The Zikist Movement and the Fight for Nigerian Independence, 1945-1960

James Mmaduaburochukwu Egbunike

Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Abuja, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Nigerian independence is usually narrated through the careers of Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and the Northern leaders who negotiated the constitutional settlement. This article examines a neglected strand of that history: the Zikist Movement, a youth-led, multi-ethnic and action-oriented body founded in Lagos in 1946 and proscribed in 1950. Existing studies treat the ban as the end of the story. The article instead asks to what extent, and through what mechanisms, the radical nationalism the Zikists represented persisted into the final decade before independence. It proposes three explicit tests of continuity (personnel and networks, ideas and idiom, and the response of the colonial state) and applies them to published scholarship, the report of the Foster-Sutton Tribunal (1956-57), Colonial Office material, House of Commons records, participant accounts, and a private letter from Chief Harvey Jim Jaja of Opobo to Azikiwe dated 1 February 1957, which is authenticated and corroborated in detail. The evidence supports continuity of personnel, of political idiom and of colonial suspicion toward Azikiwe, but it does not demonstrate an organisational lineage from the Movement to the events of 1956-57. The article concludes that the Zikists' principal legacy was a political culture of sacrifice and impatience with gradualism, and it specifies the further archival work needed to test the argument.

Keywords*:* Zikist Movement; Nnamdi Azikiwe; Nigerian nationalism; decolonisation; Foster-Sutton Tribunal; Chief Harvey Jim Jaja; source criticism

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria became independent on 1 October 1960 after fifteen years of constitutional change: the Richards Constitution (promulgated in 1946 and in force from 1947), the Macpherson Constitution of 1951, the Lyttelton Constitution of 1954 that created a federation, and the conferences in Lagos and London that settled the final terms. The standard narrative follows this sequence and the leaders who bargained within it: Nnamdi Azikiwe and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), Obafemi Awolowo and the Action Group, and Ahmadu Bello and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa of the Northern People's Congress (Coleman, 1958; Sklar, 1963; Falola & Heaton, 2008). That account is not wrong, but it is an account of elites, parties and statutes. It underplays the pressure that younger nationalists exerted from below and from the left, and it treats the pace of constitutional change as though it were set only in the conference room.

The Zikist Movement was the most visible expression of that pressure. Founded in Lagos in February 1946, it took its name from Azikiwe but quickly outran its patron in rhetoric and in method (Olusanya, 1966). Its members spoke of revolution, practised what they called "positive action," and tried to build a nationalist front that ignored ethnic and regional lines at the very moment when colonial administrative practice and party competition were hardening them. The state answered with sedition prosecutions and, in April 1950, proscribed the Movement as an unlawful society.

The Research Problem and Question

The best studies of the Movement end in 1950. The foundational article by Olusanya (1966) and the monograph by Iweriebor (1996) establish its organisational record, but, as their titles indicate, both are

bounded by the Movement's own lifespan. The result is a periodisation in which the Zikists appear, are suppressed and vanish, leaving the final years before independence to be explained by constitutional bargaining alone. Yet the later careers of former Zikists, the survival of their vocabulary, and the treatment of Azikiwe himself in 1956-57 suggest that something outlasted the ban. The question this article poses is therefore: *to what extent, and through what mechanisms, did the radical nationalism represented by the Zikist Movement persist into the final decade before independence?*

Argument

The article argues that continuity can be shown in three forms but not in a fourth. Between 1946 and 1950 the Zikist Movement injected a militant, anti-tribal and ideologically coherent radicalism into Nigerian nationalism that accelerated the demand for immediate self-government. After the ban, this radicalism persisted (a) in the careers and networks of former members and associates, (b) in a political idiom of sacrifice, "one Nigeria" and impatience with gradualism, and (c) in a recurring pattern of colonial suspicion toward the nationalist leadership most closely associated with Zikism, exemplified by the Foster-Sutton Tribunal and by the supportive 1957 letter from Chief Harvey Jim Jaja. What the evidence does not demonstrate is an organisational lineage from the Movement to the events of 1956-57. The article is explicit about this limit.

Contribution

The study makes three advances on the existing literature, set out in detail in the next section. First, it replaces the assumption that the 1950 ban ended the story with explicit tests of persistence. Second, it adds an evidentiary dimension largely absent from the literature: a private letter from a traditional ruler, subjected to authentication and corroboration. Third, it connects the Zikist episode to a longer pattern of colonial hostility toward Azikiwe, running from 1936 to 1957, and so places the Tribunal in a context that organisational histories do not supply.

Structure

The article proceeds as follows. The next section reviews the scholarship and states how this study differs. The following section sets out the analytical framework and the sources, repositories and authentication procedures. Five substantive sections then treat the post-war background and founding of the Movement; the ideology of Zikism; the peak of militancy from 1947 to 1949; repression and the ban; and the aftermath of 1950-1960. Four further sections trace colonial suspicion of Azikiwe from 1936, place the Tribunal in its context, analyse the Jaja letter, and assess the continuity evidence. A conclusion states the findings, the limits of the argument and the research needed to test it further.

Existing Scholarship and the Contribution of This Study

Three bodies of literature bear on the question. The first concerns the Zikist Movement itself. Olusanya (1966) provides the foundational narrative of its origins, campaigns and suppression, and Iweriebor (1996) offers the most detailed monograph, situating the Movement in the wider field of radical politics in the late 1940s. Participants' accounts, notably Anyiam (1959) and Okoye (1978), supplement these studies with insider testimony. Together, they establish what the Zikists did and why the colonial state moved against them. Their shared limitation is chronological: the story closes with the ban, and the question of what happened to the Movement's ideas and networks is treated as secondary.

The second body of literature explains Nigerian nationalism through parties, regions and elites. Coleman (1958) and Sklar (1963) remain the standard accounts. They show how the NCNC, the Action Group and the Northern People's Congress built regional power bases and why constitutional bargaining among them determined the pace and form of independence. In this framework the Zikists are a militant element on the edge of NCNC politics, and the decade after 1950 is a story of elections, ministries and conferences. This is an indispensable account, but its sources are overwhelmingly party and elite sources, and it has little to say about traditional rulers' views of the struggle or about radical idiom as a force in its own right.

The third body of literature places Nigerian nationalism in a wider frame. Abdulraheem and Olukoshi (1986) trace the left in Nigerian politics from 1945 to 1985 and treat the Zikists as an early moment in that genealogy. Cooper (1996) analyses decolonisation in terms of labour and social claims on the colonial state, Hodgkin (1956) offers a comparative account of nationalism in colonial Africa, and Falola and Heaton (2008) provide a national synthesis. Olusanya (1973) shows how the Second World War reshaped Nigerian politics. These works supply the comparative and structural context for the persistence question, but they do not address it directly for the Zikist case.

This study differs from the existing literature in four respects. It does not treat the ban as an endpoint but tests persistence against stated criteria. It does not claim a socialist lineage, as a left-genealogical approach might, but examines political culture and colonial suspicion, which can be assessed from non-socialist evidence. It adds a source type, the private letter of a traditional ruler, that the party-centred literature largely lacks. And it relates the Tribunal to a longer chronology of official hostility toward Azikiwe. The claim to originality is accordingly modest. The article does not overturn the scholarship summarised in Table 1; it extends it and subjects the extension to explicit evidentiary standards.

