were soon active in Rhodesia, straining the white security forces to their limits and forcing Smith to hire foreign mercenaries.
- 3 *The South Africans became less inclined to support Rhodesia* after their invasion of Angola (October 1975) had been called off on American orders. The Americans and South Africans were helping the rebel FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of Angola), which was trying to overthrow the ruling MPLA Party (People's Movement for Angolan Liberation), which had Russian and Cuban backing. The Americans were afraid that the USSR and Cuba might become involved in Rhodesia unless some compromise could be found; together with South Africa, they urged Smith to make concessions to the blacks before it was too late.
- 4 *By 1978 nationalist guerrillas controlled large areas of the Rhodesian countryside.* Farming was adversely affected as white farmers were attacked; schools in rural areas were closed and sometimes burnt down. It became clear that the defeat of the whites was only a matter of time.

Smith still tried everything he knew to delay black majority rule as long as possible. He was able to present the divisions between the nationalist leaders as his excuse for the lack of progress, and this was a genuine problem:

- **ZAPU** (the Zimbabwe African People's Union) was the party of the veteran nationalist Joshua Nkomo.
- **ZANU** (the Zimbabwe African National Union) was the party of the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole.

These two, representing different tribes, seemed to be bitter enemies.

- **UANC** (the United African National Council) was the party of Bishop Abel Muzorewa.
- **Robert Mugabe**, leader of the guerrilla wing of ZANU, was another powerful figure, who eventually emerged as ZANU's unchallenged leader.

The divisions were reduced to some extent as a result of the 1976 Geneva Conference, when ZAPU and ZANU came together loosely in the Patriotic Front (PF). After this, the parties were referred to as **ZANU-PF** and **PF-ZAPU**.

Smith now tried to compromise by introducing his own scheme, a joint government of whites and UANC, the most moderate of the nationalist parties, with Bishop Muzorewa as prime minister. The country was to be called Zimbabwe/Rhodesia (April 1979). However, it was ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU which had mass support and they continued the guerrilla war. Smith soon had to admit defeat and the British called *the Lancaster House Conference* in London (September–December 1979), which agreed the following points.

- There should be a new constitution which would allow the black majority to rule.
- In the new Republic of Zimbabwe, there would be a 100-seat parliament with 20 seats reserved for whites (uncontested). The remaining 80 MPs were to be elected, and it was expected that they would be black, since the vast majority of the population was black.
- Muzorewa would step down as prime minister and the guerrilla war would end.

In the elections which followed, Mugabe's ZANU won a sweeping victory, taking 57 out of the 80 black African seats. This gave him a comfortable overall majority, enabling him to become prime minister when Zimbabwe officially became independent in April 1980. The transference to black majority rule was welcomed by all African and Commonwealth leaders as a triumph of common sense and moderation. ZAPU and ZANU merged in 1987, when Mugabe became the country's first executive president. He was re-elected for a further term in March 1996, not without controversy, and was still clinging on to power in 2012, at the age of 87 (see Section 25.12).

24.5 THE END OF THE FRENCH EMPIRE

The main French possessions at the end of the Second World War were:

- Syria in the Middle East, from which they withdrew in 1946;
- Guadeloupe and Martinique (islands in the West Indies);
- French Guiana (on the mainland of South America);
- Indo-China in south-east Asia;

together with huge areas of North and West Africa:

- Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria (together known as the Maghreb);
- French West Africa;
- French Equatorial Africa;
- the large island of Madagascar off the south-east coast of Africa.

The French began by trying to suppress all nationalist agitation, regarding it as high treason.

As the 1944 Brazzaville Declaration put it:

The colonising work of France makes it impossible to accept any idea of autonomy for the colonies or any possibility of development outside the French Empire. Even at a distant date, there will be no self-government in the colonies.

But gradually the French were influenced by Britain's moves towards decolonization, and after their defeat in Indo-China in 1954, they too were forced to bow to the 'wind of change'.

(a) Indo-China

Before the war, the French had exercised direct rule over the area around Saigon and had protectorates over Annam, Tonkin, Cambodia and Laos. A protectorate was a country which was officially independent with its own ruler, but which was under the 'protection' or guardianship of the mother country. It usually meant, in practice, that the mother country, in this case France, controlled affairs in the protectorate just as it did in a colony.

During the war, the whole area was occupied by the Japanese, and resistance was organized by the communist *Ho Chi Minh and the League for Vietnamese Independence (Vietminh)*. When the Japanese withdrew in 1945, Ho Chi Minh declared

Vietnam independent. This was unacceptable to the French, and an eight-year armed struggle began which culminated in the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954 (see Sections 8.3(a) and 21.2–3). The defeat was a humiliating blow for the French and it caused a political crisis. The government resigned and the new and more liberal premier Pierre Mendès-France, realizing that public opinion was turning against the war, decided to withdraw.

At the Geneva Conference (July 1954) it was agreed that Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia should become independent. Unfortunately this was not the end of the troubles. Although the French had withdrawn, the Americans were unwilling to allow the whole of Vietnam to come under the rule of the communist Ho Chi Minh, and an even more bloody struggle developed (see Section 8.3(b–e)); there were also problems in Cambodia (see Section 9.4(b)).

