

## PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

### Ahmed Sékou Touré

*First President of Guinea*

*"We prefer poverty in liberty than riches in slavery."*

Page | 1



FIGURE 1 COURTESY OF GMTECH

#### Background Information

**Born: January 9, 1922; Died: March 26, 1984**

Ahmed Sékou Touré was born on January 9, 1922, in Guinea, a French colony. He was born to poor Muslim farmers and grew up as one of seven children. Touré attended schools where he studied history, and it was within schools he began to learn about the unfair treatment of Africans. His first protest against injustice took place while he was a student.

#### Touré's Resistance

Touré first worked as a treasury clerk in the French government. He was dissatisfied with job conditions and soon became general secretary of the Postal Workers Union. Ahmed led fellow workers on a successful strike in 1953 against French colonial rule. He sought different roles in government, and eventually, citizens elected him as mayor of Conakry.

Touré, like many African leaders, wanted to decolonize Guinea. He worked to build Guinea nationalism and African pride. Nationalism is the idea that culturally oppressed groups should be free to rule themselves. As he advanced in politics, he pushed for independence from France. He argued that it was better to live in poverty and be free than to have a lot of money and be controlled by someone else. His efforts were successful. Guinea became Africa's first independent French-speaking state on October 2, 1958.<sup>i</sup> Soon afterwards, Ahmed Sékou Touré was elected as the new nation's president.

The French were not happy and punished the new country. French government officials withdrew vital services from Guinea. This included removing transportation support and economic support economic funds. Despite the efforts to cripple Guinea, the country did not fall. Touré led a presidency full of reforms for Guinea, prioritizing Pan-Africanism and unity amongst African nations. He focused on strengthening relationships among close African countries. He understood that a collective dependence on European colonization could not continue. The liberation of African citizens from French rule changed the economic landscape of Guinea. Touré sought to help his people by redistributing the land and wealth of the country.<sup>ii</sup> Ahmed led Guinea for twenty-six years, until his death.

#### Achievements

During his lifetime, Ahmed Sékou Touré received many honors, including the Lenin Peace Prize (1960) and the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor of France.<sup>iii</sup>

