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"Highlife Solidarity"

White Supremacy and Black Postcolonial Statecraft

INTRODUCTION

As Ghanaians danced into political independence on March 6, 1957, under the backdrop of Ghanaian highlife musician E. T. Mensah's sweet "Ghana Freedom" rendition, the Soviet Union became increasingly anxious about its place in the new nation's foreign policy and the shifting global geopolitical landscape. At Kwame Nkrumah's behest, Ivan Benediktov, the minister of Soviet State Farms and Agriculture, and Yakov Alexandrovich Malik, the Soviet ambassador to England at the time, participated in Ghana's Independence Day celebrations.[1] Although the Soviet ambassador enjoyed the highlife music and festivities, he was upset by his exclusion from the "high table" at the dashing Savoy hotel, where other esteemed dignitaries sat. The Soviets felt that Nkrumah had reneged on an earlier promise to enact favorable ties between the two states. A month prior to the festivities, in February, Benediktov and Nkrumah, then Ghana's impending prime minister, met and agreed to create an "advantageous relationship" by establishing "diplomatic missions," and working together internationally to combat Western geopolitical hegemony.[2]

[1] Sergey Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War: The USSR in West Africa and the Congo, 1956–1964* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 46.

[2] PRAAD-Accra, *Cabinet Agenda Meeting Feb–March 1957*, February 27, 1957, "Joint Communique: On the Talks Held between the Government Delegation of the USSR and the Government of Ghana on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the USSR and Ghana."

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Historians and contemporaneous British, Russian, and American officials paint a picture of American and British pressure stalling open diplomatic relations between the Ghanaians and Soviets from 1957 to 1959.[3] Some have even suggested that "Nkrumah could not have visited Russia in 1959 without seriously weakening his domestic position."[4] Despite E. T. Mensah's Independence Day song lyrics, "Ghana, we now have freedom,"[5] and Nkrumah's proclamations that Ghana was "free forever," the Soviets convinced themselves that the British continued to exert undue power over the new state's foreign policy decisions and had pressured Nkrumah to renege on their "gentleman's agreement."[6]

White imperial powers' perception of Ghana as a satellite state, in the thralls of either the Soviets or the West, their "competitors," would come to dominate their perceptions and attitudes, and their writings of the newly independent Black state. These writings and ideas were circulated internally within white imperial government corridors and in the public domain by newspapers such as the *New York Times*, which wielded tremendous influence among the Western reading public and intelligentsia. These fabulations assumed that Black African leaders and diplomats lacked the sophistication or astuteness to make informed, well-calculated foreign policy decisions, but, rather were at the mercy of their savier and, sophisticated white partners (or masters). However, these deceptive narratives overlook African agency and the role of race in international relations. Anthropologist Jemima Pierre maintained that failing to think of the postcolonial African state without contextualizing it within "updated ... racial legacies of European hegemony and white supremacy" is to fundamentally misunderstand the postcolonial African state.[7] In returning to the archival record and a re-reading of some "well-known" episodes through

[3] TNA, FO 371/143448, January 28, 1959, from Chancery to the British Northern Department Foreign Office; Mazov, "Soviet Policy in West Africa," 297; Iandolo, "The Rise and Fall," 683–704; Iandolo, *Arrested Development*, 66–75; FO 371/146801, August 18, 1960, A. W. Snelling to Secretary of State for C.R.; Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 101.

[4] Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 100.

[5] E. T. Mensah, "Ghana Freedom" (1957).

[6] TNA, FO 371/129152, March 7, 1957, J. O. Moreton to Cole. The Soviets would complain bitterly to the British about Malik's seating snub. The British debated whether to apologize to Malik for the incident, declining ultimately to do so, insisting that the event was an entirely Ghanaian affair and to provide an official apology would give the unwanted impression that the newly independent state was still under its tutelage. See TNA, FO 371/129152, March 14, 1957, Graham to J. M. D. Ward; TNA, FO 371/129152, March 19, 1957, J. M. D. Ward to J. O. Moreton.

[7] Pierre, *The Predicament of Blackness*, xv.

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an anti–white-supremacist lens, this chapter argues that, alongside concrete considerations like a lack of finances and diplomatic personnel, we cannot fully comprehend a Black African state's foreign policy maneuvers and diplomatic objectives without taking seriously their fears of white supremacy and how the Eastern and Western white empires and states (re-)produced and projected their own visions and versions of white supremacy and modes of anti-Blackness onto the international arena.

This feeds into another argument, that early liberationist and radical Black and African leaders and states were not "junior players" or "puppets" during geopolitical deliberations, despite Western and Soviet officials' claims to the contrary.[8] Following other pioneering works, this chapter demonstrates that state leaders in Ghana had agency and dictated the pace and contours of their relationship with the USSR and other white imperial states.[9] However, like all states without nuclear bombs or economic conditions fueled by slavery and colonialism, their agency was, of course, constrained by their domestic economic and military situations. Yet, inserting the framework of white supremacy into Cold War and decolonization histories permits us to reconstruct this period within the ontologies of our Black actors who understood that white supremacy had no "Cold War" camps when it came to the issue of the provinciality of Black freedom.

COMMUNIST BOOGEYMEN AND THE FRAGILITY OF AFRICAN INDEPENDENCE

The inception of the Soviet state in 1917 through the Bolshevik Revolution amidst European colonial rule in Africa meant that the question of race and racism would cast a large shadow over both Ghana and the Soviet Union and their relationship to Western colonialism. In the 1920s, the Soviet government was the only significant white power calling for the elimination of colonialism, racism, and sexism, and the only one to advocate for the right of Blacks to self-determination – even though they

[8] Tony Smith, "New Bottles for New Wine: A Pericentric Framework for the Study of the Cold War," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (October 2000): 567–597; Miescher, *A Dam for Africa*, 31–98.

[9] Matusevich, *No Easy Row for a Russian Hoe*; Nolutshungu, "African Interests and Soviet Power; Osseo-Asare, *Atomic Junction*; DeRoche, "Asserting African Agency"; Sanchez-Sibony, *Red Globalization*; Siddiqi, "Shaping the World," 41–55; Telepneva, *Cold War Liberation*.

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had their own internally subjugated populations.[10] This contrasted vividly with the terrorist acts systematically meted out toward Blacks in the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa. These included lynchings, race riots, racism, forced labor,[11] property destruction, exclusion from capital,[12] and the denial of civil liberties.

The anti-imperialist, anticolonial, anti-capitalist, and occasionally anti-sexist slogans emanating from the USSR resonated with Blacks, colonized, and marginalized peoples across the world.[13] Such was the allure of the USSR that some Africans and oppressed peoples across the globe traveled to the "Red Mecca," as historian Woodford McClellan famously coined, in the 1920s and to a lesser extent, in the 1930s, to think about this new white state and its potential allyship against white colonial rule.[14] "For revolutionaries from the colonized world and beyond, the Soviet Union," as historian Ali Raza noted, "stood as a symbol of world revolution, as the patron in chief of national liberation struggles, and a site where a new age, a new future, a new world, were being inaugurated."[15] However, this vision of the Soviet Union that Raza eloquently described came crashing down in the 1930s for many Blacks.

[10] See George Padmore and Dorothy Pizer, *How Russia Transformed Her Colonial Empire: A Challenge to the Imperial Powers* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1946); Robert D. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Chatterjee, *Russia in World History*.

