World History · GS - I

The anti-colonial struggles in West Africa were led by the new elite of Western -educated Africans. Examine.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2016	GS - I	World History

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Western education; African nationalism; educated elite; mass movements; Pan-Africanism; labour mobilisation; limitations of elite leadership

Model Answer

Introduction

Western-educated Africans played a major role in West African anti-colonial movements by using political organisations, newspapers and constitutional demands to challenge European rule.

Role of the Educated Elite

- **Political leadership:** Figures such as Kwame Nkrumah in the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana) and Nnamdi Azikiwe in Nigeria helped mobilise nationalist opinion.
- **Press and public debate:** Western-educated leaders used newspapers and public platforms to criticise colonial exploitation and racial discrimination.
- **Constitutional demands:** Early nationalists sought representation, civil rights and reforms in colonial administration.
- **Pan-Africanism:** Ideas of African solidarity and self-determination strengthened opposition to colonial rule.
- **Political organisation:** Nationalist parties developed programmes for self-government and independence.

Role beyond the Elite

Anti-colonial struggles were not exclusively elite-led. Trade unions, farmers, market women, students and urban workers participated in strikes, protests and boycotts. In Ghana, Nkrumah's mass political mobilisation helped transform nationalism into a popular movement.

Limitations

Some early leaders were socially distant from rural populations, and constitutional methods initially produced limited results. Colonial repression and economic inequalities also restricted political activity.

Conclusion

The educated elite supplied organisational skills, political ideas and leadership, but independence struggles succeeded through the interaction of elite leadership with broader popular participation and changing international conditions.

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