Table 1

Existing Scholarship and the Position of This Study

Work	Main focus and period	Treatment of the Zikists	How this study differs
Olusanya (1966)	The Movement as a study in political radicalism, 1946-50	Central subject; narrative of origins, activities and suppression	Takes the organisational record as its base but tests persistence after the 1950 ban
Iweriebor (1996)	Radical politics in Nigeria, 1945-1950	Most detailed monograph; places the Movement in the wider radical field	Extends the frame to 1960 and adds a traditional-ruler source
Coleman (1958); Sklar (1963)	Nationalism and party politics; regional power	A militant element within, or at the edge of, NCNC politics	Asks what the party-centred account leaves out, namely radical idiom and state response
Abdulraheem & Olukoshi (1986)	The Nigerian left, 1945-1985	An early moment in a socialist genealogy	Does not claim a socialist lineage; examines political culture and colonial suspicion
Cooper (1996); Hodgkin (1956); Falola & Heaton (2008)	Decolonisation, labour and nationalism in comparative and national syntheses	Context, not a main subject	Supplies the comparative frame for the persistence question

Analytical Framework, Sources and Method

What Would Count as Continuity?

"Continuity" is easily asserted and rarely tested. The article therefore defines four tests in advance. The first is *personnel and networks*: did people or networks associated with Zikism remain active in nationalist politics between 1950 and 1960? The second is *ideas and idiom*: did the Movement's characteristic vocabulary and demands recur in later documents and in the mainstream programme? The third is *state response*: did the colonial authorities react to Azikiwe and associated nationalists in a recognisably similar way, through surveillance, prosecution or inquiry? The fourth is *organisational lineage*: is there direct evidence of

institutional succession, such as branch records, membership lists or correspondence linking the Movement to later bodies or episodes?

The evidence for each test is graded. Evidence is rated strong where independent sources of different standpoints converge, moderate where a single source is supported by established context, and limited where it is merely suggestive. The argument would be weakened if later documents showed no echo of Zikist idiom, if the personnel evidence rested on misidentified associates, or if the Tribunal were shown to be a purely financial inquiry with no political dimension. These possibilities are considered in the assessment section.

Sources, Repositories and Selection

The sources fall into five groups, classified in Table 2: official records, a private letter, press and lectures, participants' writings, and secondary scholarship. The official record consists of the Colonial Office file CO 537/5801 and related series held at The National Archives, Kew, which document the administration's reasoning on the Movement, and the Report of the Foster-Sutton Tribunal, printed as Cmnd. 51 (1957). The press source is the *West African Pilot* for 1946-1950, together with the text of Agwuna's lecture of October 1948. The private sources are the Jaja letter and an address of welcome presented to Azikiwe at Opobo on 22 February 1957, both held in the Nnamdi Azikiwe Papers. The article also uses the House of Commons record of the inquiry, which is published, and a finding-aid entry in the Bodleian Archives & Manuscripts for a motion filed by E. O. Eyo. It treats the finding aid as a pointer to the item and not as a substitute for it. Participants' writings are those of Azikiwe, Orizu, Okoye, Anyiam, Enahoro and the colonial official Hugh Foot.

Documents were selected according to four criteria: that they bear directly on the Zikist Movement or on Azikiwe's confrontation with colonial authority; that they are contemporary or near-contemporary; that they have an identifiable author; and that, taken together, they represent different standpoints (official, nationalist and traditional). Undated oral traditions and unattributed pamphlets were excluded because they could not be authenticated. Material that the article has not consulted is identified in the conclusion as a research agenda, not implied to have been used.

Table 2

Sources Used, Their Repositories and the Cautions They Require

Class	Source	Repository or form	Use and caution
Primary: official	Colonial Office file CO 537/5801 and related series	The National Archives, Kew	Shows official reasoning on the Movement and its ban; reflects the state's standpoint
Primary: official	Foster-Sutton Tribunal report (Cmnd. 51, 1957)	Printed parliamentary paper, HMSO	Findings on Azikiwe's conduct; a judicial body's view, itself contested
Primary: official	House of Commons proceedings on the inquiry, 24 July 1956 to 20 February 1957	UK Parliament, historic Hansard (online)	Official statements by the Colonial Secretary; reflect the government's standpoint
Primary: archival description	Finding-aid entry for a motion filed by E. O. Eyo, 20 April 1956	Bodleian Archives & Manuscripts, Fabian Colonial Bureau archive	Used as a pointer; the item itself has not been consulted

Primary: private	Chief H. J. Jaja to Azikiwe, 1 February 1957; address of welcome from the Opobo Divisional Branch of the NCNC, 22 February 1957	Typescript; Nnamdi Azikiwe Papers, Zik's Library, Onuiyi Haven, Nsukka (UCLA digitisation)	Traditional-ruler view of the Tribunal; partisan; single document
Primary: press and lectures	*West African Pilot*, 1946-1950; Agwuna (1948)	Printed newspaper; lecture text	The Movement's public language; the *Pilot* was Azikiwe's own paper
Primary: participant writings	Azikiwe, Orizu, Okoye, Anyiam, Enahoro, Foot	Published books	Insider or contemporary testimony; shaped by hindsight and loyalty
Secondary	Olusanya, Iweriebor, Coleman, Sklar, Abdulraheem & Olukoshi, Cooper, Falola & Heaton, Hodgkin	Published scholarship	Interpretation and context; Coleman and Sklar draw on field research but remain interpretations

Authentication and Corroboration

The article applies the standard two-stage procedure of historical source criticism. External criticism asks whether a document is what it purports to be. The Jaja letter is a typewritten sheet bearing a letterhead address, a date, a salutation, a closing and a typed signature line marked "(Sgd)," which signals that the surviving text is a file copy of a signed original. The reference initials "HJJ/MDOE" follow the conventional pattern of writer and typist, which suggests that the letter was dictated and typed by a secretary. The photograph of the document shows creasing and fastening marks consistent with a retained copy. The letter is held in the Nnamdi Azikiwe Papers, which remain in Zik's Library at Onuiyi Haven, Nsukka, the family home, and which have been digitised under the Modern Endangered Archives Program of the UCLA Library and made available through the UCLA Digital Library. Its presence in the addressee's own papers is the strongest single indicator of authenticity, because it shows that the document was kept by the person to whom it was sent. Whether the surviving sheet is the top copy that reached Azikiwe or a duplicate, as the typed "(Sgd)" might suggest, cannot be settled from the image. The UCLA Digital Library record titles the item "Chief Jim Harvey Jaja, grandson of King Jaja of Opobo, writes a letter to cheer and encourage Dr. Azikiwe during trying times." The cataloguer's title inverts the writer's given names, and this article follows the letterhead and signature, which read Harvey Jim Jaja. The item's local identifier is zik_man_00282 and its persistent identifier is ark:/21198/z1d84b92; the record gives its rights status as public domain. The author consulted the digitised item on 29 September 2026.