[11] Roger Casement and Emily Banks, "Evidence of Colonial Atrocities in the Belgian Congo (1903–5)," in *Africa and the West: A Documentary History: Vol. 2: From Colonialism to Independence, 1875 to the Present*, eds. William H. Worger, Nancy L. Clark, and Edward Alpers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 13–21; Charles Van Onselen, *Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1900–1933* (London: Pluto Press, 1973).

[12] Peter Hudson, *Bankers and Empire: How Wall Street Colonized the Caribbean* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

[13] Robert Edgar, *The Making of an African Communist: Edwin Thabo Mofutsanyana and the Communist Party of South Africa 1927–1929* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2005); Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

[14] Woodford McClellan, "Black Hajj to 'Red Mecca': Africans and Afro-Americans at KUTV, 1925–1938," in *Africans in Russia, Russia in Africa: Three Centuries of Encounters*, ed. Maxim Matusevich (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2007), 61–84; Kate Baldwin, "The Russian Routes of Claude McKay's Internationalism," in *Africans in Russia, Russia in Africa: Three Centuries of Encounters*, ed. Maxim Matusevich (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2007), 85–110; Matusevich, *No Easy Row for a Russian Hoe*, 11–56.

[15] Ali Raza, *Revolutionary Pasts: Communist Internationalism in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 2.

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Several incidents forced many Blacks to reconsider the Soviet Union's claims of solidarity. After the Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin's death on January 21, 1924, the Bolshevik Communist Party's general secretary Josef Stalin consolidated power by marginalizing and killing his rivals.[16] Stalin's rise to and solidification of power also signaled a shift in Soviet foreign policy toward Africa and the colonized world.[17] Not only did Stalin repudiate global interventionism and revolution against Western colonialism and imperialism, in 1935, the Soviets sold fuel to Benito Mussolini's fascist Italian regime that was invading Ethiopia – one of the only non-colonized African countries.[18] In effect, Stalin's USSR was fueling the fascist empire. Furthermore, on February 23, 1934, the Soviet Communist Party released a statement noting that George Padmore (born Malcolm Nurse), a leading Black figure within the Communist Party, was expelled for prolonged contacts with "bourgeoisie elements." The Soviets questioned Padmore's attitude toward the national question, his preference for racial unity over class unity, and a failure to hand over committee affairs upon his departure.[19] Within the expulsion document, the seeds of Padmore's concerns over Soviet anti-Blackness and white supremacist geopolitical constructions were germinating and becoming visible.

Fortunately, Padmore escaped Stalin's purges. Albert Nzula, the first Black person to hold the position of general secretary of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) in 1928, and Lovett Fort-Whiteman, an African American Communist in the Soviet Union, were less fortunate. Nzula died in mysterious circumstances on January 7, 1934.[20] On January 13, 1939, in Magadan, Siberia, Fort-Whiteman died at the Sevvostlag Prison Labor Camp.[21] These incidents coincided with revelations of Stalin's agricultural policies in Soviet Ukraine and Kazakhstan

[16] Ian D. Thatcher, "Troskii and Lenin's Funeral, 27 January 1924: A Brief Note," *History*, Vol. 94, No. 2 (April 2009): 194–202; Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888–1938* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

[17] Matusevich, *No Easy Row for a Russian Hoe*, 21–25; Iandolo, *Arrested Development*, 24–25.

[18] Allison Blakely, *Russia and the Negro: Blacks in Russian History and Thought* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press 1986), 127.

[19] Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI), Comintern, f. 495, op. 261, d. 4718, March 3, 1934.

[20] Albert Nzula, I. I. Potekhin, and Z. Zusmanovich, *Forced Labour in Colonial Africa*, ed. Robin Cohen (London: Zed Press, 1979), 15.

[21] Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919–1950* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008), 31–154.

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had left millions dead in the early 1930s.[22] For some Asian communists, like M. N. Roy, "the Soviet turn toward national chauvinism" represented "a resurgence of Russian Pan-Slavism" and were "deeply critical of" it.[23] These episodes damaged Stalin's and the USSR's reputation in the minds of the early Ghanaian leaders and tied the Soviet leader to broader imperial processes. Indeed, these were important moments of reflection in considering the limitations of Soviet anti-racist and anti-imperialist discourses.

From the 1930s, leading figures of Colonial Ghana's anticolonial movement saw no distinctions between white empires for colonized Africans. While Padmore worked in the USSR, the Soviets had asked him to distinguish between "democratic imperialists" and "fascist imperialists." Padmore balked at the suggestion.[24] Historian Susan Dabney Pennybacker noted that Padmore "lump[ed] the Soviet Union together with the Western powers."[25] In 1935, Padmore argued that the Soviet leaders were part of "the Versailles camp," and it was "very important for Negroes to understand this. . . ."[26] The Soviets were indistinguishable from the Western imperial powers. On July 1, 1942, as World War II raged, from his Philadelphia abode, Nkrumah wrote to the New York-based Gold Coaster, Jones-Quartey, criticizing his attempts to distinguish between the British and Germans. For Nkrumah, "the true renascent African" had "no choice . . . between ruthless Nazi barbarism and the cold, selfish, heartless exploitation and domination to which the British have subjected our people for so many years . . . !" Nkrumah declared that it was the Africans' mandate to ensure that those seeking "to exploit and maintain empire, whether they be British, German, or anything else, will find a living hell in Africa."[27] In fact, Nkrumah's dissertation committee failed his dissertation, "Mind and Thought in Primitive Society: A Study in Ethno-Philosophy,"[28] "on three separate occasions because it was nothing more nor less than a vicious indictment of Imperialism and could

[22] Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2017); Sarah Cameron, *The Hungry Steppe: Famine, Violence, and the Making of Soviet Kazakhstan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018).

[23] Chatterjee, *Russia in World History*, 98.

[24] C. L. R. James Papers, box 10, folder 25, series II, 3, George, Padmore 1976, "George Padmore: Black Marxist Revolutionary: A Memoir by C. L. R. James (Talk in North London, 1976).

[25] Susan Dabney Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich: Race and Political Cultural in 1930s Britain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 87.

[26] Passage quoted in ibid. [27] SC 1/40/96, July 1, 1942, Nkrumah to Jones-Quartey.

[28] PRAAD-Accra, SC 21/4/8.

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not qualify as a philosophical thesis."[29] At a speech in London in late 1942, the Marxist and Sovietophile Gold Coaster Bankole Awooner-Renner stated: "West Africa can no longer stand any form of selfish exploitation, be it British, German, French, Italian, American."[30]

After World War II, the ingredients of rampant inflation, slumping wages, food and goods shortages, and workers' strikes were stirring a soup of widespread discontent in Colonial Ghana. In January 1947, J. B. Danquah – a formidable Ghanaian lawyer and intellectual of the 20th century, who would perish in prison in 1965 under Nkrumah's rule – founded the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC). The UGCC sought to channel and cultivate this restlessness to garner political and economic concessions from the British and to position themselves as the heirs to any post-British political order.[31] Danquah and Kojo Botsio, a figure who would occupy several prominent cabinet portfolios within Nkrumah's socialist government, invited Nkrumah to return to Colonial Ghana and become the party secretary.[32] Despite his initial hesitations, Nkrumah accepted their offer and returned in 1947 after twelve years in the UK and US. In early 1948, Nii Kwabena Bonne, a Ga sub-chief, organized an Anti-Inflation Campaign to boycott the prices of British and Syrian imported goods sold within the colony.[33] Nkrumah's return coincided with these mass mobilizations against racial and economic marginalization and discrimination.