(b) Tunisia and Morocco

Both these areas were protectorates – Tunisia had a ruler known as the bey, and Morocco had a Muslim king, Mohammed V. But nationalists resented French control and had been campaigning for real independence since before the Second World War. The situation was complicated by the presence of large numbers of European settlers. Tunisia had about 250 000 and Morocco about 300 000 of these in 1945, and they were committed to maintaining the connection with France, which guaranteed their privileged position.

1 Tunisia

In Tunisia the main nationalist group was *the New Destour* led by Habib Bourghiba. They had widespread support among both rural dwellers and townspeople who believed independence would improve their living standards. A guerrilla campaign was launched against the French, who responded by banning New Destour and imprisoning Bourghiba (1952); 70 000 French troops were deployed against the guerrillas, but failed to crush them. The French became aware of a disturbing trend: with Bourghiba and other moderate leaders in jail, the guerrilla movement was becoming more left-wing and less willing to negotiate. Under pressure at the same time in Indo-China and Morocco, the French realized that they would have to give way. With a moderate like Bourghiba at the head of the country, there would be more chance of maintaining French influence after independence. He was released from jail and Mendès-France allowed him to form a government. In March 1956 Tunisia became fully independent under Bourghiba's leadership.

2 Morocco

In Morocco the pattern of events was remarkably similar. There was a nationalist party calling itself *Istiqlal (Independence)*, and King Mohammed himself seemed to be in the forefront of opposition to the French. The new trade unions also played an important role. The French deposed the king (1953), provoking violent demonstrations and a guerrilla campaign. Faced with the prospect of yet another long and expensive anti-guerrilla war, the French decided to bow to the inevitable. The king was allowed to return and Morocco became independent in 1956.

(c) Algeria

It was here that the 'settler' factor had the most serious consequences. There were over a million French settlers (known as *pieds noirs*, 'black feet'), who controlled something like a third of all the most fertile land in Algeria, taken from the original Algerian owners

during the century before 1940. The whites exported most of the crops they produced and also used some of the land to grow vines for winemaking; this meant there was less food available for the growing African population, whose standard of living was clearly falling. There was an active, though peaceful, nationalist movement led by Messali Hadj, but after almost ten years of campaigning following the end of the Second World War, they had achieved absolutely nothing.

- The French settlers would make no concessions whatsoever, continuing to dominate the economy with their large farms and treating the Algerians as second-class citizens. They firmly believed that fear of the full might of the French army would be enough to dissuade the nationalists from becoming violent.
- Algeria continued to be treated not as a colony or a protectorate, but as an extension or province of metropolitan France itself; but that did not mean that the 9 million Muslim Arab Algerians were treated as equals with ordinary French people. They were allowed no say in the government of their country. Responding to pressure, the French government allowed what appeared to be power-sharing. An Algerian assembly of 120 members was set up, though its powers were limited. But the voting was heavily weighted in favour of the Europeans: the million whites were allowed to vote for 60 members, while the other 60 were chosen by the 9 million Muslim population. Corruption on the part of the Europeans usually meant that they had a majority in the assembly.
- In spite of what had happened in Indo-China, Tunisia and Morocco, no French government dared consider independence for Algeria, since this would incur the wrath of the settlers and their supporters in France. Even Mendès-France declared: 'France without Algeria would be no France.'

Tragically, the stubbornness of the settlers and their refusal even to talk meant that the struggle would be decided by the extremists. Encouraged by the French defeat in Indo-China, a more militant nationalist group was formed – *the National Liberation Front (FLN)*, led by *Ben Bella*, which launched a guerrilla war towards the end of 1954. At the same time, however, they promised that when they came to power, the *pieds noirs* would be treated fairly. On the other hand, the settlers were still confident that with the support of the French army they could overcome the guerrillas. The war gradually escalated as the French sent more forces. By 1960 they had 700 000 troops engaged in a massive anti-terrorist operation. *The war was having profound effects in France itself:*

- Many French politicians realized that even if the army won the military struggle, the FLN still had the support of most of the Algerian people, and while this lasted, *French control of Algeria could never be secure.*
- *The war split public opinion in France* between those who wanted to continue supporting the white settlers and those who thought the struggle was hopeless. At times feelings ran so high that France itself seemed on the verge of civil war.
- The French army, after its defeats in the Second World War and Indo-China, saw the Algerian war as a chance to restore its reputation and refused to contemplate surrender. Some generals were prepared to stage a military coup against any government that decided to give Algeria independence.
- In May 1958, suspecting that the government was about to give way, as it had in Tunisia and Morocco, Generals Massu and Salan organized demonstrations in Algiers and demanded that General de Gaulle should be called in to head a new government. They were convinced that the general, a great patriot, would never agree to Algerian independence. They began to put their plan – codenamed *Resurrection* – into operation, airlifting troops from Algiers into Paris, where it was

intended that they should occupy government buildings. Civil war seemed imminent; the government could see no way out of the deadlock and consequently resigned. De Gaulle cleverly used the media to reinforce his case; he condemned the weakness of the Fourth Republic and its 'regime of the parties', which he claimed was incapable of dealing with the problem. Then, looking back to 1940, he said: 'Not so long ago, the country, in its hour of peril, trusted me to lead it to salvation. Today, with the trials that face it once again, it should know that I am ready to assume the powers of the Republic.'