Internal criticism asks whether the content is coherent and consistent with what is otherwise known. The letter names an office holder (the Colonial Secretary, Alan Lennox-Boyd), a body (the Tribunal), a place and addressee (Azikiwe at Enugu, the Eastern Region's capital), named individuals (E. O. Eyo and J. G. Cookey, Junior) and forthcoming events (a visit on 22 February 1957 and a return to power on 15 March 1957). Each of these is, in principle, checkable. Table 5 records which have been corroborated and which remain pending. The pending items are stated as such. They are not assumed true on the strength of the letter alone.

Limits

Three limits should be stated at the outset. The letter is a single document by a partisan well-wisher, and it can show how one traditional ruler understood events, not how traditional rulers in general did. The participant accounts were written after the fact and carry factional loyalties. And the archival base is narrow: the article relies on the Kew material, printed and parliamentary sources and two items from the Nnamdi Azikiwe Papers, and it has not surveyed the wider collection or the holdings of the National Archives of Nigeria. The findings are therefore stated with the corresponding qualifications.

Historical Background: Post-War Radicalism and the Birth of the Movement, 1945-1946

War, Strike and Rising Expectations

The Second World War changed the political temperature of British West Africa. Wartime inflation, shortages and price controls fell hard on urban wage earners, while the language of the Allied cause, including the Atlantic Charter and the war against racial tyranny, raised expectations that colonial rule could not satisfy. Nigerian soldiers who had served in the West African Frontier Force overseas returned with a wider view of the world, a diminished awe of European authority and grievances over pay and employment (Olusanya, 1973; Coleman, 1958).

The general strike of June-July 1945 gave these pressures public form. Led by Michael Imoudu and the railway and general workers' unions, it lasted some six weeks, paralysed much of the colonial economy and extracted concessions over cost-of-living allowances (Cooper, 1996). The authorities' attempt to silence Azikiwe's newspapers, the *West African Pilot* and the *Daily Comet*, for their sympathetic coverage backfired by linking labour grievances to the nationalist cause. For young Lagosians the lesson was plain: mass action could succeed where petitions had failed.

The Limits of Existing Nationalism

The existing organisations seemed ill-suited to this mood. The Nigerian Youth Movement, founded in 1934, had shown that a cross-ethnic nationalist body was possible, but it split along ethnic lines in 1941 over the Ikoli-Akinsanya dispute, a warning that Zikists would later struggle to heed (Coleman, 1958). The NCNC, formed in 1944 with Herbert Macaulay as president and Azikiwe as general secretary, was a broad coalition of unions, clubs and ethnic associations led by an older generation whose habits were those of the constitutional lobbyist (Sklar, 1963). When the colonial government introduced the Richards Constitution, which the NCNC condemned as imposed without adequate consultation and as entrenching regional divisions, its response was a national tour, during which Macaulay died in 1946, and a delegation to London in 1947. To impatient younger members this looked like a politics of delegation and waiting. Meanwhile, ethnic cultural associations such as Awolowo's Egbe Omo Oduduwa (1945) and the Igbo State Union pointed toward a very different future (Sklar, 1963).

Azikiwe's own career explains why the young attached themselves to him. Born in Zungeru in 1904 and educated in the United States, he returned to West Africa as a journalist, edited the *African Morning Post* in Accra, and was tried for sedition in 1936 over a provocative editorial before the conviction was overturned on appeal. In 1937 he founded the *West African Pilot* in Lagos, the first of a chain of newspapers whose combative style spoke directly to a generation impatient with deference (Azikiwe, 1970; Coleman, 1958). The *Pilot* was therefore both Azikiwe's political platform and the Zikists' main public forum, a fact that bound the Movement to its patron and exposed it to his tactical choices.

Founding and Early Organisation

It was in this atmosphere that the Zikist Movement was founded in Lagos on 16 February 1946. Olusanya (1966) identifies its initiators as Kolawole Balogun, M. C. K. Ajuluchukwu, Abiodun Aloba and Nduka Eze, among others. They were young journalists, clerks and students who admired Azikiwe and the *Pilot* and wished to turn that admiration into organised work. The name signalled devotion to his ideas and a claim to be their most faithful interpreters. The Movement was a membership organisation with branches, officers and regular meetings, designed for propaganda and mobilisation more than for elections. Its composition was multi-ethnic, though Igbo participation was prominent, a fact that rival commentators later exploited (Iweriebor, 1996). It affiliated to the NCNC as a group member and was not merely its youth wing. That gave it a platform and some autonomy, but it also sowed the seeds of later conflict over who spoke for the nationalist cause.

The Ideology of Zikism

Zikism was less a finished doctrine than a family of ideas. Its foundations lay in two books. The first was Azikiwe's *Renascent Africa* (1937), written after his years as a student in the United States and as a journalist in the Gold Coast, which proposed a programme built on five pillars: spiritual balance, social regeneration, economic determinism, mental emancipation and national risorgimento. The second was Nwafor Orizu's *Without Bitterness: Western Philosophy in Africa* (1944), together with his later exposition, *Original Zikism*, which sought to systematise Azikiwe's thought into a philosophy (Orizu, 1944, n.d.). Orizu was a close associate and admirer of Azikiwe and gave the movement an intellectual vocabulary, although he was not a Zikist in the organisational sense.

Five tenets can be extracted from these texts and from the Movement's public statements. The first was African self-determination: the claim that Africans were entitled to govern themselves and that self-government should not wait until colonial officials judged them ready. The second was psychological emancipation, the conviction that political freedom required the removal of an inherited sense of racial inferiority (Azikiwe, 1937). The third was economic justice, the argument that colonial rule rested on the extraction of African resources and labour, a theme popularised in the same period by Mbonu Ojike's campaign to "boycott all boycottables" (Coleman, 1958). The fourth was rejection of tribalism and regionalism, expressed in the aspiration to a Nigerian rather than a sectional nationalism. The fifth was "positive action," the idea that nationalists should move from protest to disciplined, direct and confrontational activity.

The Zikists did not simply reproduce Azikiwe. Scholars note a difference between his pragmatic nationalism, which paired militant language with readiness to bargain, and the more radical readings adopted by younger members (Olusanya, 1966; Iweriebor, 1996). Some of those readings drew on socialist and Marxist ideas then circulating among West African students and activists, and Abdulraheem and Olukoshi (1986) treat the Zikists as an early point in the history of the Nigerian left. The extent of Marxist influence should not be overstated. The Zikists were above all nationalists, and their socialism expressed anti-colonial and anti-capitalist sentiment more than a systematic commitment. Even so, their readiness to speak of revolution, to criticise the party leadership and to question whether nationalism could coexist with colonial collaboration marked a break with the style of the older generation. Hodgkin (1956) had already observed that such youthful radicalism was a general feature of nationalism in colonial Africa.

The name "Zikism" carried symbolic and mobilising power. For supporters it joined a living leader, a newspaper and a set of ideas under one banner. For the colonial authorities it suggested a personality cult that might become a threat. For Azikiwe it was both an asset and a liability, since it tied him to his most radical followers at moments when his strategy called for flexibility. That ambiguity shaped the relationship between leader and Movement until its suppression.