Buoyed by these political developments and aggrieved by unpaid pensions, unemployment, and financial desperation, Colonial Ghanaian World War veterans rallied in Accra on February 28, 1948, and marched to Christiansborg Castle, the seat of British power in the colony. Colin Imray, the European police superintendent, "grabbed a rifle from one of his men" and unleashed bullets, murdering three World War II

[29] TNA, FCO 141/4933, April 18, 1949, E. H. Roach to the Honorable Colonial Secretary. This counters Marika Sherwood's suggestion that Nkrumah's dissertation was rejected because it was "too pro-Communist." See Marika Sherwood, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Years Abroad 1935–1947* (Accra: Freedom Publications, 1996), 64.

[30] Bankole Awoonor-Renner, *West African Soviet Union* (London: Wans Press, 1946), 24.

[31] Dennis Austin, *Ghana Observed: Essays on the Politics of a West Africa Republic* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1976), 14–16.

[32] Rooney, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 48–49. For more on J. B. Danquah's tragic life, see L. H. Ofosu-Appiah, *The Life and Times of Dr. J.B. Danquah* (Accra: Waterville Pub. House, 1974); Yaw Twumasi, "J.B. Danquah: Towards an Understanding of the Social and Political Ideas of a Ghanaian Nationalist and Politician," *African Affairs*, Vol. 306 (1978): 73–88.

[33] See Davidson, *Black Star*, 55, 61–63; Austin, *Ghana Observed*, 15.

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veterans.[34] The martyrdom of Sergeant Cornelius Francis Adjetey, Corporal Patrick Attipoe, and Private Odartey Lamptey further fanned discontent and anger among the populace. Wide-scale riots and looting erupted.[35]

Danquah recalled:

> I saw a horrible sight. All about the central part of the town I saw big cars – the first that struck me was a big car near the Insurance Office – turned upside down and burnt. Another car near Chellaram I saw, and other cars too. I went through to the High Street and saw the whole of Kingsway Stores looted, glass broken. It was a terrible site. I went through Station Road and found looting still going on in some parts. [The people] were excited and rushing into the street and taking the goods out. I saw policemen standing by doing nothing and some of them, in fact, taking part in the looting.[36]

Where some saw carnage, others saw an opportunity to dismantle the empire's carceral system, if only piecemeal, and forced their way into Ussher Fort prison and released inmates. At the end of the disturbances, 29 people had died, more than 200 were injured, and "two million worth of property had been destroyed."[37] The British scavenged the scene for scapegoats.

Often, within a racialized framework to suggest that African leaders were being puppeteered, the British imperial apparatus employed Soviet and communist linkages and affiliations to suffocate or discredit independence movements and anti-British sentiments. This dual threat also muddled Ghana's future leaders' interaction with the Soviets.[38] The British quickly portrayed the UGCC leaders as communist stooges, participating in a Marxist conspiracy, and arrested them.[39] The British searched Nkrumah's belongings and found a document called the Circle and Nkrumah's "Communist Party card." The Watson Commission, which was set up to study the turmoil in the colony, declared that the Circle was "all too familiar to those who have studied the technique of countries which have fallen victims of Communist enslavement."[40] The

[34] Rooney, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 63; Austin, *Ghana Observed*, 18; Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism*, 8–9.
[35] Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism*, 9. [36] Cited in Austin, *Ghana Observed*, 19.
[37] Rooney, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 64; Davidson, *Black Star*, 63.
[38] Other Western powers followed this tactic.
[39] Davidson, *Black Star*, 64. The UGCC leaders were Ebenezer Ako-Adjei, Edward Akufo-Addo, J. B. Danquah, Emmanuel Obetsebi-Lamptey, Kwame Nkrumah, and William Ofori Atta.
[40] Ibid.

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communist escape hatchet for Britain's disastrous colonial policies had been found. These tactics were not limited to Africa. Historian Heather Streets-Salter has demonstrated how Western European colonial powers in Southeast Asia during the interwar period, imbued with similar racist ideas, were "convinced that the intellectual, theoretical, and organizational driving force behind communism [to push for independence] in the 'Orient' only could come from the Russian center."[41] Nkrumah's UGCC colleagues, cut from the cloth of British liberal traditions, were deeply unsettled by the communist-linked charges and blamed Nkrumah for their travails. A divorce between the parties loomed.

On June 12, 1949, in the coastal town of Saltpond, Nkrumah and the pro-Soviet Bankole Awooner finalized their divorce from the UGCC. With the slogan, "Independence Now," Nkrumah and Awooner formed their own political party, the Convention People's Party (CPP).[42] This contrasted with the UGCC's slogan: "Independence in the shortest possible time." While the differences between the two slogans have consumed the historiography of Ghana's colonial independence movements, scholars Jon Olav Hove and Kofi Baku have argued that other political parties, although electorally irrelevant, called for a much slower push toward independence.[43] On January 11, 1950, the CPP leaders started a Positive Action campaign, urging further strikes against the "railways, electricity services, communications and other key services."[44] It was a direct assault on British colonialism. Charles Arden-Clarke, the governor of Colonial Ghana, immediately sought to quell the unrest. The governor resuscitated the communist boogey trick and framed the Positive Action Campaign as the "tactics of the communists."[45] George Padmore observed astutely: "The word 'Communist' is just a term of abuse, used

[41] Heather Streets-Salter, "The Noulens Affair in East and Southeast Asia: International Communism in the Interwar Period," *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (2014): 412.

[42] TNA, KV 2/1849_2, "Francis Nwia Kwame N'krumah"; Rooney, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 71; Austin, *Ghana Observed*, 16.

[43] Jon Olav Hove and Kofi Baku, "Conservativism in Gold Coast Politics: From Ku-Hee (New Party) to the National Democratic Party, 1943–51," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, Vol. 17 (2015): 28.

[44] KV 2/1849_2, "Francis Nwia Kwame N'krumah." Furthermore, Francis K. Danquah argues that colonial Ghanaian Nationalists' decision to politicize "rural discontent" contributed significantly to Ghana's eventual independence. See Francis K. Danquah "Rural Discontent and Decolonization in Ghana, 1945–1951," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 68, No. 1 (Winter 1994): 1–19.

[45] Rooney, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 85.

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loosely by Europeans and reactionary Black politicians to smear militant nationalists whose views they dislike." Padmore continued, "There is hardly a colonial leader worth his salt who at some time or another has not been branded a 'dangerous Communist agitator.'"[46] On January 21, 1950, the British arrested many of the strikers. The following day, Nkrumah was charged "with sedition and incitement to violence" and joined the other protestors in prison.[47] Nkrumah's second stint in prison lasted thirteen months, bringing his overall tally to fourteen months.[48] Arden-Clarke's efforts backfired spectacularly.

Nkrumah's popularity grew and his resolve hardened while in prison. On July 8, 1950, Eyo Ita – a Nigerian academic and the principal and founder of the West African People's Institute from Calabar, Nigeria – thanked Nkrumah for igniting "the external light of human struggle, for human freedom" in "Ghanaland." Furthermore, Ita noted that "when I heard of your [Nkrumah's] imprisonment the first thought that came to my mind was that a new revolution had started in Ghanaland that would take in the whole of West and the result of which would be the liberation of the peoples of West Africa. It was the beginning of a new era in West Africa."[49] Similarly, Maud Rogerson, a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and on its Africa Committee, believed that Nkrumah's imprisonment had further stirred feelings of independence among the peoples of West Africa. Rogerson informed attendees at an April 1950 meeting that "the national feeling was very strong."[50] K. A. B. Jones-Quartey wrote to Padmore prophetically on November 27, 1950, that it would be the "beginning of the end of foreign rule" if Nkrumah remained in prison during the 1951 elections.[51] He was not wrong.