President Coty called upon de Gaulle, who agreed to become prime minister on condition that he could draw up a new constitution. This turned out to be *the end of the Fourth Republic*. Historians have had a great debate about the role of de Gaulle in all this. How much had he known about Resurrection? Had he or his supporters actually planned it themselves so that he could return to power? Was he simply using the situation in Algeria as a way of destroying the Fourth Republic, which he thought was weak? What does seem clear is that he knew about the plan and had dropped hints to Massu and Salan that if President Coty refused to allow him to take power, he would be happy for Resurrection to go ahead so that he could take power in that way.

- De Gaulle soon produced his new constitution, giving the president much more power, and he was elected president of the Fifth Republic (December 1958), a position he held until his resignation in April 1969. His enormous prestige was demonstrated when a referendum was held on the new constitution – in France itself, over 80 per cent voted in favour, while in Algeria, where Muslim Algerians were allowed to vote on equal terms with whites for the first time, over 76 per cent were in favour.

Having gained power, de Gaulle was now expected to deliver a solution. But how could he possibly achieve this when any attempt at compromise would be seen as total betrayal by the very people who had helped him to power? But de Gaulle was the great pragmatist. As the vicious fighting continued, with both sides committing atrocities, he must have realized that outright military victory was out of the question. He no doubt hoped that his popularity would enable him to force a settlement. When he showed a willingness to negotiate with the FLN, the army and the settlers were incensed; this was not what they had expected from him. Led by General Salan, they set up *l'Organisation de l'Armée Secrète* (OAS) in (1961), which began a terrorist campaign, blowing up buildings and murdering critics both in Algeria and in France. Several times they attempted to assassinate de Gaulle; in August 1962, after independence had been granted, he and his wife narrowly escaped death when their car was riddled with bullets. When it was announced that peace talks would begin at Evian, the OAS seized power in Algeria. This was going too far for most French people and for many of the army too. When de Gaulle appeared on television dressed in his full general's uniform and denounced the OAS, the army split, and the rebellion collapsed.

The French public was sick of the war and there was widespread approval when Ben Bella, who had been in prison since 1956, was released to attend peace talks at Evian. *It was agreed that Algeria should become independent in July 1962*, and Ben Bella was elected as its first president the following year. About 800 000 settlers left the country and the new government took over most of their land and businesses. The aftermath of the struggle was savage. Algerian Muslims who had remained loyal to France, including some 200 000 who had served in the French army, were now denounced by the FLN as traitors. Nobody knows how many were executed or murdered, but some estimates put the total as high as 150 000. Some historians have criticized de Gaulle for his handling of the Algerian situation and for the enormous bloodshed that was caused. Of all the wars of independence

waged against a colonial power, this was one of the most bloody. Yet, given the intransigence of the white settlers and the rebel elements of the army, and eventually that of the FLN, it is difficult to imagine any other politician who could have handled it any better. It may have been a flawed process, but arguably it was one that saved France from civil war.

(d) The rest of the French Empire

The French possessions in Africa south of the Sahara were:

- **French West Africa**, consisting of eight colonies: Dahomey, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mauretania, Niger, Senegal, Sudan and Upper Volta;
- **French Equatorial Africa**, consisting of four colonies: Chad, Gabon, Middle Congo and Oubangui-Shari;
- a third group consisting of **Cameroun** and **Togo** (former German colonies given to France to be looked after as mandates in 1919), and the island of **Madagascar**.

French policy after 1945 was to treat these territories as if they were part of France. Yet this was a sham, since the Africans were not treated on equal terms with Europeans, and any moves towards more privileges for the Africans were opposed by the French settlers. In 1949 the French government decided to clamp down on all nationalist movements, and many nationalist leaders and trade unionists were arrested. Often they were denounced as communist agitators, though without much evidence to support the accusations.

Gradually the French were forced by events in Indo-China and the Maghreb, together with the fact that Britain was preparing the Gold Coast and Nigeria for independence, to change their policy. *In 1956 the 12 colonies of West and Equatorial Africa were each given self-government for internal affairs, but they continued to press for full independence.*

When de Gaulle came to power in 1958 he proposed a new plan, hoping to keep as much control over the colonies as possible:

- the 12 colonies would continue to have self-government, each with its own parliament for local affairs;
- they would all be members of a new union, *the French Community*, and France would take all important decisions about taxation and foreign affairs;
- all members of the community would receive economic aid from France;
- there would be a referendum in each colony to decide whether the plan should be accepted or not;
- colonies opting for full independence could have it, but would receive no French aid.