The Peak of Militancy: Positive Action and Confrontational Politics, 1947-1949

By 1947 the Zikists had adopted "positive action" as their programme. The term reflected the influence of Gandhian non-cooperation and civil disobedience, which circulated widely among anti-colonial movements, but the Zikists gave it a harder edge. In their usage it meant boycotts, strikes, demonstrations and refusal to cooperate with colonial institutions, and it was framed as the stage that must follow petition and protest (Olusanya, 1966; Iweriebor, 1996).

The lecture series of 1948 is the best-known episode. On 27 October 1948 Osita Agwuna delivered "A Call for Revolution," with Anthony Enahoro in the chair (Agwuna, 1948; Olusanya, 1966). The lecture urged Nigerians to prepare for a revolutionary struggle against colonial rule and attacked both the administration and what the speaker regarded as the timidity of established nationalist leaders. Raji Abdallah's "A Call for Positive Action" belonged to the same series and set out the case for confrontational methods in more programmatic terms. Together the lectures turned a loose discussion about tactics into a public declaration of intent.

The Movement's activity extended beyond rhetoric. Zikists campaigned against racial discrimination in public life and employment, supported striking workers and tried to link nationalist agitation to labour and community grievances. They also sought a pan-Nigerian, non-tribal front, a goal that ran against the regional shape of party politics but reflected their founding principles. These efforts gained urgency after the shooting of striking miners at the Enugu Colliery in November 1949, in which some twenty-one men were killed, an event that radicalised opinion across the country and strengthened those who argued that the colonial state would answer peaceful pressure with force (Coleman, 1958).

The Nigerian experiment with confrontational methods also had a regional resonance. Kwame Nkrumah, who acknowledged the influence of Azikiwe's writings, launched his own campaign of "Positive Action" in the Gold Coast in January 1950, at almost the moment the Nigerian authorities were moving against the Zikists (see Hodgkin, 1956). The contrast is instructive. Nkrumah was imprisoned, but within about a year a general election brought him to office, whereas the Nigerian radicals were left without a comparable political vehicle. The difference lay less in ideas than in the structure of the colonial state and of party competition in each territory.

Tension with the authorities grew alongside tension within the nationalist camp. The administration regarded Zikist rhetoric as seditious and monitored its meetings and publications. The gradualist NCNC leadership became increasingly uneasy, since a party hoping to negotiate constitutional advance could not easily accommodate a member organisation that spoke of revolution (Sklar, 1963; Iweriebor, 1996). The Movement's peak of militancy was thus also the point at which its isolation became apparent.

Colonial Repression, Trials and the Ban of 1950

The colonial response was legal as well as administrative. Between 1948 and 1949 the government brought sedition charges against leading Zikists, including over the October 1948 lecture. The trial of Osita Agwuna and others, reported in the contemporary press, ended in convictions and prison terms and signalled that revolutionary speech would be treated as a crime (Olusanya, 1966; *West African Pilot*, 1946-1950). Several prominent figures were imprisoned, among them Agwuna, Abdallah, Ogedengbe Macaulay and Smart Ebbi. Enahoro, who chaired the Agwuna lecture, was also prosecuted for sedition over his journalism, which placed him close to the Zikist circle even though he is better described as an ally than as a core member (Enahoro, 1965).

In April 1950 the government declared the Movement an unlawful society. Officials alleged that it had moved from words to preparations for violence, including a plot against the lives of senior officials, and the Colonial Office files at Kew record the official reasoning (Colonial Office, n.d.). Foot (1964), who served as Chief Secretary in these years, preserves the administration's outlook. Historians have treated the official case with caution, noting that the line between revolutionary rhetoric and conspiracy was drawn by a government with a strong interest in suppressing the Movement (Olusanya, 1966; Iweriebor, 1996).

Azikiwe's response was complex and ultimately distancing. He was bound to the Movement by name, by affection and by the ideas that had inspired it, and he did not wish to be seen abandoning young nationalists to the courts. But he led a party committed to constitutional advance and headed a newspaper group vulnerable to official pressure. His public stance was to defend the right of nationalists to speak while distancing himself and the NCNC from methods that might compromise the party (Azikiwe, 1970; Olusanya, 1966). For many Zikists this was a lesson in the limits of a patron's loyalty. For others it was a realistic recognition of the constraints on a leader who still had a party to protect.

The immediate consequences for radical nationalism were serious. The Movement's organisation was broken, its leaders were imprisoned or scattered, and the space for openly revolutionary politics narrowed sharply. The government had shown that it would use the criminal law and proscription against radical nationalists, and the NCNC and other parties drew the lesson that constitutional politics offered the safer road to power. Yet suppression did not remove the grievances the Movement had voiced, and several of its ideas, above all the demand for immediate self-government, soon entered the mainstream.

Aftermath and Continuing Influence, 1950-1960

Dispersal and Personnel (Test 1)

Proscription dispersed the Zikists but did not extinguish them. Former members and sympathisers moved into the NCNC, the trade unions, journalism and the regional politics that came to dominate the decade (Iweriebor, 1996; Olusanya, 1966). The political landscape into which they moved was changing fast. The Macpherson Constitution of 1951 introduced indirect elections to regional houses and a central legislature with an African majority, and the elections that followed confirmed regionalised party strength: the Action Group dominated the West, the NCNC the East and the Northern People's Congress the North (Sklar, 1963). Azikiwe took office as Premier of the Eastern Region in 1954. For many former Zikists, as for the NCNC itself, the revolutionary moment of the late 1940s gave way to the work of parties, ministries and regional patronage.

Individual trajectories show the range of these paths. Mbazulike Amaechi, whose political formation was bound up with the radical nationalism of the period, later held high office in the First Republic as Minister of Aviation. Nwafor Orizu, the theorist of Zikism, became President of the Senate of the independent federation and briefly Acting President of the Republic in 1965-66. Dennis Osadebay, a poet and nationalist from the same milieu, became Premier of the Mid-Western Region. Anthony Enahoro, prosecuted for sedition in the late 1940s, joined the Action Group and on 31 March 1953 moved the motion in the House of Representatives calling for self-government in 1956. The motion was amended at Northern insistence, the Southern members walked out, and the Kano disturbances of May 1953 followed, but the demand had become a fixture of the political agenda (Coleman, 1958; Enahoro, 1965).

These careers establish that people who had passed through, or stood close to, the Zikist circle remained prominent in nationalist politics. They do not show that the Movement caused particular outcomes, and several of these men are better described as associates than as core Zikists. The test is therefore met in a moderate-to-strong form: the networks persisted, but the evidence concerns individuals and not organisations, and no membership records survive in the sources used for the later period.

From Revolution to Timetable (Test 2)

The most traceable continuity of ideas lies in the demand for self-government. In 1948 the Zikist call for revolution and immediate independence was dismissed by moderates as unrealistic. By 1953 the mainstream parties were competing to fix a date, and by 1958 the date of 1 October 1960 had been agreed at the constitutional conference (Coleman, 1958; Sklar, 1963; Falola & Heaton, 2008). It would overstate the case to say that the Zikists caused this shift, which had many sources, among them the post-war economy, the example of the Gold Coast and the rivalry among the parties. The more defensible claim is that the Zikists moved the limits of what could be demanded in public, so that a timetable which might have seemed extreme in 1948 appeared moderate by the mid-1950s.