Despite languishing in prison, Nkrumah ran for a parliamentary seat in Accra,[52] and, with his party, the CPP, stormed to victory.[53] On February

[46] George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism* (Garden City: A Doubleday Anchor Book, 1972), 355.
[47] TNA, KV 2/1849_2, "Francis Nwia Kwame N'krumah." Furthermore, in prison, Nkrumah was prevented from reading his "own books" and was forced to weave baskets "and many other things." See TNA, KV 2/1849_2, March 19, 1950, letter from Nyako Matecole to George Padmore.
[48] Biney, *The Political and Social Thought of Kwame Nkrumah*, 42.
[49] TNA, KV 2/1849_2, July 8, 1950, Eyo Ita to Kwame Nkrumah
[50] TNA, KV 2/1849_2, April 14, 1950, "Table/Extract," B.4.B. Ref: K.S. 16/622 Pt. 2.
[51] TNA, KV 2/1849_2, November 27, 1950, K. A. B. Jones-Quartey to Padmore.
[52] "Gaoled Man as Accra Candidate," *The Daily Telegraph*, January 25, 1950.
[53] Biney, *The Political and Social Thought of Kwame Nkrumah*, 47.

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12, 1951, the British released Nkrumah from prison to thousands of rapturous and adoring supporters. According to the British newspaper the *Daily Mail*, jubilant Colonial Ghanaians "broke through the police and shouldered Nkrumah to a car." Furthermore, a priest "knifed" a "sheep on Nkrumah's feet" to "'cleanse' Nkrumah from jail and to propitiate 'the old gods.'"[54] The masses and gods had proverbially spoken. History would celebrate Nkrumah as one of the first prison-to-president graduates that would come to define the political landscape of 20th-century Africa. Others would include the Democratic Republic of Congo's Patrice Lumumba, Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta, Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, and South Africa's Nelson Mandela. However, Nkrumah's victory did not mean that Colonial Ghana's future independence was guaranteed or that the British would not employ pro-Soviet or communist sympathies as a pretext to curtail Black independence.[55] Black freedom was very fragile.

As the events in Colonial Ghana unfolded, the British waged a savage war against the Mau Mau across the African continent in Kenya in 1952.[56] Padmore wrote to Nkrumah: "Brother, since the storm in Kenya I have been working night and day. [Mbiyu] Koinage the official representative of the Kenyan African Union is here and I am trying to send possible aid. His old man, brothers and Jomo [Kenyatta] are all arrested. Brother, it is hell let loose. Only the gods of Africa know how it will end."[57] Despite the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Charter in 1948 in response to the atrocities committed during World War II, outlawing and "condemn[ing] torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment," Britain constructed detention camps in Kenya and forced suspected Mau Mau fighters there.[58] The British, white Kenyan officers, and their African supporters (Askari) tortured the Mau Mau fighters and their supporters there. Suspected liberationists had sand, water, eggs, and sticks put in their anuses and vaginas. Their heads were put into a bucket of water and beaten; they were "mercilessly"

[54] "A Lamb Is Sacrificed on His Feet," *Daily Mail*, February 13, 1951.

[55] Jennifer Luff, "Covert and Overt Operations: Interwar Political Policing in the United States and the United Kingdom," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 122, No. 3 (2017): 727–757.

[56] Carol Elkins, *The Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 2005).

[57] KV 2/1850_1, October 24, 1952, Padmore to Nkrumah.

[58] Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948, Art. 5) – International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976, Art.)

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stomped upon and their "brains [were] splattered everywhere."[59] Witnesses recounted seeing dead bodies piled on each other and tossed away.[60] Furthermore, the detainees were forced to build the present-day Jomo Kenyatta International Airport.[61] Across the world in the Americas, other repressive efforts to stop the colonized from obtaining their independence transpired.

In 1953, the British offered British Guiana a constitutional referendum, paving the way for independence. When Cheddi Jagan, the People's Progressive Party's (PPP's) leader in British Guiana, stormed to victory, the British and Americans overthrew him over fears he was a communist. They suspended the constitution, and deployed British troops to stop any "communist revolt."[62] The events in British Guiana and Kenya warned Nkrumah and his comrades that Black independence was tenuous; it was not self-evident. Sociologist St. Clair Drake's hopes in 1962 that Portugal would "retreat from Angola and Mozambique" and that South Africa's prime minister Hendrik Verwoerd's "dream ... of white supremacy" would "collapse" were misplaced.[63] Historian Marc Matera shows that the British Fabians, supposed allies of the anticolonialists, still continued to imagine a future with British colonial possessions.[64] The duration of apartheid in South Africa until 1994, Zimbabwe's Independence in 1980, and the ongoing and concurrent Lusophone African and Algerian wars for liberation underscored this truth. In fact, Nkrumah died in 1972, before the Lusophone African liberation battles had ended. These parallel struggles loomed large from the vantage point of 1956 and during Nkrumah's tenure as Ghana's leader. The Ghanaian press published daily articles denouncing the monstrosities of white minority rule and colonialism in Africa.

Black independence was precarious – not inevitable. Both teleological ideas of civilizational progress, presentist knowledge that political "independence" would come, and imperial attempts to rewrite history to

[59] Elkins, *Imperial* Reckoning, 66, 68, 157.
[60] "White Terror (2013)," *British Broadcasting Corporation*, Produced and Directed by Giselle Portenier.
[61] Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, 132.
[62] Biney, *The Political and Social Thought of Kwame Nkrumah*, 54.
[63] Schomburg Archives, St. Clair Drake, box 66 (103), St. Clair Drake, "Reflections on the African Revolution."
[64] Marc Matera, "Pan-Africa and the 'Federal Moment' of Decolonization," in *Socialism, Internationalism, and Development in the Third World: Envisioning Modernity in the Era of Decolonization*, eds. Su Lin Lewis and Nana Osei-Opare (London: Bloomsbury, 2024), 55–73.

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underscore their "benevolence" and "willingness" to "grant" their subjects' independence have obscured the realities and precariousness of Black liberation, and the depths and horrors Europeans underwent to maintain colonial order. The white Western powers had demonstrated that they were more than willing and could put the brakes on Black and African independence.

Even before British and American governments pulled the rug of independence from underneath the people of Guiana, Nkrumah had been cautious over how Western communist smears or Soviet associations could jeopardize Black sovereignty. During his trip to the United States in 1951 as prime minister of Colonial Ghana to receive his honorary doctorate from his alma mater, Lincoln University, Nkrumah dodged and downplayed pro-Soviet attitudes despite being "confronted by a direct question" on the subject matter.[65] As Chapter 4 will illustrate, Nkrumah felt compelled to hide his socialist sympathies and expelled suspected communists from his government during this period. Events in the British colonies of Kenya and Guiana in the 1950s informed Nkrumah and his CPP government that their impending independence on March 6, 1957, could not be taken for granted and had to be carefully managed. While anti-Soviet and anti-communist tactics failed to harm Nkrumah and his colleagues' popular support – for now – they had important implications for how Nkrumah and his early government navigated Soviet communications and linkages before independence.