De Gaulle was confident that none of them would dare face the future without French help. He was almost right: 11 colonies voted in favour of his plan, but one, *Guinea, under the leadership of Sékou Touré, returned a 95 per cent vote against the plan.* Guinea was given independence immediately (1958), but all French aid was stopped. However, Guinea's brave stand encouraged the other 11, as well as Togo, Cameroun and Madagascar: they all demanded full independence and de Gaulle agreed. They all became independent republics during 1960. However, this new independence was not quite so complete as the new states had hoped: *de Gaulle was intent on neo-colonialism* – all the states except Guinea found that France still influenced their economic and foreign policies, and any independent action was almost out of the question.

Three French possessions outside Africa – Martinique, Guadeloupe and French Guiana – were not given independence. They continued to be treated as extensions of the mother country and their official status was ‘overseas départements’ (a sort of county or province). Their peoples voted in French elections and their representatives sat in the French National Assembly in Paris.

24.6 THE NETHERLANDS, BELGIUM, SPAIN, PORTUGAL AND ITALY

All these colonial powers, with the exception of Italy, were, if anything, even more determined than France to hold on to their overseas possessions. This was probably because, being less wealthy than Britain and France, they lacked the resources to sustain neo-colonialism. There was no way that they would be able to maintain the equivalent of the British Commonwealth or the French influence over their former colonies, against competition from foreign capital.

(a) The Netherlands

Before the Second World War, the Netherlands had a huge empire in the East Indies including the large islands of Sumatra, Java and Celebes, West Irian (part of the island of New Guinea) and about two-thirds of the island of Borneo (see Map 24.3). They also owned some islands in the West Indies, and Surinam on the mainland of South America, between British and French Guiana.

It was in the valuable East Indies that the first challenge came to Dutch control, even before the war. The Dutch operated in a way similar to the French in Algeria – they grew crops for export and did very little to improve the living standards of the East Indians. Nationalist groups campaigned throughout the 1930s, and many leaders, including Ahmed Sukarno, were arrested. When the Japanese invaded in 1942, they released Sukarno and others and allowed them to play a part in the administration of the country, promising independence when the war was over. With the Japanese defeat in 1945, *Sukarno declared an independent Republic of Indonesia*, not expecting any resistance from the Dutch, who had been defeated and their country occupied by the Germans. However, Dutch troops soon arrived and made determined efforts to regain control. Although the Dutch had some success, the war dragged on, and they were still a long way from complete victory in 1949, when they at last decided to negotiate. *Reasons for their decision were the following.*

- The expense of the campaign was crippling for a small country like the Netherlands.
- Outright victory still seemed a long way off.
- They were under strong pressure from the UN to reach agreement.
- Other countries, including the USA and Australia, were pressing the Dutch to grant independence so that they could exert their influence in the area, once exclusive Dutch control ended.
- The Dutch hoped that by making concessions, they would be able to preserve the link between Holland and Indonesia and maintain some influence.

The Netherlands agreed to recognize the independence of the United States of Indonesia (1949) with Sukarno as president, but not including West Irian. Sukarno agreed to a Netherlands–Indonesia Union under the Dutch crown, and Dutch troops were withdrawn. However, the following year Sukarno broke away from the Union and began to pressurize the Dutch to hand over West Irian, seizing Dutch-owned property and expelling Europeans. Eventually in 1963, the Dutch gave way and allowed West Irian to become part of Indonesia.

Important developments took place in 1965 when Sukarno was overthrown in a right-wing military coup, apparently because he was thought to be too much under the influence of communist China and the Indonesian Communist Party – the largest communist party outside the USSR and China. The USA, operating via the CIA, was involved in the coup, because they did not like Sukarno's toleration of the Communist Party, or the way in which he was acting as leader of the non-aligned and anti-imperialist movements of the Third World. The Americans welcomed Sukarno's successor, General Suharto, who obligingly introduced what he called his 'New Order'. This involved a purge of communists, during which at least half a million people were murdered, and the Communist Party was broken. The regime had all the hallmarks of a brutal military dictatorship, but there were few protests from the West because, in the Cold War atmosphere, Suharto's anti-communist campaign was perfectly acceptable. Of the other Dutch possessions, Surinam was allowed to become an independent republic in 1975; the West Indian islands were treated as part of the Netherlands, though allowed some control over their internal affairs.

(b) Belgium

Belgian control of their African possessions, the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi, ended in chaos, violence and civil war. *The Belgians thought that the best ways to preserve their control were as follows.*

- Denying the Africans any advanced education. This would prevent them from coming into contact with nationalist ideas and deprive them of an educated professional class who could lead them to independence.
- Using tribal rivalries to their advantage by playing off different tribes against each other. This worked well in the huge Congo, which contained about 150 tribes; men from one tribe would be used to keep order in another tribal area. In Ruanda-Urundi the Belgians used the Tutsi tribe to help them control the other main tribal group, the Hutu.

In spite of all these efforts, nationalist ideas still began to filter in from neighbouring French and British colonies.

1 The Belgian Congo

The Belgians seemed taken by surprise when widespread rioting broke out (January 1959) in the capital of the Congo, Leopoldville. The crowds were protesting against unemployment and declining living standards, and disorder soon spread throughout the country.