The Movement's idiom survived in other ways. Anyiam's *Men and Matters in Nigerian Politics, 1934-58* was published in 1959 by a Zikist veteran and carries the Movement's reading of the nationalist struggle into the last year before independence (Anyiam, 1959). Okoye's later memoir performs a similar function (Okoye, 1978). Three themes recur across the sources: sacrifice, anti-tribalism and impatience with gradualism. Amaechi has recalled that some Zikists pledged not to marry until independence was won. This is his account of the Movement's ethos and not an independently documented rule, and it is cited only as testimony. These themes were not exclusive to the Zikists, and the second test is accordingly graded as moderate.

Colonial Suspicion in Long View, 1936-1957 (Test 3)

The third test asks whether the state responded to Azikiwe and the Zikists in a recognisably similar way across the period. Table 3 sets out the linked episodes. Azikiwe's career as a journalist had brought him into conflict with colonial authorities before the Zikist Movement existed: he was prosecuted for sedition in the Gold Coast in 1936, in a case that ended in his favour on appeal, and in 1945 the authorities moved against his newspapers

during the general strike (Azikiwe, 1970; Coleman, 1958). The Zikist trials of 1948-49 and the ban of 1950 followed, and the Foster-Sutton Tribunal of 1956-57 completes the sequence.

Table 3

Linked Episodes of Colonial Suspicion and Nationalist Response, 1936-1957

Date	Episode	Relevance to the argument
1936	Azikiwe prosecuted for sedition in the Gold Coast over an editorial; the matter ended in his favour on appeal	Earliest example of official hostility to his journalism
1945	Authorities move against his newspapers during the general strike	Links the press to labour and nationalist mobilization
1948-49	Sedition trials of Zikist speakers and writers	State treats revolutionary speech as a crime
1950 (April)	Zikist Movement declared an unlawful society	Organisation broken; ideas remain in circulation
1956-57	Foster-Sutton Tribunal inquires into Azikiwe's conduct as Premier	Judicial inquiry into the principal nationalist patron of the Zikists
1 Feb. 1957	Chief Jaja writes to Azikiwe	A traditional ruler reads the Tribunal as persecution of a nationalist

Two cautions apply. The table does not show a single, coordinated colonial strategy; each episode had proximate causes of its own, from a press editorial to a strike to a banking controversy. And not every episode was directed at Azikiwe personally. What the chronology does show is a recurring official wariness toward the nationalist leader whose newspapers and ideas gave the radicals their name and whose political and economic ventures were central to the nationalist cause. That is enough to make the third test a moderate one: the pattern is real, but its interpretation as hostility to *radical* nationalism, and not simply to a vigorous opponent, remains an inference.

The Foster-Sutton Tribunal in Its Context

The African Continental Bank (ACB), which Azikiwe helped to found in 1944, was a product of economic nationalism. Banking in British West Africa was dominated by expatriate firms, and African entrepreneurs complained of limited access to credit. An African-owned bank was the practical expression of the economic tenets of Zikism, notably the argument in *Renascent Africa* that political freedom required economic power (Azikiwe, 1937). When Azikiwe became Premier of the Eastern Region in 1954, the relationship between the regional government's funds and a bank in which he held a personal interest became politically explosive, against a background of intense rivalry between the NCNC and its regional opponents.

In 1956 allegations on this subject led the Colonial Secretary, Alan Lennox-Boyd, to appoint a tribunal under Sir Stafford Foster-Sutton, then Chief Justice of the Federation. The Tribunal's report, published as Cmnd. 51 in 1957, criticised Azikiwe's conduct as Premier in respect of conflict of interest. It accepted, however, that his primary motive had been the creation of a strong indigenous bank, and it made no finding of personal criminal fraud or embezzlement (Foster-Sutton Tribunal, 1957). The distinction matters. The report was neither a clean bill of health nor a verdict of criminality, and contemporaries read it according to their politics.

The sequence of events can now be set out in detail from parliamentary and archival records (Table 4). In April 1956 E. O. Eyo, who until then had been the Eastern Region Government's Chief Whip, Deputy-Speaker and Chairman of the Regional Development Corporation, tabled a motion in the Regional House of Assembly on the Premier's association with the African Continental Bank, and he subsequently called for an independent commission of inquiry ("Eastern Region, Nigeria," 1956). A finding-aid entry in the Fabian Colonial Bureau archive at the Bodleian Library, which describes a motion filed by Eyo on 20 April 1956, appears to correspond to this episode (Bodleian Archives & Manuscripts, 1956). Eyo had thus held office in Azikiwe's

own government, which gives context to the letter's remark that Azikiwe's "goodness to E. O. Eyo" would never be his ruin.

In July 1956 Lennox-Boyd told the Commons that he had invited Azikiwe to agree to a commission of inquiry; that Azikiwe and his colleagues had instead advised the Governor to appoint a sole commissioner and then a committee of their own choosing; that the Governor had declined that advice; and that he had therefore decided to appoint a commission under Sir Stafford Foster-Sutton ("Eastern Region, Nigeria," 1956). He gave as reasons that banking was a federal matter beyond the Region's competence and that the allegations should be cleared up before the next constitutional conference. Membership and terms of reference were given on 1 August ("Commission of Inquiry," 1956), and the warrant of appointment is dated 4 August 1956 (Foster-Sutton Tribunal, 1957).

Table 4

Sequence of Events, April 1956 to March 1957

Date	Event	Source
April 1956 (20 April per the finding aid)	E. O. Eyo, until then the Government's Chief Whip, Deputy-Speaker and Chairman of the Regional Development Corporation, tables a motion on the Premier's association with the African Continental Bank; he later calls for an independent commission	"Eastern Region, Nigeria" (1956); Bodleian Archives & Manuscripts (1956)
14-18 July 1956	The Colonial Secretary invites Azikiwe to agree to a commission; Azikiwe's ministers advise the Governor to appoint a sole commissioner and then a committee of their own choosing; the Governor declines	"Eastern Region, Nigeria" (1956)
24-Jul-56	Lennox-Boyd tells the Commons he will appoint a commission under Sir Stafford Foster-Sutton	"Eastern Region, Nigeria" (1956)
1 Aug. 1956	Membership and terms of reference given in the Commons	"Commission of Inquiry" (1956)
4 Aug. 1956	Warrant of appointment of the Tribunal	Foster-Sutton Tribunal (1957)
Before 1 Feb. 1957	Report published; the Eastern House of Assembly is dissolved on ministers' advice; the Jaja letter refers to the report	"African Continental Bank (Inquiry)" (1957a); Jaja (1957)
1 Feb. 1957	Chief Jaja writes to Azikiwe	Jaja (1957)
20 Feb. 1957	Commons told that Azikiwe will surrender his bank shares without compensation and repay directors' fees of £5,252	"African Continental Bank (Inquiry)" (1957b)
22 Feb. 1957	Opobo Divisional Branch of the NCNC presents an address of welcome to Azikiwe on his visit	Opobo Divisional Branch of the NCNC (1957)
15 Mar. 1957	Eastern Region Legislative Assembly election	"African Continental Bank (Inquiry)" (1957a)

