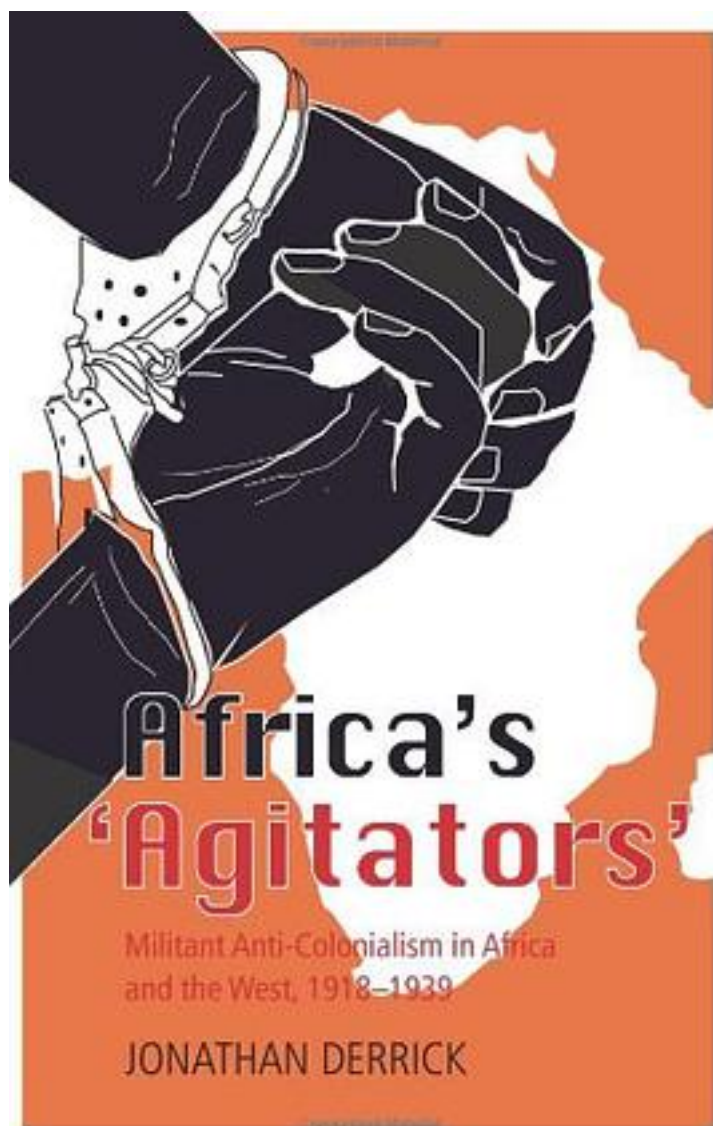


Africa's 'Agitators'



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The period between the two World Wars were troubling years for colonial empire. Individuals and organizations began to call for major reforms and an end to white supremacy and colonial rule, contributing first to local unrest and protest and then to anticolonial activity not only in Africa but the United States and Europe as well. In this compelling history, Jonathan Derrick, a renowned scholar of Africa's past, recounts the opposition to British and French rule practiced both by Africans living on the continent and by European anticolonialists and members of the Black Diaspora. He covers campaigns waged by an early incarnation of the African National Congress and other groups in South Africa who fought against legal and other aspects of white minority rule. He also talks of the Kikuyu protests against the settler regime in Kenya; Marcus Garvey's African American movement and its role in sparking interest in Africa; the Etoile Nord Africaine, formed mainly by Algerians in France, that called for the independence of French North Africa; protests led by European critics against forced labor in Kenya and French Equatorial Africa; and the activity of small militant groups like the Ligue de Defense de la Race Negre (LDRN) in France and George Padmore's International African Service Bureau (IASB) in Britain. Derrick examines the role of the Comintern and Western Communist parties that were opposed to Western colonialism and ready to support militant action against it. He highlights common misunderstandings regarding the collaboration between Communists and other left-wing organizations on the one hand and African nationalists and pan-Africanists on the other, and examines the Communists' separation from Padmore, as well as the LDRN leader Garan Kouyate. He shows that, although colonial rulers greatly feared the specter of Communism in Africa, actual Communist activity was in fact quite small. Derrick reveals how, with the exception of a few colonies, anticolonial activity was easily organized, primarily because militants in Europe had the freedom to operate and create a tremendous impact. In the later 1930s, nationalist movements, fuelled by African outrage at the Italian occupation of Ethiopia, began to spread in parts of Africa. The approach and onset of the Second World War affected the rhetoric of anticolonialists, with French Communists opposing calls for independence as long as the danger of Nazism and Fascism existed, but some militants continued their anti-empire campaigns until 1939. The war then pushed colonial issues to the background, but as Derrick argues, in the long term the anticolonialists of the interwar era may have helped pave the way for later decolonization.

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