people has formed the basis for identity (re)formation and mobilization around minority rights in the Zambezi borderlands in postcolonial Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Focusing on an important but relatively neglected part of south-central Africa, *Crossing the Zambezi* is a major contribution to African studies. Although the author chose to downplay the influence of nonhuman forces on developments in the mid-Zambezi frontier, this book indeed offers a fresh perspective on landscape studies. It also provides refreshing ideas on the politics of belonging, identity formation, and citizenship in Africa's borderlands. Furthermore, McGregor's ability to deploy a wide combination of sources and analytical approaches deserves deep appreciation. In addition to writing very clearly, the author also managed to avoid unnecessary details—which is not always the case in historical accounts of conflicts in Africa.

However, in light of the river people's unending struggles to regain lost access and reopen closed opportunities that the Zambezi provided before colonial rule, I wonder if the book should have been entitled "Closing the Zambezi."

Francis Musoni
Emory University
Atlanta, Georgia

Jonathan Derrick. *Africa's Agitators: Militant Anti-Colonialism in Africa and the West, 1918–1939.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2008. x + 483 pp. Abbreviations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. $50.00. Cloth.

I am a journalist, and I have noted that discussions about Africa's anticolonial struggles—at least among people outside of academia—most often focus on the immediate post–World War II period. Kwame Nkrumah, Sékou Touré, Julius Nyerere, Jomo Kenyatta, and Nnamdi Azikiwe are among the great names that are commonly referenced, for example, usually in terms of the 1950s and 1960s; the emblematic issues and events that come to mind are Kenya's "Mau Mau" (or the Land and Freedom Movement), Touré's refusal to acquiesce to the French government's referendum on a new "French community," decolonization in the Congo and Patrice Lumumba's assassination, and the Algerian revolution. One of the great merits of Jonathan Derrick's *Africa's Agitators* is that it reminds us that neither the people nor the political movements we tend to identify with African independence came out of nowhere, and that these political histories go back much further.

Subtitled *Militant Anti-Colonialism in Africa and the West 1918–1939*, this book's detailed and rigorously researched portrayal of struggle in Africa between the two World Wars fills a huge gap in our understanding of African-led anticolonial campaigns. And it does so in remarkably few pages

https://doi.org/10.1353/arw.0.0233 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(only 483): it could have been encyclopedic in size. Although sometimes weighed down by its detail (particularly by the welter of acronyms), the work is generally an engagingly well-written narrative that easily could interest a general audience—an impressive achievement, for it could easily have been a turgid piece of scholarship.

Derrick makes clear early on that his work is narrowly focused and that he is not writing about the meaning of African nationalism but specifically about African opposition to the fact of European rule—"the opposition which alien invasion, occupation and exploitation have always aroused among subjected people" (66). Thus the book establishes unequivocally that from the beginning of European colonialism, Africa resisted—a point that cannot be emphasized enough. Furthermore, this resistance was led by Africans—another point that cannot be emphasized enough: the Zulus defeated the British in 1879; Ethiopia defeated Italy in 1896. But the wealth to be found in Africa kept European powers coming, and eventually superior weaponry resulted in the conquest of the continent. Nonetheless, African resistance continued on a smaller scale, and Derrick examines how three critical factors helped shape that resistance: African soldiers returning from the First World War, who formed a core group of dissatisfied activists; the impact of the 1917 Russian Revolution and general socialist agitation in Europe; and pan-African ideas, which led blacks of the diaspora to adopt the goals of Africa's anticolonial agitators.

Derrick's work is handicapped by the limited availability of African sources; consequently there is a dependence on European sources, particularly when it comes to examining organizations in Africa. Nonetheless, especially in the contexts of North Africa, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa, we are introduced to the people and organizations that laid the foundations for African independence, many of them long-erased from the historical narratives of Africa's struggles against colonialism.

The book is strongest in its portrayal of the interaction of Africa's agitators with others on the international stage, particularly with regard to the Russian Revolution and the pan-African movement. The Communists, writes Derrick "were almost alone in accepting the idea of colonial independence" (136). But Derrick also guides us through what might be called the Stalinist betrayal, when the Russian leader ordered Communist parties not to make common cause with nationalist organizations like those agitating in Africa. We get a very clear picture of how African agitators took advantage of sympathies in Europe, as well as Europe's tolerance for anticolonial protest in its metropoles. On the continent African political activities were greatly restricted; in Europe, ironically, Africans "were free to meet, write and organize as they liked" (91). It is therefore in Europe, more than in any unified struggle on the African continent itself, that we encounter the pan-African dynamic. This dynamic takes two forms in Europe: contact among Africans from different parts of the continent, and contact with blacks from the Caribbean and the United States living in Europe—including George

https://doi.org/10.1353/arw.0.0233 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Padmore, C. L. R. James, W.E.B. Du Bois, and others.

Of particular interest to me (as someone who was deeply involved with the southern civil rights movement in the 1960s) was Derrick's discussions of "friends" unwilling to go all the way to support anticolonialism. When Tieko Garan Kouyate (from what then was the French Soudan and is now Mali) broke from the French Communist party in 1933 over the issue of organizing blacks in France, he spoke of a universal desire of white men to dominate black men. Many (perhaps most) European progressives were against the brutal excesses of colonialism and imperialism—yet they often accepted the basic premise of colonial rule: the journalist E. D. Morel, for example, led the campaign against King Leopold's brutal rule of the Congo but supported British colonialism in northern Nigeria. "Concern for proper treatment of Africans under colonial rule was much more widespread than doubts about the rightness of colonial aggression," writes Derrick (38).

Both in geography and politics, *Africa's Agitators* covers a remarkably wide range of personalities and events. There is a lot to absorb here, but it is a book well worth reading.

Charles Cobb Jr.
AllAfrica.com
Washington, D. C.

https://doi.org/10.1353/arw.0.0233 Published online by Cambridge University Press