

Unit Activities, cont'd.

Activity 1: Human Rights in the Twentieth Century— 60 minutes

Use the sources below to help you write an answer to the following essay question:

To what extent were human rights more protected and (or) more abused in the twentieth century?

Franz Blumenfield, Letter to His Mother, 1914

... I think that war is a very, very evil thing But now that it has been declared, I think ... that one should feel oneself so much a member of the nation that one must unite one's fate as closely as possible with that of the whole.... The sight of the ... dangerously wounded, the dead men, and horses lying about, hurts, of course, but the pain of all that is not nearly so keen or lasting as one imagined it would be. Of course that is partly due to the fact that one knows one can't do anything to prevent it ... how is it possible that it gives me more pain to bear my own loneliness than to witness the suffering of so many others?... What is the good of escaping all the bullets and shells, if my soul is injured? (Weisner, Merry E., et al., *Discovering the Global Past: A Look at the Evidence* [Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997], 2:295–96.)

Japanese Expansion

One thing that makes Japanese imperialism quite different from Western imperialism is just how extensively Japan develops all of its colonies, especially Korea, and then the puppet state of Manchukuo. The level of industrial development sponsored by the Japanese is very significant and makes those two cases rather different from the typical European colonies of the time. There was domestic opposition to Japanese imperialism, however, that showed up on walls in Japanese cities. Some of the graffiti was: "Look at the pitiful figures of the undernourished people. Overthrow the government..." and "No rice. End the war. Give us freedom." The Japanese really didn't intend to give Asian people their freedom. They moved in and instituted colonial policies just as oppressive as the Western powers. So in the case of the INA (Indian National Army), you have the Japanese first and foremost trying to strike a blow at their British foe, keeping British forces busy in India trying to fend off attacks by the INA. That's probably the first thing that's going on. You no doubt have some idealistic officers at the time who genuinely believe in liberating Asia and want to help fellow Asians achieve independence from Britain. But I think that the bottom line is that this is a self-serving effort by the Japanese to further their own interests. (Ken Ruoff, interview with Oregon Public Broadcasting, *Bridging World History, Unit 22: Global War and Peace* [Oregon Public Broadcasting, Fall 2003].)

Colonial Troops

The global nature of warfare in the twentieth century was underscored by European powers' use of colonial troops in virtually every theatre of war. In World War I, Britain used Indian soldiers in Africa, and France fielded West African units in Europe. In German East Africa, Britain deployed troops from Malawi, Kenya, Uganda, and India. France even went so far as to replace its dwindling work force at home with Vietnamese and African factory workers.

Decolonization After World War II

In 1960, after decades of Belgian rule, a free Republic of the Congo was established in Africa, and Patrice Lumumba—the popular hero of the anti-colonial struggle—became prime minister. The account of the first months of nationhood of this former colony offers an insightful example of the interplay between the U.S., the Soviet Union, the United Nations, and the often-charged atmosphere that surrounded African decolonization.

In his Independence Day speech on July 30, 1960, Patrice Lumumba declared:

... But we, whom the vote of your elected representatives have given the right to direct our dear country, we who have suffered in our body and in our heart from colonial oppression, we tell you very loud, all that is henceforth ended. The Republic of the Congo has been proclaimed, and our country is now in the hands of its own children. History will one day have its say, but it will not be the history that Brussels, Paris, Washington, or

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the United Nations will teach, but that which they will teach in the countries emancipated from colonialism and its puppets. I prefer to die with my head high, my faith unshakable, and my confidence profound in the destiny of my country, rather than to live in submission and scorn of sacred principles. (Robin McKown, *Lumumba: A Biography* [New York: Doubleday and Company, 1969]: 123.)

Lumumba wasted no time in removing Belgian military advisors as part of the process of Africanization. Riots and violence were the result of the exit of this officer corps. Belgium, wanting to protect its citizens in the Congo—as well as its business interests—quickly took advantage of the opportunity to re-establish its military presence. The move had all the appearances of an occupation. Lumumba promptly called upon the United Nations to remove the Belgians. When the U.N. moved too slowly, he solicited military and technical aid from the Soviet Union. By inviting the Soviets into his country, Lumumba was seen by the U.S. as a dangerous man, and a CIA operative was assigned to kill him. The U.S. also encouraged another leader for the Congo: Joseph Mobutu, a colonel and head of the military under Lumumba. Mobutu, in a push for more power, betrayed Lumumba, and with the help of either American or Belgian mercenaries, he delivered Lumumba to Congolese rebels. Lumumba was imprisoned, tortured, and eventually executed in early 1961.

Peace Movements and Protection of Human Rights

Early twentieth-century peace groups were founded around the world in opposition to the carnage of World War I. The American Union Against Militarism was a lobbying group that attempted to keep America out of the war. And delegates from the Women's Peace Party joined European women at an international conference in The Hague in 1915.

The charter establishing the United Nations pledged to achieve “universal respect for, and observance of, human rights, and fundamental freedoms.” In December of 1948 the National Assembly of the U.N. adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The declaration, drafted in part by Eleanor Roosevelt, addressed specific human rights violations such as summary executions, arbitrary arrest, and torture.

Eleanor Roosevelt:

Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world. (Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* [Random House, 2001].)

Rwanda

Rwanda had long existed as an ancient and well-governed kingdom. The people of Rwanda all spoke the same language and shared a common culture: All had converted to Roman Catholicism. Belgian rule imposed ideas of hierarchy in race and civilization. Belgium stereotyped a Tutsi elite (perhaps related to white ancestors) and Hutu commoners, labeling these groups as tribes with tribal hatreds.

By the 1990s, there was a Hutu-dominated government, a Tutsi army entering the country from neighboring Uganda, and a Hutu-led radio campaign of hatred. The presidents of Rwanda and Burundi were killed in 1994, and massacres began. Both France and the United States acted to halt any United Nations intervention for several months, during which time at least a half million people had died.