Research Assignment: Anti-colonial Actors

Your first research assignment asks you to locate and analyze primary documents from an intellectual or political (or both) leader of an African, Asian, or Caribbean anti-colonial or nation liberation struggle of the 1940s-1960s.

Research:
Library research is at the core of this assignment. I would like you to locate a document or a collection of no more than three short documents (between 10 and 20 total pages of materials) such as a speech, an essay, a book chapter or selection, a poem, etc., from a major figure in an anti-colonial or national liberation struggle. This should be a primary document, by which I mean a document written by a major figure, not a document written about that figure. If at all possible, I would like the document(s) to be from the 1950s in keeping with our class’ focus on the Bandung conference, but documents from the 1940s or 1960s will be acceptable as well. While you will only be turning in this document or short collection of documents for the assignment, you will also need to do additional research to help you contextualize the material. That is, you will need to do some brief research to find out biographical material on the author and a sense of the historical context in which your document was produced (i.e. to which conflicts is it responding or in what debates is it taking part?). When you hand in your assignment, you should bring a clean photocopy of the primary document(s) that you have located. I will have them scanned and placed on e-reserves.

Written Response:
Once you have located the document, you will need to write up a short (500 –750 words, or 2-3 double-spaced typed pages) description and analysis of your research. Roughly half of this response should be a description of the document itself, its author, and the historical context in which the piece is written. Here you will need to be concise, and work to frame your research in a way that clearly summarizes the key features of the primary document and that identifies essential elements about the specific anti-colonial conflict in which it was produced. The second half of your paper should be an analytical response to the document, in which you make an argument about the broader significance and/or implications of the selected text. This argument can take many forms. It might be historical (e.g., X takes Y position in response to a particular historical events), political (e.g. X uses particular textual strategies and tactics to gain or maintain some measure of power), philosophical (X intervenes in the way we have come to understand ourselves or the world), and much more. Because this is such a short paper, I would like you to focus on what you believe to be the single most significant contribution or intervention in the primary document, meaning that you will likely be ignoring other important issues for the moment. Let me stress that in this second half of your paper I am expecting you to do more than simply identify significant aspects of the text; I am asking you to make an argument about why the text is significant, and what its implications are for the questions we’ve been asking thus far in the course.
Suggested Topics:
There are innumerable possibilities for research here. The following list is simply a place to start. If there is a particular country or figure that interests you, by all means feel free to depart from these suggestions.

Major Figures at Bandung
Jawaharlal Nehru (India)
Chou En Lai (China)
Sukarno (Sukarno)
Abdel Nasser (Egypt)
Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah (Pakistan)

Anti-Colonial/National Liberation Movement Leaders
Kwame Nkruma (Ghana)
Patrice Lumumba (Democratic Republic of Congo, Zaire)
Amilcar Cabral (Guinea Bissau)
Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya)
Govan Mbeki (South Africa)
Julius Nyerere (Tanzania)
Ahmed Sekou Toure (Guinea)
Ho Chi Minh (Vietnam)
Fidel Castro (Cuba)
Che Guevara (Cuba, Congo, Bolivia)

Anti-Colonial Intellectuals
CLR James (Trinidad)
George Padmore (Trinidad)
George Lamming (Barbados)
Walter Rodney (Guyana)
Albert Memmi (Tunisia)
Cheikh Anta Diop (Senegal)
Jean Paul Sartre (France)

Logistics:
Due at the beginning of class on September 30
Turn in a photocopy of your primary document(s) and a hard copy of your written response.
Once the documents are scanned, I will ask you to post an electronic version of your response to the course website.