In 1952, a year before Stalin's death, Nkrumah noted that while he "greatly admire[d] . . . Lenin," he held Stalin "in aversion because he regard [ed] him as an Imperialist."[66] Nkrumah's pronouncement came two years after his stint in the gaols, and three years after the CPP's formation. These fears, coupled with the USSR's failure to support Ethiopia, its inward turn, the horrific scale of death from its economic policies, and the persecution of dissident Black intellectuals, made the future Ghanaian leaders wary of the USSR. Padmore's scathing critique of Soviet paternalism and nationalism in *Pan-Africanism or Communism* in 1956, a year before Ghana's independence, underscored his bitter rift with the USSR and had a profound impact on early Ghana–Soviet relations.

Thus, while attending Liberian president Harry Tubman's inauguration between December 31, 1955, and January 15, 1956, Nkrumah

[65] Colin Legum, "The Gold Coast Looks to West: Technicians needed for Economic Build-Up," *The Scotsman*, June 5, 1951.
[66] TNA, FCO 141/4934, "Mile Claude Gerard's visit to Nkrumah," May 7/8, 1952.

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and his delegation secretly met with a Soviet party.[67] The records are silent about the nature or extent of their communications, but the African delegation must have expressed an eagerness to establish ties with the Soviets after independence. A month later, the political landscape in the Soviet Union, so detested by some of Ghana's early leaders, began to shift. On February 25, 1956, the new Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, behind closed doors, in his now infamous speech, "On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences," denounced Stalin and Stalinism. Khrushchev sharply criticized Stalin's "brutality, and his abuse of power," and for murdering and silencing those "dedicated to the cause of communism" and bringing "untold harm" to the Soviet cause and the Bolshevik party.[68] A thaw, or rather, a potential new opening, even if it had to be done secretly to avoid British imperial might, was transpiring. Three months before independence, Nkrumah invited Soviet officials to Ghana's weeklong Independence Day festivities.[69] The overture was an act of courage. Nikolai Bulganin, the Soviet Union's premier, happily accepted Nkrumah's invitation and promised that the Soviet government would send two representatives and a secretary-interpreter to the festivities.[70]

BEGINNING OF GHANA–SOVIET RELATIONS

Although Ghana's early leaders sought to strengthen ties with the Soviets at independence, they still viewed the Soviets as part and parcel of white empire and were loath to subsume or relinquish their sovereignty to a different white empire, even one with communist or socialist pretensions. For Africans born in the belly of European empire and whose lives were impacted by white supremacist laws, violence, cultures, and norms, economic or linguistic differences among Europeans did not expunge or mask white supremacy. In the tumultuous 1950s, key figures of Ghana's think tank saw no distinctions between white empires for

[67] TNA, FCO 141/4932, July 1956, "Comments on Mr. Vile's Secret and Personal Letter . . . to Sir Gordon Hadow Concerning a Conversation with the Gold Coast Commissioner in London."

[68] Nikita Khrushchev, "On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences," February 25, 1956, Wilson Center, Digital Archive – https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/khrushchevs-secret-speech-cult-personality-and-its-consequences-delivered-twentieth-party.

[69] Arkhiv Vneshnei Politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii/Russian Foreign Ministry Archive (AVP RF): d. 1–42. op. 1, por. 3, pa. 1, January 15, 1957, Nkrumah to Soviet Central Committee Presidium.

[70] AVP RF, d. I-42, op. 1, por. 3, pa. 1, January 23, 1957, Nikolai Bulganin to Nkrumah.

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colonized Africans. While capitalism and communism in their infancy might not have originated as tools of white European supremacy, they certainly were used to expand European imperialism and then colonial rule.[71] Ghana's early leaders saw white supremacy as the ordering principle of the international order.

From the onset of Ghana's independence, Nkrumah had famously linked Ghana's independence to the liquidation of white European colonial rule across the African continent. At multiple and subsequent occasions, Nkrumah repeated that vision. On December 8, 1958, at the All-African People's Conference (AAPC) in Accra, a "mechanism through which the independent countries of Africa could assist the dependent territories [in Africa] gain their independence,"[72] Nkrumah reiterated his desire to eradicate European colonialism. He declared to the world that it was "Only with the internment of Imperialism will Africa be free from menace and live and breathe in liberty, where men of colour shall walk with head held high in human dignity."[73] The other delegates declared that "Africa is not an extension of Europe."[74] During a March 1, 1961, dinner in Accra with the socialist Yugoslavian leader Josef Tito, who also instigated the nonaligned movement, and his spouse, Madam Broz, Nkrumah said: "The tragedy of the world situation of today is that the imperialists and colonialists refused to reconcile themselves to the simple fact that all people were created equal, were born

[71] The conservative reporter Hilarie Du Berrier wrote in March 1960 that both the United States and the USSR "made common cause. Each claimed to be the torch-bearer of 'liberty' to the colonized, the oppressed and the underdeveloped." Hoover Archives, Elizabeth Churchill Folder, March 10, 1960, Hilarie Du Berrier Reports, Vol. II. Letter; Historian Choi Chatterjee notes with bitter irony, "surely one of the greatest ironies of the twentieth century" was the "strange reconfiguration of the Soviet Union, a colonizer par excellence, into a champion of anti-colonial movements throughout Africa, Asia, and Latin America." See Chatterjee, *Russia in World History*, 127. On the American front, Mary L. Dudziak brilliantly dissected how racial discrimination in the United States undercut America's self-professed and projected image as a democratic state. See Dudziak, *Cold War Rights*; Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 2, 26; Historian Arne Westad noted that both the United States and the Soviet Union were "[l]ocked in conflict over the very concept of European modernity – to which both states regarded themselves as successors." See Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 4.

[72] CIA, "The All African Peoples Conference in 1961, 1 November 1961," *Copy 50*, p. 1.

[73] Hoover Archive, George Loft Papers 7.1, Nkrumah's speech at the All-African People's Conference in Accra on December 8, 1958, printed by the Ghanaian government, Accra, Ghana.

[74] Schomburg Archives, St. Clair Drake, box 66 (103), Ghana-1961, "The Year of Decisions: 1958."

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equal, and have an equal right to self-determination."[75] Similarly, on Africa Freedom Day, on April 15, Nkrumah lamented that "there are living millions of Africans languishing in colonial bondage and living in the most wretched conditions in many parts of this continent."[76] Nkrumah critiqued white supremacy unabashedly. It was the Europeans and European settler-colonialism that were denying colonized people's their rights. In Nkrumah's vision, those who suffered from the ills of white supremacy, "men of colour," would be liberated. Nkrumah declared gallantly that "all Africa shall be free in this, our lifetime. For this mid-twentieth century is Africa's. This decade is the decade of African independence. Forward then to independence. To Independence Now."[77]

The gauntlet was set and the problem framed – colonized and formerly colonized people and their governments had to remove white racial systems of domination in order to walk with their heads aloft and breathe in the sweetness of liberty. Nkrumah's actions and words signaled to the world that Black and African sovereignty were central to Ghana's foreign policy agenda in a world dominated by white supremacist international systems.[78] This system had predated the USSR's rise or communism as an ideological foe to capitalism and Western imperialism. Colonized subjects living in the belly of white supremacy and empire understood that the problem for Blacks and colonized people was not different European ideologies fighting for global power, but rather their subjugation by all such racist ideas.[79] Even in the postcolony, historian Uzma Quraishi writes that Pakistanis sharply criticized America as a beacon of liberty because of its anti-Black laws and living conditions in

[75] Kwame Nkrumah, March 1, 1961, "A Speech at a Dinner in honour of President Tito, Accra," in *Selected Speeches of Kwame Nkrumah, Vol. 2*, compiled by Samuel Obeng (Accra: Afram Publications, 1997), 46.