The Belgians suddenly changed their policy and announced that the Congo could become independent in six months. This was inviting disaster: the Belgians' own policies meant that there was no experienced group of Africans to which power could be handed over; the Congolese had not been educated for professional jobs – there were only 17 graduates in the entire country, and there were no African doctors, lawyers, engineers or officers in the army. *The Congolese National Movement (MNC)*, led by *Patrice Lumumba*, had been in existence less than a year. The huge size of the country and the large number of tribes would make it difficult to govern. Six months was far too short a time to prepare for independence.

Why did the Belgians take this extraordinary decision?

- They were afraid of further bloodshed if they hesitated; there were over 100 000 Belgians in the country, who could be at risk.
- They did not want to face the expense of a long anti-guerrilla campaign like the one dragging on in Algeria.

- They hoped that granting independence immediately while the Congo was weak and divided would leave the new state completely helpless; it would be dependent on Belgium for support and advice, and so Belgian influence could be preserved.

The Congo became independent on 30 June 1960 with Lumumba as prime minister and Joseph Kasavubu, the leader of a rival nationalist group, as president. Unfortunately everything went wrong shortly after independence and the country was plunged into a disastrous civil war (see Section 25.5). Order was not restored until 1964.

2 Ruanda-Urundi

The other Belgian territory, *Ruanda-Urundi*, was given independence in 1962 and divided into two states – Rwanda and Burundi, both governed by members of the Tutsi tribe, as they had been throughout the colonial period. Neither of the states had been properly prepared, and after independence, both had a very unsettled history of bitter rivalry and violence between the Tutsis and the Hutus (see Section 25.7).

(c) Spain

Spain owned some areas in Africa: the largest was Spanish Sahara, and there were also the small colonies of Spanish Morocco, Ifni and Spanish Guinea. General Franco, the right-wing dictator who ruled Spain from 1939 until 1975, showed little interest in the colonies.

- When nationalist movements developed, he did not resist long in the case of *Spanish Morocco*: when the French gave independence to French Morocco (1956), Franco followed suit and Spanish Morocco became part of Morocco. The other two small colonies had to wait much longer;
- *Ifni* was allowed to join Morocco, but not until 1969;
- *Guinea* became independent as Equatorial Guinea in 1968.

Spanish Sahara

Here Franco resisted even longer, because the country was a valuable source of phosphates. Only after Franco's death in 1975 did the new Spanish government agree to release Sahara. Unfortunately the process was badly bungled: instead of making it into an independent state ruled by its nationalist party, *the Polisario Front*, it was decided to divide it between its two neighbouring states, Morocco and Mauritania. The Polisario Front, under its leader, Mohamed Abdelaziz, declared the Democratic Arab Republic of Sahara (1976), which was recognized by Algeria, Libya, the communist states and India. Algeria and Libya sent help and in 1979 Mauritania decided to withdraw, making it easier for Sahara to struggle on against Morocco. However, the fact that Sahara had been officially recognized by the USSR was enough to arouse American suspicions. Just when it seemed that the Moroccans too were prepared to negotiate peace, the new American president, Ronald Reagan, encouraged them to continue the fight, stepping up aid to Morocco.

The war dragged on through the 1980s; yet another new Third World country had become a victim of superpower self-interest. In 1990 the UN proposed that a referendum should be held so that the people of Sahara could choose whether to be independent or become part of Morocco. Both sides signed a ceasefire, but the referendum was never held; during the 1990s the Polisario forces grew weaker as support was withdrawn by Algeria and Libya, mainly because they were preoccupied with their own problems. Sahara remained under Moroccan control and large numbers of Moroccan settlers began

to move in. At the same time many Saharans, including Polisario fighters, moved out of the country and were forced to live in refugee camps in Algeria.

(d) Portugal

The main Portuguese possessions were in Africa: the two large areas of *Angola* and *Mozambique*, and the small West African colony of *Portuguese Guinea*. They also still owned the eastern half of the island of Timor in the East Indies. The right-wing Portuguese government of Dr Salazar blithely ignored nationalist developments in the rest of Africa, and for many years after 1945 the Portuguese colonies seemed quiet and resigned to their position. They were mainly agricultural; there were few industrial workers and the black populations were almost entirely illiterate. In 1956 there were only 50 Africans in the whole of Mozambique who had received any secondary education. Though nationalist groups were formed in all three colonies in 1956, they remained insignificant. *Several factors changed the situation.*

- By 1960 the nationalists were greatly encouraged by the large number of other African states winning independence.
- The Salazar regime, having learned nothing from the experiences of the other colonial powers, stepped up its repressive policies, but this only made the nationalists more resolute.
- Fighting broke out first in Angola (1961), where Agostinho Neto's *MPLA (People's Movement for Angolan Liberation)* was the main nationalist movement. Violence soon spread to Guinea, where Amilcar Cabral led the resistance, and to Mozambique, where the FRELIMO guerrillas were organized by Eduardo Mondlane.
- The nationalists, who all had strong Marxist connections, received economic and military aid from the Communist bloc.
- The Portuguese army found it impossible to suppress the nationalist guerrillas; the troops became demoralized and the cost escalated until by 1973 the government was spending 40 per cent of its budget fighting three colonial wars at once.
- Still the Portuguese government refused to abandon its policy; but public opinion and many army officers were sick of the wars, and in 1974 the Salazar dictatorship was overthrown by a military coup.