Three features of the parliamentary record bear on how the Tribunal should be read. First, the dispute began inside Azikiwe's own camp, with a senior party colleague, and the Colonial Secretary framed his intervention as a constitutional and regulatory matter, not as a political attack. Second, he acknowledged that the inquiry would delay the constitutional conference due to meet on 19 September 1956, so the Tribunal bore directly on the timetable of constitutional advance that nationalists were pursuing. Third, British opinion was itself divided: Labour members, among them Aneurin Bevan and Fenner Brockway, pressed the Colonial Secretary closely, observing that the association of politicians with banks was not peculiar to Nigeria and asking whether the Governor himself had recommended the investment in the bank ("Eastern Region, Nigeria," 1956). These facts do not decide whether the Tribunal was persecution, but they show why Azikiwe's supporters could plausibly read it as such.

The calendar after the letter can also be checked. After the report was published, the Governor was advised by his ministers to dissolve the Eastern House of Assembly, and on 6 February 1957 the Colonial Secretary told the Commons that elections were due on 15 March ("African Continental Bank (Inquiry)," 1957a). That is the date on which Chief Jaja, writing on 1 February, anticipated Azikiwe's return to power. The Colonial Secretary added that he had asked the Governor to pursue with Azikiwe certain matters arising from the Tribunal's findings, and on 20 February 1957 the Commons was told that Azikiwe intended to surrender his shares in the bank without compensation and to repay directors' fees of £5,252 paid to him after public money had been injected into it ("African Continental Bank (Inquiry)," 1957b). Azikiwe remained Premier of the Eastern Region until 1959 (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.). The election thus served as the public test of his position that the letter anticipated, and the article does not rely on the size of the result.

Two readings competed. Nationalist opinion tended to interpret the Tribunal as political persecution of a leading independence fighter, in which a colonial authority long suspicious of Azikiwe used an inquiry into his finances to damage his standing at a moment when constitutional advance made his leadership more consequential (Azikiwe, 1970). Opponents and the Tribunal itself treated the matter as one of public propriety: a Premier should not favour a bank in which he had a stake. The second reading is not frivolous, since the Tribunal did criticise his conduct, and Azikiwe's undertaking in February 1957 to surrender his shares and repay directors' fees shows that the findings had practical consequences ("African Continental Bank (Inquiry)," 1957b). The article does not adjudicate between them. It observes that the political timing and the identity of the inquiry's subject allowed the first reading to flourish, and it is that reading, held by his supporters, that the Jaja letter expresses. The political context of early 1957 sharpened the stakes: regional self-government for the East and West was approaching, and the question of who would lead the Eastern Region into it was open.

The Jaja Letter: Provenance, Audience and Content

Writer, Audience and Purpose

The letter is dated 1 February 1957, written from Jim Jaja's Compound, Opobo Town, and addressed to Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe at Onitsha Road, Enugu (Jaja, 1957). Chief Jaja writes as the senior chief of the Opobo clan and as the grandson of King Jaja of Opobo. King Jaja rose from enslaved origins to found the state of Opobo in 1869 and made it the dominant palm-oil trading power of the Niger Delta. His decision to ship oil directly to Liverpool, bypassing the British merchants who expected to control the trade, brought him into conflict with the consular authorities. In 1887 he was lured aboard a British vessel, deported to the West Indies and denied return, and he died in 1891 on the journey home (Falola & Heaton, 2008). To his grandson, the colonial treatment of a leader who had defied European commercial control was the natural precedent for the treatment of a nationalist who had built an African-owned bank.

The primary audience was Azikiwe, a leader whose position was uncertain after the Tribunal's report, and the primary purpose was encouragement and the securing of political goodwill. The letter's survival among Azikiwe's own papers shows that its addressee kept it, which fits its evident purpose of encouragement. Whether Azikiwe replied cannot be established from the letter alone. The visit it announces is corroborated by a second document in the Azikiwe Papers, discussed below (see Table 5).

Table 5

Authentication and Corroboration of the Claims in the Jaja Letter

What the letter states or implies	Independent check	Status
The Tribunal report contained no finding of fraud or embezzlement	Cmnd. 51 (1957), as summarised in the scholarship	Consistent; pinpoint reference to be added

The Colonial Secretary was responsible for the Tribunal and, in the writer's view, acted for his own prestige	Lennox-Boyd announced and appointed the commission ("Eastern Region, Nigeria," 1956); his stated reasons were the federal nature of banking and the need to clear the matter before the constitutional conference; his private motive cannot be tested	Responsibility confirmed; motive an interpretation
Azikiwe resided and governed at Enugu	The Eastern Region's capital; Azikiwe was Premier from 1954 to 1959 (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.)	Consistent
The letter reached, or was kept by, its addressee	Held in the Nnamdi Azikiwe Papers, Zik's Library, Onuiyi Haven, Nsukka; digitised by UCLA MEAP	Supported by custody
E. O. Eyo was an adversary of Azikiwe and had benefited from his goodness	Eyo had been the Government's Chief Whip, Deputy-Speaker and Chairman of the Regional Development Corporation before tabling his motion in April 1956 ("Eastern Region, Nigeria," 1956); Bodleian Archives & Manuscripts (1956)	Confirmed
Azikiwe would visit Opobo on 22 February 1957	Address of welcome from the Opobo Divisional Branch of the NCNC, dated 22 February 1957, in the Azikiwe Papers (zik_man_01527)	Supported by a primary document; text of the address not yet analysed
A return to power was anticipated on 15 March 1957	The Colonial Secretary told the Commons on 6 February 1957 that elections to the dissolved Eastern House were due on 15 March ("African Continental Bank (Inquiry)," 1957a); Azikiwe remained Premier until 1959	Confirmed
J. G. Cookey, Junior, was an active young supporter in Opobo	No independent record located; the Opobo address shows a party branch in the area, but its text has not yet been checked for his name	Pending; stated as described by Chief Jaja
The writer is senior chief of Opobo and grandson of King Jaja	The UCLA record repeats the description, but it may rest on the letter itself; Opobo genealogies are still needed	Attributed to the letter and the catalogue; pending

Content

The content falls under five themes. First, the letter affirms support for Azikiwe's "efforts towards 'one Nigeria' and Nigerian freedom," and tells him not to be disheartened by the ambition of the Colonial Secretary, which it likens to "water on duck's back." Second, it draws a historical parallel: King Jaja, the writer's grandfather, "became an economic martyr" because he believed in the "supremacy of the African and the equality of mankind." Third, it dismisses Azikiwe's opponents as self-interested men whose only ambition is to "fill their empty pockets," and it names E. O. Eyo as a source of "snares and plans." Fourth, it expresses relief that the Tribunal report contained "nothing like fraud, embezzlement, or the like," while asserting that the Colonial Secretary found Azikiwe at fault "to upkeep his prestige," and it cites scripture on the persecution of "the Prophets (Nationalists)." Fifth, it looks forward: it anticipates Azikiwe's return to power on 15 March 1957 and reports that Chief Jaja has asked J. G. Cookey, Junior, to arrange a meeting between Azikiwe and the Opobo chiefs during the planned visit.