[76] Kwame Nkrumah, April 15, 1961, "Africa Must Be Free," in *Selected Speeches of Kwame Nkrumah, Vol. 2*, compiled by Samuel Obeng (Accra: Afram Publications, 1997), 69.

[77] Hoover Archive, George Loft Papers 7.1, Nkrumah's speech at the All-African People's Conference in Accra on December 8, 1958, printed by the Ghanaian government, Accra, Ghana.

[78] Elisa Prosperetti has argued that Nkrumah ensured that his first trip as Ghana's head of state was to neighboring African countries and not non-African countries for personal and political reasons. See Elisa Prosperetti, "The Hidden History of the West African Wager: Or, How Comparison with Ghana Made Côte d'Ivoire," *History in Africa*, Vol. 45 (May 2018): 29–57.

[79] See also Aimé Césaire, *Discourses on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1950).

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the 1960s.[80] Ghana's relationship with the USSR, Britain, and America was being shaped by its early leaders' astute understanding of how white supremacy operated and their evolving ideas about neocolonialism and imperialism. Black Marxists offered their contemporaries and future scholars a new framework to understand the postcolonial African state within its positionality to white superpowers, white supremacy, and history.[81] For "a true renascent African," as Nkrumah wrote, there was no choice but independence and the avoidance of neocolonialism's trappings, imperialism, and white supremacy – however they manifested themselves.

As a result, Ghana's early leaders were preoccupied with dismantling the stranglehold of white supremacy and preventing its reemergence in the new Ghanaian state. "Do not let us also forget," Nkrumah said, "that Colonialism and Imperialism may come to us yet in a different guise – not necessarily from Europe. We must alert ourselves to be able to recognize this when it rears its head and prepare ourselves to fight against it."[82] Thus, when Ghana acquired political independence from Britain, its next priority was to achieve economic independence by revamping its colonial economy to limit and blunt neocolonial sabotage and Western or Eastern European capital or diplomatic pressure. Nkrumah wrote: "We (Ghana) have emancipated ourselves politically, and we have now to shake off the economic monopoly that was the objective of foreign political control." The Ghanaian leader continued, "This is the crux of our economic policy, and the essential heart of our endeavours. For unless we attain economic freedom, our struggle for independence will have been in vain, and our plans for social and cultural advancement frustrated."[83] As Chapter 4 will explain in more detail, economic independence meant demonopolizing the power American and British capital and firms had on the Ghanaian economy. Furthermore, it entailed building state industries that would eventually compete with and outperform foreign firms, moving the state from a model agrarian and export-orientated economy into one that produced, refined, and distributed a range of commodities. Where the Soviets could aid in Black freedom, they were consulted – see Chapter 2

[80] Uzma Quraishi, "A 'Well-Loaded' Question: Pakistanis, Black Diplomacy, and Afro-Asian Anticolonialism," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (June 2023): 391–418.

[81] Kwame Nkrumah, *Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (New York: International Publishers, 1965).

[82] Hoover Archive, George Loft Papers 7.1, Nkrumah's speech cited in George Loft's December 23, 1958, "Report on All-African People's Conference Held at Accra, Ghana, December 8–13, 1958," 5.

[83] Kwame Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), 102.

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for instance. In constructing hierarchies of geopolitical importance, restructuring Ghana's colonial economy was more important than hastily diving into diplomatic relations with the Soviets.

Indeed, on January 14, 1958, Nkrumah's cabinet accepted a bill proposed by Krobo Edusei, the Ghanaian minister of Interior, that any government body "receiving any request for information emanating from a Communist country should be required to pass it to the Ministry of Defense ... for scrutiny and consideration."[84] The Ghanaian cabinet was eager to ensure that a new European empire, albeit with socialist and communist pretensions, would not compromise its independence through destabilization or other means. Ghana cautiously approached the Soviet Union with the fear of swapping one set of white masters for another.[85] Within a few months of independence, Nkrumah rejected the minister of Soviet State Farms and Agriculture's invitation to send Ghana's Agricultural Minister, Boahene Yeboa Afari, and his two top aides to the USSR. While Nkrumah expressed his sincere gratitude for the invitation, he noted that the Ghanaian government was reviewing its entire "economic policy and programme" of which the agricultural sector was an integral component and thus it would be imprudent for the individuals above to leave Ghana. Nkrumah had hoped that the Soviets would empathize with Ghana's "difficulty ... in establishing" a robust postcolonial economy and wished for a future invitation. Nkrumah was adamant that Ghana was not aligned with any power bloc or country and would engage in policies that ensured its security and true neutrality.[86]

After Nkrumah's first national assembly address in August 1957, Malik characterized Ghana's foreign policy toward the USSR as hostile.[87] On June 11, 1958, N. A. Makarov, a Soviet official, wrote an internal memorandum that American and British capital held dominant positions within Ghana's economy, causing Ghana to fear that Britain and the United States would decrease its financial assistance to it if the new

[84] PRAAD-Accra, ADM 13/1/27, January 14, 1958, "Item 33. Cultural Relations with Communist Countries."

[85] Douglas G. Anglin, "Ghana, the West, and the Soviet Union," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (1958): 152–165, 152.

[86] AVP RF: d. 110, op. 1, por. 2, pa. 1, September 3, 1957, Nkrumah to Jacob Alexandrovich Malik; AVP RF: d. 1–42, op. 1, por. 3, pa. 1, June 4, 1957, Nkrumah to Benediktov.

[87] AVP RF: d. 110, op. 1, por. 2, pa. 1, September 3, 1957, Nkrumah to Malik.

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state established relations with the USSR.[88] Orestov, a Soviet journalist touring Ghana, agreed with Makarov's assessment. Orestov surmised that Nkrumah's obsession with constructing the Volta River Project to industrialize and electrify Ghana, to increase Ghana's global prestige, and to end Ghana's economic dependency actually put him under the thumbs of the Americans, the British, and Canadians.[89] On April 22, 1959, Orestov accused Ghanaian newspapers of attacking socialist-oriented countries.[90] However, as I will discuss later, Ghanaian newspapers actually praised socialist-orientated countries' technological, educational, and cultural feats while strongly condemning socialist countries that permitted and failed to punish racist attacks against Black bodies in their lands.[91]

The debates surrounding when Ghana's Trade and Goodwill Mission and Nkrumah would visit the USSR or when embassies between the two nations would be established underscored both Soviet attempts to pressure Ghana into hasty deals, Ghanaian bemusement over Soviet efforts to undermine prior agreements and procedures, and illustrate Ghanaian independence and agency. In January 1958, Malik expressed a desire to expedite Ghana–Soviet relations. While the Ghanaian and Soviet governments had agreed to dispatch a Ghanaian Trade and Goodwill Mission to the USSR in July 1958, Malik urged the Mission to visit sooner, between March and April 1958.[92] Sir E. O. Asafu-Adjaye, the Ghanaian high commissioner to London, rebuffed Malik's request. Asafu-Adjaye reminded Malik that Ghana's one-year Independence Day celebrations would commence between March and April of 1958 and that it would be highly inappropriate for Ghanaian ministers to miss the festivities and conferences planned. The Ghanaian high commissioner implored the Soviets to uphold the originally scheduled July 1958 date and not to tamper with the carefully planned Mission program.[93] Malik then invited

[88] AVP RF: d. 720, op. 2, por. 6, pa. 1, env. 2, June 11, 1958, Makarov to the European Department of the Soviet Union.