Soon all three colonies were granted independence: Guinea took the name Guinea-Bissau (September 1974) and Mozambique and Angola became independent the following year. This caused a serious crisis for Rhodesia and South Africa; they were now the only states left in Africa ruled by white minorities, and their governments felt increasingly threatened.

Now it was the turn of Angola to become a victim of outside interference and the Cold War. South African troops immediately invaded the country in support of UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), while General Mobutu of Zaire, with American backing, launched another invasion in support of the FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of Angola). The Americans thought that a joint Angolan government of these two groups would be more amenable and open to western influence than the Marxist MPLA. The MPLA received aid in the form of Russian weapons and a Cuban army; this enabled them to defeat both invasion forces by March 1976, and Neto was accepted as president of the new state. This proved to be only a temporary respite – further invasions followed and Angola was torn by civil war right through into the 1990s (see Section 25.6). The South Africans also interfered in Mozambique, sending raiding parties over the border and doing their best to destabilize the FRELIMO government. Again the country was torn by civil war for many years (see Section 9.4(c)).

One other Portuguese territory deserves mention: East Timor was half of a small island in the East Indies (see Map 24.6); the western half belonged to the Netherlands and became part of Indonesia in 1949. East Timor's nationalist movement (FRETILIN) won a short civil war against the ruling group, which wanted to stay with Portugal (September 1975). The USA denounced the new government as Marxist, which was not entirely accurate; after only a few weeks, Indonesian troops invaded, overthrew the government and incorporated East Timor into Indonesia, a sequence of events vividly described in Timothy Mo's novel *The Redundancy of Courage*. The USA continued to supply military goods to the Indonesians, who were guilty of appalling atrocities both during and after the war. It is estimated that about 100 000 people were killed (one-sixth of the population) while another 300 000 were put into detention camps.

FRETILIN continued to campaign for independence, but although the UN and the EU condemned Indonesia's action, East Timor was apparently too small and too unimportant, and the nationalists too left-wing to warrant any sanctions being applied against Indonesia by the West. The USA consistently defended Indonesia's claim to East Timor and played down the violence. In November 1991, for example, 271 people were killed in Dili, the capital, when Indonesian troops attacked a pro-independence demonstration. However, this incident helped to focus international attention on the campaign against Indonesian abuses of human rights and against US and UK arms sales to Indonesia. In 1996, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Dili, Carlos Belo, and exiled FRETILIN spokesman José Ramos-Horta, were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, in recognition of their long, non-violent campaign for independence.

By 1999, with international support for East Timor mounting, and the Cold War long since over, Indonesia at last began to give way and offered to allow a referendum on 'special autonomy' for East Timor. This was organized by the UN and took place in August 1999, resulting in an almost 80 per cent vote for complete independence from Indonesia. However, the pro-Indonesian minority did their best to sabotage the elections; as voting took place, their militia, backed by Indonesian troops, did everything they could to intimidate voters and throw the whole country into chaos. After the result was announced, they ran wild in a furious outburst of revenge and destruction, killing 2000 and leaving 250 000 homeless. Violence was only ended by the arrival of a large Australian peacekeeping force.

Two years later, in August 2001, when elections were held for the Constituent Assembly, the situation was much calmer. FRETILIN won by a large majority and their



Map 24.6 **Indonesia and East Timor**

Source: *The Guardian*, 20 April 1996.

leader, Xanana Gusmao, was elected as the first president. In May 2002, East Timor received international recognition as an independent state after a struggle lasting more than a quarter of a century.

(e) Italy

It was officially decided in 1947 that the Italians, having supported Hitler and suffered defeat in the Second World War, must lose their overseas empire. Their African possessions were to be administered by France and Britain until the UN decided what to do with them. The UN followed a policy of placing the territories under governments which would be sympathetic to western interests.

- *Ethiopia* was handed back to the rule of the Emperor Haile Selassie, who had been forced into exile when the Italians invaded Ethiopia (Abyssinia) in 1935.
- *Libya* was given independence under King Idris (1951).
- *Eritrea* was made part of Ethiopia (1952) but it was to have a large measure of self-government within a federal system.
- *Italian Somaliland* was merged with British Somaliland to form the independent state of Somalia (1960).

Some of these arrangements did not prove to be very successful. Both Idris and Selassie became unpopular with their peoples, Idris because he was thought to be too pro-West, and Selassie because he made no attempt to modernize Ethiopia and did little to improve the living standards of his people. He also made the mistake of cancelling Eritrea's rights of self-government (1962), which prompted the Eritreans into launching a war for independence. Idris was overthrown in 1969 by a socialist revolutionary movement, which nationalized the oil industry and began to modernize the country. Selassie was overthrown in 1974. New leaders soon emerged – Colonel Gaddafi in Libya and Colonel Mengistu in Ethiopia, both of whom turned to the USSR for economic aid. Mengistu seemed to have the more serious problems. He made the mistake of refusing to come to terms with the Eritreans and was faced with other provinces – Tigre and Ogaden – also wanting independence. As he struggled to suppress all these breakaway movements, military expenditure soared and his country sank into even deeper poverty and famine (see Section 25.9).