The Opobo Visit and the Divisional Branch of the NCNC

The Azikiwe Papers also contain an address of welcome presented by the Opobo Divisional Branch of the NCNC to Azikiwe "on the occasion of his visit to Opobo," dated 22 February 1957 (Opobo Divisional Branch of the NCNC, 1957). The date matches the visit that Chief Jaja announced three weeks earlier. A formally presented address is good evidence that a reception was held, although it does not by itself prove that the address was delivered as written, and the article therefore treats the visit as supported by a primary document and not as established beyond question.

The document matters in two further ways. First, it corroborates the letter on a point that can be checked, which raises confidence in the letter's account of matters that cannot. Second, it shows that the NCNC had an organised branch at divisional level in Opobo in 1957. This gives context to the activity that Chief Jaja attributes to Cookey: the local politics around the letter's writer was not only a matter of personal loyalty to Azikiwe but took place within, or alongside, a party organisation. That is an inference, since this article has not examined whether the address names Cookey. The reception also appears to have been staged by the party branch and not by the chiefs alone, so the meeting with the Opobo chiefs that the letter requested may have been one item in a larger programme. Whether it took place is not shown. The article has used the title and date of the address; a close reading of its text, signatories and idiom, to see whether it echoes the letter and the language of Zikism, is the most immediate extension of this study.

What the Letter Shows About Political Culture in Opobo

The letter's most interesting evidence concerns not the Tribunal but the people around the writer. Chief Jaja describes Cookey as Azikiwe's "political son" and says that he has been "an inspiration to us all politically." He adds that Cookey "talks to us of Zik, Zik, all the time." This is the language of a young activist who carried the name and cause of Azikiwe into a local community and appears to have won the interest of its senior chiefs. It is the kind of work that Zikism, with its personal devotion to a leader and its emphasis on propaganda and mobilisation, was designed to do. The letter does not say that Cookey was a Zikist, and the article does not claim it. What it shows is that, in 1957, in a Rivers community far from Lagos, a Zik-centred politics of youthful agitation was operating alongside, and was being linked to, the authority of a traditional ruler. That is evidence for the second test and, more weakly, the first.

The letter also suggests a mechanism of transmission. The senior chief did not communicate with Azikiwe directly on the matter of the visit but delegated it to the young activist, who was to "write and give you an appointment to meet Opobo Town Chiefs." The connection between traditional authority and young nationalist organisers thus appears to have run through personal networks of this kind, although one letter cannot show how typical the arrangement was. The themes of persecution, martyrdom and "one Nigeria" in the letter echo those of the Zikist period, although, as noted above, they were also part of the general vocabulary of nationalism.

Table 6 sets the letter's main phrases against their antecedents in the Zikist period. The comparison shows how little of the letter's language is exclusive to Zikism, which is the reason the article grades the idiom test as moderate and not strong. Almost every phrase has an antecedent in the Movement's rhetoric, but almost every phrase was also available to any nationalist writer of the time. What distinguishes the letter is not any single expression but the combination of Zik-centred youthful agitation, the language of martyrdom and a traditional ruler's willingness to adopt both.

Table 6

Idiom in the Jaja Letter and Its Antecedents

Phrase in the letter	Antecedent in Zikist-period idiom	Why it cannot be claimed as uniquely Zikist
"one Nigeria"	The Zikist insistence on a non-tribal, pan-Nigerian nationalist front	Common to all the main nationalist parties
"economic martyr"; "the Prophets (Nationalists)"	The culture of sacrifice that followed the trials and the ban	Biblical and nationalist martyrdom language was widely shared
"Zik, Zik, all the time"	Devotion to the leader expressed in the very name "Zikism"	Equally a feature of NCNC personality politics
"selfish men"; "fill their empty pockets"	Zikist attacks on opportunists and cautious leaders	A stock polemic against rivals

"Carry on, we are behind you"	Mobilisational posture of the Movement	Generic language of political loyalty

Evidentiary Limits

The letter should not be asked to carry more than it can. It is partisan; its account of the Colonial Secretary's motives is interpretation and not evidence; it is a single document; and, although several of its checkable claims are now corroborated (Table 5), two remain pending. It does not mention the Zikist Movement or any Zikist by name. Any link to the Movement is therefore one of interpretation, which this article makes explicit instead of assuming. The letter's value is as an illustration of how a traditional ruler understood the Tribunal and of the political culture around him, and as a prompt to the further research identified below.

Assessing Continuity: Evidence, Alternatives and Limits

Table 7 summarises the evidence against the four tests. Personnel continuity is the best supported, since it rests on published biographical record. Continuity of idiom and of state response is supported to a moderate degree. Organisational lineage is not demonstrated, since the sources used contain no branch records, membership lists or correspondence linking the Zikist Movement to the events of 1956-57.

Table 7

Evidence for Continuity, 1950-1960, by Test

Test	Evidence	Strength	Limits
1. Personnel and networks	Enahoro's 1953 motion; later careers of Amaechi, Orizu and Osadebay; Anyiam's 1959 account; an organised NCNC divisional branch addressing Azikiwe at Opobo in 1957	Moderate to strong	Several figures were associates, not core members; no membership lists for later years
2. Ideas and idiom	Self-government demand adopted by the mainstream; the Jaja letter's themes of "one Nigeria," martyrdom and Zik-centred youth talk (Table 6)	Moderate	The vocabulary was shared across the nationalist movement and was not unique to the Zikists
3. State response	Chronology of 1936-1957 (Table 3); the Tribunal's criticism of Azikiwe	Moderate	Each episode had its own proximate causes; the Tribunal also made genuine findings of impropriety
4. Organisational lineage	None found	Not demonstrated	Requires provincial branch records and oral history

Three alternative explanations deserve consideration. The first is that what persisted was not Zikism but Azikiwe's personal leadership and the NCNC's organisation, so that the Tribunal and the Jaja letter concern a leader and a party and not a radical tradition. This cannot be excluded. It is, however, difficult to separate Azikiwe from Zikism, since the Movement took its name, ideas and press from him, and the Jaja letter's "Zik, Zik" idiom suggests that the two were not distinguished in the popular mind. The second explanation is that the shared vocabulary of nationalism, and not any Zikist inheritance, accounts for the recurrence of sacrifice and martyrdom language. This too is plausible, and it is the reason the idiom test is graded as only moderate. The third is that radical energies were reconstituted elsewhere, for example in the trade unions and in the Action Group, and did not pass through the Zikist networks at all. The Enahoro evidence is consistent with this, although Enahoro's Zikist-adjacent origins suggest at least partial continuity.