[89] O. Orestov, "Ghana – Notes on the Political and Economic Situation," *Pravda*, June 16, 1958.

[90] AVP RF: d. 720, op. 3, pa. 2., O. Orestov, "Correspondent of Pravda in Ghana," *Pravda*, April 22, 1959.

[91] It is unclear whether, and very unlikely that, Nkrumah orchestrated these attacks. Clement E. Asante has argued that Nkrumah gained "full control" over Ghanaian newspapers in 1962, so four years after the events in question. See Clement E. Asante, *The Press in Ghana: Problems and Prospects* (New York: University of America Press, 1996), 14–15.

[92] AVP RF: d. 142, op. 2, por. 4, pa. 1, January 13, 1958, E. O. Asafu-Adjaye to Monsieur Yakov Malik.

[93] AVP RF: d. 111-1, op. 2, por. 2, pa. 1, June 1958, E. O. Asafu-Adjaye to Malik.

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Nkrumah to visit the USSR in the summer of 1958.[94] Regarding Nkrumah's visit, Asafu-Adjaye informed Malik that Nkrumah would visit the USSR when he was free, and that a decision would be rendered *only* after Nkrumah's independent African states tour.

Alongside financial and personnel reasons, the Ghanaians refused to be bullied and rushed into hastily opening an embassy in the USSR or accepting the USSR's nomination of Mikhail D. Sytenko as their ambassador to Ghana on May 30, 1958.[95] Sytenko, a career civil servant, was an attaché at the Soviet embassy to the Allied Governments in London in 1943. He served in Prague from 1955 to 1957 and as its ambassador in 1955.[96] The Ghanaians rejected the haste. Despite Soviet incredulity, Ghanaian officials had provided several reasons – from a lack of finances and personnel, and Soviet failure to observe predetermined protocols – for the impossibility of either at that moment.[97] Even the American consul general in Accra during British colonial rule, Donald Lamm, commented in December 1956 that Colonial Ghana's financial and personnel constraints would make the new state unable to send representatives to the "U.S.S.R. or Communist China ... 'for a considerable time after independence, even if they were inclined to do so.'"[98] While others have framed or used these episodes to deride Ghana's leaders, to assert that Ghana's decisions resulted solely from British and American pressure, in effect, denying Africans their agency, or to deride or question Ghana's leaders' intentions or political economic philosophies, my archival sources instead paint a different picture. Coupled with financial and personnel constraints, Ghana's leadership had set a course of action and were determined to implement it. They would not buckle to Soviet

[94] AVP RF: d. 142, op. 2, por. 4, pa. 1, January 13, 1958, E. O. Asafu-Adjaye to Monsieur Yakov Malik.

[95] AVP RF: d. 111-1, op. 2, por. 2, pa. 1, June 1958, E. O. Asafu-Adjaye to Malik.

[96] KEW: FO 371/143448, March 3, 1959, Northern Dept. to Chancery, Moscow.

[97] AVP RF: d. 110, op. 1, por. 2, pa. 1, September 3, 1957, Nkrumah to Malik; Orestov, "Ghana – Notes on the Political and Economic Situation"; AVP RF: d. 720 (I-58), op. 3, pa. 2, Orestov, "Correspondent of Pravda in Ghana." Furthermore, Asafu-Adjaye reminded Malik of his conversation with members of the Soviet Mission in Accra on November 25, 1957, that Ghana preferred to establish formal ties with the USSR *after* the Ghanaian Trade and Goodwill Mission visited the Soviet Union in July 1958. Until then, Asafu-Adjaye – and Ghana's top brass – sought Soviet respect for established diplomatic protocols, and Malik's patience and understanding. See AVP RF: d. 111-1, op. 2, por. 2, pa. 1, June 1958, E. O. Asafu-Adjaye to Malik.

[98] Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War*, 44.

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pressure even if it did not endear Nkrumah to the Soviets, whose leadership accused him of being a Western lackey.[99]

Yet, others refused to hold the Ghanaian government as solely responsible for the sluggishness of Ghana–Soviet affairs. On January 16, 1959, at a meeting in Moscow dedicated to the Conference of the Peoples of Africa held in Accra, an unnamed Ghanaian student lamented that while there were approximately 2,000 Ghanaian students in the UK, there were only 7 in the USSR. The student blamed both governments for the situation.[100] The student declared that the Soviets were not innocent bystanders and should eschew the role of passive victims in the formation of Ghana–Soviet affairs.

After their initial enthusiasm of quickly joining forces with the newly independent Black state to challenge American and Western European supremacy, the Soviets' hopes dimmed. Alongside Soviet angst that American and British capital and might were thwarting their attempts to form diplomatic relations with Ghana, they circled George Padmore as a source of obstruction. Soviet analysts argued that Padmore's prior experience with Stalinism and his close relationship with Nkrumah restricted more robust Ghana–Soviet relations. Their suspicions were correct.

ENTER AND EXIT GEORGE PADMORE

Padmore's bitter departure from the Communist Party and his disillusionment with Stalinism profoundly influenced his political outlook and Ghana's foreign orientation during his lifetime. In November 1957, Ivan Potekhin arrived in Ghana.[101] He was the deputy director of Moscow's African department of the Institute of Ethnography,[102] a former prominent Communist University of the Toilers of the East (KUTV) instructor,[103] and the first Soviet scholar to research in

[99] Iandolo, *Arrested Development*, 43.

[100] TNA, FO 371/143448, January 28, 1959, from Chancery (British Embassy in Moscow) to Northern Department, Foreign Office, London.

[101] Hoover Archive, George Loft Papers 7.1, December 23, 1958, George Loft reported that at the All-African Conference in Accra in December 1958 that Potekhin "warmly welcomed by Ghanaians."

[102] Howard Moorland, DGCKN, Kwame Nkrumah – Foreign Relations – The USSR, *New Commonwealth*, November 11, 1957.

[103] George Skorov, "Ivan Potekhin-Man, Scientist, and Friend of Africa," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1964): 444–447.

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Africa.[104] After gathering information in Ghana, Potekhin reported to the Soviet government that Padmore continued to pressure and steer Nkrumah away from the Soviets due to his expulsion from the Communist Party a few decades prior.[105] However, Potekhin's attribution of Padmore's antagonism toward the Soviets as personal and not ideological was misleading. At the heart of Padmore's wariness of the USSR was their decision to support fascist Italy against independent Black Africa and their growing coolness toward Black liberation. Scholar P-Kiven Tunteng argued that "Padmore . . . made sure that Ghanaian policy steered away from close identification with the Socialist bloc, no doubt because he had come to suspect their intentions."[106] On June 16, 1958, Orestov concluded that Padmore denounced the USSR as much as he did American and British imperialism.[107] Padmore believed that the Soviets saw Blacks as pawns to further their interests.[108] Padmore's ideas substantially impacted Nkrumah.