24.7 VERDICT ON DECOLONIZATION

Although some states, particularly Britain (with the exception of Kenya), handled decolonization better than others, in general it was not a pleasant experience for the colonies, and there was no simple happy ending. There were some gains for the new states, which now had much more control over what went on inside their frontiers; and there were some gains for ordinary people, such as advances in education and social services, and a political culture which allowed them to vote. However, it soon became fashionable to dismiss the entire colonial and imperial experience as a disaster, in which European nations, with supreme arrogance, imposed control over their subject peoples, exploited them ruthlessly and then withdrew unwillingly, leaving them impoverished and facing new problems. Piers Brendon points out that this was not really surprising, since 'the British Empire's real purpose was not to spread sweetness and light but to increase Britain's wealth and power. Naturally its coercive and exploitative nature must be disguised.' The same applied to other European empires, except perhaps that they were not as good as the British in disguising it. George Orwell remarked that empire was 'a despotism with theft as its final

object'. Bertrand Russell called the British Empire 'a cesspool for British moral refuse', by which he apparently meant that many of the British administrators and officials were racist bullies.

There is plenty of evidence to support this negative view of colonialism. Although by no means all officials were racist bullies, there is no doubt that most of them treated the native peoples with arrogance, and considered them to be inferior beings or lesser breeds. After the Indian Mutiny of 1857, the army vowed to spill 'barrels and barrels of the filth that flows in these niggers' veins for every drop of blood' that they had shed. Piers Brendon shows that 'the history of India is punctuated by famines which caused tens of millions of deaths'. During a severe famine in Bengal in 1942–3, Churchill refused to divert shipping to take food supplies to Calcutta. The result – over 3 million people died from starvation. Much more can be added to the debit list: the slaughter of thousands of Aborigines in Australia and Maoris in New Zealand; during the Boer War (1899–1902) in South Africa, the British set up concentration camps in which about one-sixth of the entire Boer population died. Whenever there was any resistance, retribution was usually swift and disproportionate: Afghanistan, Ceylon, Jamaica, Burma, Kenya and Iraq were all ruthlessly subjugated. One of the latest historians to pronounce on imperialism is Richard Gott, in his book *Britain's Empire: Resistance, Repression and Revolt* (2012). He goes along with what is probably the majority view, presenting a long catalogue of crimes against humanity committed by British imperialists: slavery, famine, prison, repression, battles, massacre, devastation and extermination; it makes depressing reading.

What about the supposed benefits that imperialism was claimed to have brought? The evidence suggests that, at best, these were thinly spread.

- *Neo-colonialism* meant that western European countries and the USA still exerted a great deal of control over the new states, which continued to need the markets and the investment that the West could provide.
- *Many new states, especially in Africa, had been badly prepared or not prepared at all for independence.* Their frontiers were often artificial ones forced on them by the Europeans and there was little incentive for different tribes to stay together. In Nigeria and the Belgian Congo tribal differences helped to cause civil war. When the British withdrew from Nyasaland (Malawi) there were only three secondary schools for 3 million Africans, and not one single industrial factory. When the Portuguese were forced to withdraw from Mozambique, they deliberately destroyed installations and machinery in revenge.
- Although the people of the newly independent states were now able to vote, *in most cases, the governments which took over were run by the local political elite groups.* There was no social revolution and no guarantee that ordinary people would be any better off. Many historians, including Ellen M. Wood, have pointed out that their new political rights and citizenship were essentially passive. People were allowed to vote from time to time, but in practice it hardly made any difference to the way the country was run. 'The whole point of this strategy', she writes, 'is to put formal political rights in place of social rights, and to put as much of social life as possible out of the reach of democratic accountability.'

In countries where new governments *were* prepared to introduce socialist policies (nationalizing resources or foreign businesses), or where governments showed any sign of being pro-communist, the western countries disapproved. They often responded by cutting off aid or helping to destabilize the government, and in some cases, even overthrowing governments. This happened in Indo-China, Indonesia, East Timor, Chad, Angola, Mozambique, Zaire and Jamaica. For example, in 1974 when Portugal withdrew from East Timor, the indigenous population opted to become independent. But the Indonesian leader, General Suharto, claimed East

Timor for Indonesia. The leading political party in East Timor, known as FRETILIN, was thought to be Marxist, so that an independent East Timor might have socialist or even communist leanings. Consequently US president Gerald Ford gave Suharto the go-ahead: Indonesian troops move into East Timor to force the people to submit to Indonesian rule. They resisted stoutly, and there was a long campaign of terror in which around 200 000 people were killed out of a total population of only 700 000. Only in 1999 did the UN intervene and helped East Timor to gain its independence. Similar Cold War interventions took place in many countries in Central and South America which had gained their independence much earlier, in the nineteenth century (see Chapter 26).