The most defensible conclusion is therefore a qualified one. The evidence supports the claim that a radical nationalist political culture associated with Zikism persisted into the 1950s, that its personnel remained active,

and that the colonial state's suspicion of the nationalist leadership most closely tied to it recurred. It does not support a claim of institutional succession. The thesis stated in the introduction should be read in that light.

DISCUSSION: RADICAL FLANKS AND THE PACE OF DECOLONISATION

The findings invite comparison with the literature on radical flanks in social movements, which asks how the presence of a militant wing affects the position of moderates (Haines, 1988). Two effects are usually distinguished. A positive effect arises when militants make the moderates' demands appear reasonable by comparison and so strengthen their bargaining position. A negative effect arises when militants discredit the wider movement or give the authorities a pretext for repression that also touches the moderates.

The Zikist case shows both effects. The positive effect is visible in the shift of the mainstream agenda from the Movement's demand for immediate self-government in 1948 to the parties' competition over a fixed date by 1953, which made the timetable look moderate. The negative effect is visible in the sedition trials, the ban and the NCNC's careful distancing in 1950, which show how closely the leadership felt itself exposed. The later Tribunal and the Jaja letter suggest that the suspicion of radicals did not disappear with the Movement but attached itself to the leader most identified with it. This is a hypothesis and not a finding, since the article has not measured the effect of the Zikists on the bargaining position of the moderates directly. It is, however, a testable one: it predicts that the colonial government's concessions on timing should be traceable to pressure that the radical idiom helped to create, a question for further work in the Colonial Office files.

The comparison with the Gold Coast is again instructive. There, a mass party led by a figure who had admired Azikiwe's writings converted positive action into electoral power within a year. In Nigeria, the radicals had no comparable vehicle, and their influence passed into other organisations and into a political culture. The Zikist case therefore suggests that persistence after proscription may take the form of dispersed personnel and shared idiom and not of organisational survival, and that the historian's evidence must be adapted accordingly.

CONCLUSION

This article has asked to what extent the radical nationalism of the Zikist Movement persisted after its proscription in 1950. It has argued that the Movement made a distinctive contribution between 1946 and 1950: it radicalised the nationalist agenda by insisting on immediate self-government and direct action, it embodied a multi-ethnic idealism at a time when regional politics were hardening, and it practised a politics of personal sacrifice that left a lasting mark on the language of the independence struggle. Against the assumption that the ban ended its influence, the article has shown continuity of personnel, of idiom and of colonial suspicion, graded as moderate to strong, moderate and moderate respectively, and has found no evidence of organisational lineage.

The article's contribution lies in three things: a framework that makes the persistence claim testable; a source, the Jaja letter, that has been authenticated, corroborated where possible and read within its political context; and a longer chronology of official hostility toward Azikiwe that places the Foster-Sutton Tribunal alongside the Zikist trials instead of apart from them. Its limits are those of its evidence: a narrow archival base, one private letter, and participant accounts written with hindsight. The Movement's long-term legacy is best located in political culture. Its demands, ridiculed at the outset, were absorbed by the mainstream; its alumni filled leading positions; and its example of sacrifice shaped how the struggle was remembered. It was also small, concentrated in Lagos and divided from the NCNC leadership, and it did not prevent the regionalisation of politics that its founders deplored.

Further research should address the gaps identified above. Five tasks follow directly from the argument. First, the *West African Pilot* and other regional papers for January to March 1957 should be searched for local reporting of the Opobo visit, for the activities of Cookey and for any reply to Chief Jaja. Second, the Eastern House of Assembly record for 1956–57, which would complement the Commons record used here, should be examined for the debates on the Tribunal. Third, the digitised Nnamdi Azikiwe Papers, whose correspondence series can be searched through the UCLA Digital Library, and the holdings of the National Archives of Nigeria

should be searched for letters from other traditional rulers and from young activists such as Cookey, which would show whether the Jaja letter was exceptional. Fourth, further Colonial Office files at Kew should be examined for official assessments of Azikiwe and the former Zikists after 1950. Fifth, oral histories should be collected in Opobo and elsewhere in the Rivers area, and from surviving associates of the Zikists, to test Test 4. Comparative work on radical youth movements in other African colonies would help to show whether the pattern of persistence after proscription was distinctively Nigerian.

Public memory honours the leaders who signed the constitutional instruments and tends to forget the younger men who went to prison in the 1940s for speaking of freedom before it was politically safe to do so. Restoring them to the record does not diminish the achievement of the constitutional nationalists. It shows that independence was reached by two roads at once, the negotiated and the confrontational, and that the second helped make the first look reasonable to a hesitant colonial government.

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APPENDIX A

Transcription of the Jaja Letter, 1 February 1957

Transcribed by the author from the digitised item (Nnamdi Azikiwe Papers, local identifier zik_man_00282; ark:/21198/z1d84b92). Original spelling, punctuation and capitalisation are retained, including "troubulour," "assunder" and "King Jack Jaja." Line breaks within the address blocks follow the typescript.

Chief Harvey Jim Jaja,

Jim Jaja's Compound,

Opobo Town.

1st. February, 1957.

Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe,

1, Onitsha Road,

Enugu.

My dear Son,

As the most senior Chief in Opobo Clan; as a supporter of all your efforts towards "one Nigeria" and Nigerian freedom; as an eye witness of most of the economic struggles of our late grandsires, I send you sincere greetings, at this troubulour time.

As a sincere citizen of Nigeria your struggles and trials are mine; your joy is also mine. The ambition of Mr. Lennox-Boyd is like water on duck's back. Do not be disheartened.

My grandfather the late King Jack Jaja became an economic martyr, as he believed in the supremacy of the African and the equality of mankind. Take heart, all will be well. Cheer up. God will provide all the missing links and make your dreams come true.

Do not mind the opposers. They are not serious. They are a bunch of selfish men who have no other ambition than to fill their empty pockets. When their personal interests clash with national interests, their political clocks will be rent assunder, and the world will know them by their fruits.

Your political son, Mr. J. G. Cookey, Junior, has always told us how you love Opobo and how you aim at helping us. May God bless you for the thought. He tells us how you like him too. We are grateful to you very sincerely, because the boy has been an inspiration to us all politically. He also talks to us of Zik, Zik, all the time.

Your goodness to E. O. Eyo will never be your ruin. God forbid. God will save you from his snares and plans.

Your goodness to Opobo will surely add plumes to your wing. We are no ingrates. We are a proud people. We will never let down those who repose implicit confidence in us.

I thank God that in the Tribunal Report there is nothing like fraud, embezzlement, or the like against you. Carry on, we are behind you. "For so persecuteth they the Prophets (Nationalists) which were before you". The Colonial Secretary found you guilty to upkeep his prestige. Damn him. We shall slap him on the face with our overall support when you return to power on March 15th, 1957.

I am happy to hear that you will visit Opobo on February 22, 1957. I have asked your son J. G. Cookey, Junior, to write and give you an appointment to meet Opobo Town Chiefs on your arrival, even for five minutes. I hope you will do us the favour.

I extend my sincere greetings to you and family, and pray that God may be with you in all you do and give you success.

Best wishes,

Yours Ever,

(Sgd) H. Jim Jaja.

HJJ/MDOE.