



AP[®] European History 2002 Sample Student Responses Form B

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In the wake of WWII, European nations were left with the immense responsibility of reconstructing the Continent and mobilizing their societies out of war-time economies. The old imperial regime idea was changing to a European integrated economy, with each country relying on others for commerce and markets for products, as well as world power shifts occurring, with England emerging from the war as a weakened power, France obliterated, and Germany occupied. The USA and Soviet Union now dominated international politics. Through European integration and increased external influence, imperialist powers realized that the time had come to release their colonies.

To jump-start the reconstruction process, America offered large amounts of economic aid to Europe through the Marshall Plan. Becoming indebted to the USA, European powers were obligated to take heed of America's strict anti-colonial and self-determination rhetoric. Even at the final conferences between the Big Three at Yalta and Potsdam had England's colonial policy often been criticized by Roosevelt.

Furthermore, reconstruction of the metropole (home nation) involved a more domestically-oriented policy; nations could not afford to ~~become~~ spend time on their colonial economies and well-being when there were so many problems at home. Downsize was in order.

Economically, the colonies hadn't proven their major advantages in terms of a market for European goods. Very few natives wished to buy fancy cotton shirts or other consumer goods—their economic advantage lay in the abundance of natural resources. However, in the post-war world, European nations found it more advantageous to trade with one another through the formation of the European Steel and Coal Community ~~and~~ which transformed into the European Economic Community in the Treaty of Rome, espousing free trade across the continent.

Due to these developments, ~~the~~ European nations, on the whole, were not so concerned (with the exception of France) ~~for the~~ with the nationalistic agitations in Africa. England, ~~with~~ was most prepared to leave its colonies, and Ghana received its independence in 1960 through peaceful means. Other nations had many more problems, ~~to name~~ such as Algeria, due to the 1 million French settlers residing there.

The attitudes of the European nations towards their colonies also played an important role in decolonization. England employed racist but more authoritarian, structured policies—very few British civilians lived in the colonies, making removal of forces an easy task. The French on the other hand had a vision of integrating natives into "la civilisation" and thus created black elites, settler problems and immigration issues that made pullout difficult. Charles DeGaulle also saw

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the colonies as a means to restore French power on the continent; he called this idea "la gloire".

Although internal problems caused imperialist nations to release their colonies over 25 years ago, they are still feeling aftershocks from this dark period of history. Native immigrations are increasing to places like France and England, and tribal warfare and conflict exist in places such as Rwanda and the DR Congo, where pullout was rapid and unprepared.

After the devastation caused by WWII to all European countries it seems fair to say that the preoccupation with countries thousands of miles away as a means of raw materials and market were overlooked when the matters of financial recovery in all the homelands of countries with colonial records was far more important. This may also be another reason for a particular interest in European integration - as advocated by Monnet and Schuman - which overshadowed the importance of global correspondence with colonies. Integration ~~of~~ of a free market in Europe fundamental of laissez-faire, could lead successfully to economic recovery.

Such problems were already being debated by the Big Three; Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin at Bretton Woods in 1944. The importance of liberalization of trade and stabilization of currencies were fundamental. Therefore a General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs was formulated (GATT) was made and even at the Yalta conference in 1945 the European Union was first introduced. An important make in making a "United States of Europe". De Gaulle,

ex-president of France, was an influential figure concerning the union of Europe. This is the reason that although in 1957 the Treaty of Rome formulated the European Economic Community (EEC) it was not until after 1967 when de Gaulle resigns that England were allowed into this fundamental part of liberalisation of trade and an important European free market which would prove to be a driving force for European recovery and integration. Thus the Benelux nations, France, Italy, W. Germany and England were currently united.

It is important to note that a wide concern with the quality ~~and~~ of life and social benefits was becoming ^{even} more of a concern to nations after WW2. Clement Attlee, predecessor of Winston Churchill, ~~of~~ the Labour Prime Minister of Great Britain gave India its independence during his run as Prime Minister. It may be inferred that the importance of reducing excessive unemployment and returning a peacetime industrial pattern were more important than worrying about the state of India far, far away.

when the state of the country in which he lived were far more important. Therefore, with no financial drain to colonies it was easier to concentrate on the recovery economically and of the people morally with social benefits.

Forming of such organisations as the EEC and EU showed the devotion that the European countries felt at this time, and up till today, to uniting Europe very importantly financially and politically. It was almost as though the world outside Europe and the borders of countries, like the United Kingdom was not at all important in comparison with what was happening within the borders of Europe and its her countries as a means of economic survival and restructuring after WW2.