- *All the Third World states faced intense poverty.* They were economically underdeveloped and often relied on exports of only one or two commodities; a fall in the world price of their product was a major disaster. Loans from abroad left them heavily in debt (see Section 26.2). As usual, Africa was worst hit: it was the only area of the world where, in 1987, incomes were on average lower than in 1972.

On the other hand, in 2003, historian Niall Ferguson brought out a strong defence of the British Empire and its legacy. While admitting that Britain's record as a colonial power was not without blemish, he argued that the benefits of British rule were considerable. In the nineteenth century the British 'pioneered free trade, free capital movements and, with the abolition of slavery, free labour'. In addition they developed a global network of modern communications, spread a system of law and order and 'maintained a global peace unmatched before or since'. When the Empire came to an end, the former British territories were left with the successful structures of liberal capitalism, the institutions of parliamentary democracy and the English language, which today is a vitally important medium of global communication. 'What the British Empire proved', Ferguson concludes controversially, 'is that empire is a form of international government which can work – and not just for the benefit of the ruling power. It sought to globalize not just an economic but a legal and ultimately a political system too.'


In conclusion, it seems fair to say that so many limitations were placed on the independence given to the former colonies after the Second World War that the result was to divide people's political rights from any chance of expressing their rights in social and economic affairs. True, they were now able to vote, but this did not necessarily enable them to improve their standards of living, since governments were still dominated by wealthy privileged elites. Canadian historian Anthony J. Hall calls this 'the great betrayal of humanity's democratic promise'. Kwame Nkrumah, the leader of the newly independent Ghana, described it well in his book *Neo-Colonialism*. Criticizing the growing power of global capitalism, he wrote: 'For those who practise neo-colonialism, it means power without responsibility and for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress.' In 1946 there were 74 nation-states on the planet; in 1995, thanks to decolonization, the number had risen to 192. In the words of Anthony J. Hall:

There was much unevenness, however, in the outcomes from this process of decolonization. Indeed the evidence is overwhelming that the frontier expansions of global corporations, along with the exercise of coercive authority centred in the military-industrial complex [see Section 23.3(b)] of the United States, intensifies the disparities of wealth and power that continue to reside at the very core in its most essential sense. Class exploitation and colonial exploitation are two sides of the same coin ... [it all tends] to favour the interests of small, local oligarchies rather than to deliver on the ideals of broad-ranging liberation that the winds of change seemed initially to promise.

FURTHER READING

- Anderson, D., *Histories of the Hanged: Britain's Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (Weidenfeld, 2005).
- Brasted, H., 'Decolonisation in India: Britain's Positive Role', *Modern History Review* (November 1990).
- Brendon, P., 'A Moral Audit of the British Empire', *History Today* (October 2007).
- Brendon, P. *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire* (Jonathan Cape, 2007).
- Clarke, P., *The Last Thousand Days of the British Empire: The Demise of a Superpower, 1944–47* (Allen Lane, 2007).
- Davidson, B., *Africa in Modern History* (Macmillan, 1992).
- Elkins, C., *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya* (Jonathan Cape, 2005).
- Ferguson, N., *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (Allen Lane/Penguin, 2003).
- Ferguson, N., *Civilisation: The West and the Rest* (Allen Lane, 2011).
- Gott, R., *Britain's Empire: Resistance, Repression and Revolt* (Verso, 2012).
- Hall, A. J., *Earth into Property. Colonization, Decolonization and Capitalism* (McGill University Press, 2010).
- Holland, R. F., *European Decolonisation 1918–1981* (Macmillan, 1985).
- Holland, R. F., 'Imperial Decline: A New Historiography', *Modern History Review* (February 1992).
- Holland, R. F., *Emergencies and Disorders in the European Empires after 1945* (Routledge, 2004).
- Hyam, R., *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918–68* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).
- Kriger, N. J., *Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).
- Schwarz, B., *The White Man's World* (Oxford University Press, 2011).
- Tunzelmann, A. von, *Indian Summer: The Secret History of the End of an Empire* (Simon & Schuster, 2007).
- Wood, E. M., 'Democracy as Ideology of Empire', in C. Mooers (ed.), *The New Imperialists: Ideologies of Empire* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006).

QUESTIONS

- 1 'Without de Gaulle's masterly handling of the situation, the Algerian crisis would probably have plunged France into civil war. How far would you agree with this verdict on President de Gaulle's contribution to the events leading to Algerian independence?
 - 2 'Decolonization did not bring the benefits for the majority of the African people which they had hoped for.' Explain why you agree or disagree with this assessment of decolonization in Africa.
 - 3 'Indian independence was not a gift from the British; it was the hard-won fruit of struggle and sacrifice.' Explain whether you think this is an accurate verdict on India's progress towards independence.
 - 4 Explain why it was thought necessary to divide India, creating the separate state of Pakistan.
 - 5 Assess the reasons for the growth of nationalism in the European colonies after the Second World War. How important was nationalism in bringing about decolonization?
-  There is a document question about the Kenyan struggle for independence on the website.