

African Churches in Social Transformation

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Abstract:

It is an ironic twist of history that Euro-American interests in the "democratization" of Africa accelerated after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990, rather than at the establishment of African republics following decolonization in the 1960s. African struggles for national independence in the 1940s and 1950s did not get much support, moral or otherwise, from Western Europe and North America, even though in the North Atlantic nations, freedom was cherished as one of the basic human rights and democracy was championed as the ideal form of government. The rich nations now interested in democratization of Africa did not consider it a priority for the continent in the decades since decolonization: Ideological considerations took precedence over Africa's democratization. The national constitutions brokered and signed respectively in London, Paris, Lisbon and Washington to end colonial rule in Africa were, in principle, democratic, but the citizens were hardly informed about their democratic rights under the provisions of those constitutions. Civic education campaigns should have immediately followed national independence. Had they, the citizens would have become aware of their rights from the beginning. As it turned out, Africa became a continent of coups and countercoups, of one-party and military regimes. The leaders of those regimes had the tacit support of one ideological bloc or the other. Thus these political convulsions were largely, though not exclusively, shaped by Cold War interests, and Africa became a massive battle-ground for superpower rivalry.