As outlined earlier, Nkrumah and Padmore had a very close relationship. After Nkrumah left Britain for Colonial Ghana in 1947, their relationship blossomed further.[109] Padmore and Nkrumah discussed what forms Ghana's constitution should take.[110] Padmore conscripted individuals to spy on anti-Nkrumah factions, enforced CPP party discipline,[111] and alerted Nkrumah to assassination plots against him.[112] While disagreements arose, a strong bond between them prevailed. Nkrumah placed Padmore's office right next to his at the Flagstaff House.[113] Caribbean Marxist CLR James wrote, "I who knew them both cannot think of Padmore without Nkrumah or Nkrumah without Padmore."[114] Scholar W. Scott Thompson argued that "only Nkrumah had a greater hand than Padmore in shaping Ghana's foreign policy during the first two years."[115]

[104] DGCKN, *New Commonwealth*, November 11, 1957.
[105] AVP RF: d. 853, January 31, 1958, from I. I. Potekhin.
[106] Kiven Tunteng, "Ideology, Racism and Black Political Culture," *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (June 1976): 237–250, 244.
[107] Orestov, "Ghana – Notes on the Political and Economic Situation."
[108] Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, 268–269.
[109] TNA, KV 2/1850_1, "SF. 291/West Africa," Extracted January 1, 1953.
[110] TNA, KV 2/1850_1, October 2, 1952, Padmore to Nkrumah.
[111] TNA, KV 2/1850_3, September 14, 1951, W. H. A. Rich to Director General.
[112] TNA, KV 2/1850_1, September 30, 1952, Padmore to Nkrumah.
[113] Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 29.
[114] Columbia University: C. L. R. James Papers, box 9, folder 9, series II, 2, Nkrumah, Kwame – Various 1966–1967, "Homage to Nkrumah."
[115] Thompson, *Ghana Foreign Policy*, 22.

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Political scientist David Apter, a keen observer of the Nkrumah era and a contemporary, maintained that "many of his (Padmore's) ideas … have helped form some of the key ideas of African socialists in Ghana …. Both the racial factor and the ideological find expression" amongst "African freedom fighters" and the Ghanaian state.[116] Padmore's political views on the USSR reflect Ghana's early leaders' worry about the dangers of white empires – a reality often lost in Cold War analytics.

From Ghana's infancy, Padmore bemoaned and worried that Nkrumah might become too friendly toward the white empires. During Ghana's Independence Day celebrations, Padmore lamented to his Caribbean Marxist compatriot CLR James that "the police, the head of the department of education, the magistrates and a lot of white people," who were responsible for putting "all the Black people into gaols," were "inside dancing," enjoying the festivities while the Blacks languished "outside."[117] Padmore rejected the idea that those white people had Ghana's best interests at heart and feared that they sought to manipulate Nkrumah and sink Black independence.

A series of events from 1958 to 1959 would substantially modify Ghana–Soviet relations. On September 25, 1959, Padmore died from "'cirrhosis of the liver'" in London. His death shook Nkrumah, who cried bitterly in his house.[118] During the spreading of Padmore's ashes at Fort Christiansborg or also known as Osu Castle in Accra, Nkrumah delivered a somber eulogy. He praised Padmore as a staunch defender of Black liberation.[119] At the opening of the George Padmore Memorial Library a few years later in Accra, Nkrumah declared that Padmore "sought to break the myth of white supremacy and inspired African nationalism which today has become a militant force in the destruction of imperialism and colonialism."[120] On October 30, 1959, A. K. Barden, the secretary of the Ghanaian Bureau of African Affairs, wrote about Padmore's legacy to George Loft, the American Friends Service Committee's representative in sub-Saharan Africa in Salisbury, Southern

[116] Apter, *Ghana in Transition*, xiii.
[117] Columbia University: C. L. R. James Papers, box 10, folder 25, series II, 3, 17.
[118] Biney, *The Political and Social Thought of Kwame Nkrumah*, 138.
[119] AVP RF: f. 140 (1-22), op. 3, por. 3, pa. 2, October 4, 1959, Nkrumah's Speech at Padmore's Funeral.
[120] Kwame Nkrumah, "Padmore Missionary," June 30, 1961 speech in Samuel Obeng *Selected Speeches of Kwame Nkrumah, Vol. 2* (Accra: Afram Publications, 1997), 127.

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Rhodesia.[121] Barden praised Padmore's devotion to "African Freedom" and his attempts to eliminate "imperialism, racialism, and oppression" from Africa. Barden informed Loft that Nkrumah would "continue the battle from where Comrade Padmore left it."[122] Padmore's death was more than a personal loss for Nkrumah; it also signaled the beginning of a shift in Ghana's foreign policy toward the USSR. "No factor affected the formulation of policy more during this period," historian W. Scott Thompson noted, "than the death of George Padmore."[123] As Padmore's ashes lay at Osu Castle,[124] a Ghanaian trade delegation visited the Soviet Union,[125] and Baako, a pro-Soviet minister, stepped into his office.[126] While a progressive foreign policy shift toward the Soviets was in the making, Padmore's central concerns, white supremacy and Black liberation, would continue to steer the decisions of Ghana's leaders.

"SOLIDARITY HIGHLIFE": A DIFFERENT WHITE EMPIRE?

Yet, despite the perception of minimal diplomatic ties between Ghana and the USSR from 1957 to 1959, there were early efforts from Ghana to create connections, the Ghana–Soviet space, between the two countries. In 1957, Nkrumah urged the Soviets to accept a Ghanaian trade mission to the USSR in 1958, which would include high-ranking members from the state trading corporation, the cocoa marketing board, the industrial development corporation, and the agricultural corporation.[127] Furthermore, on October 28, Kwame Jantuah, the youngest member of Nkrumah's first all-African cabinet, informed Malik that Ghana would send a delegation to the USSR for two weeks in July 1958. The mission was intended to bring goodwill, promote reciprocal trade, attract Soviet foreign investment, and instruct Ghanaians on how to establish small-scale or cottage industries in

[121] Hoover Archive, The American Friends Service Committee was an international Quaker Service Agency. See George Loft Papers, box 4/39, November 15, 1958, Loft to Padmore.
[122] Hoover Archive, George Loft Papers, box 4/39, October 30, 1959, A. K. Barden to George Loft.
[123] Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 106.
[124] In remembrance of Padmore, a nursery school in the coastal town of Mankessim in 1962 Central Region was opened in 1962. Furthermore, Accra presently boasts the George Padmore Library. St. Clair Drake Papers, box 66 (103), "November 1, 1962 – E.N. P. 7).
[125] TNA, FO 371/138167, October 2, 1959, H. W. King to Tom.
[126] Biney, *The Political and Social Thought of Kwame Nkrumah*, 138.
[127] AVP RF: d. 110, op. 1, por. 2, pa. 1, September 3, 1957, Nkrumah to Malik.

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rural areas.[128] Moreover, Nkrumah hoped that the Soviets would generously send an official to Ghana to discuss "technical details" and grant permission for Ghanaian "trade union officials to visit the U.S.S.R. from China."[129] The Soviets happily accepted these proposals. The opening salvo of the Ghana–Soviet economic and science-technical space commenced.

In early May 1959, a Soviet trade delegation ventured to Ghana to finalize a trade agreement that would develop and strengthen "commercial relations between the two nations on the basis of equality and mutual benefit."[130] The contents and terms of the trade agreement mirrored other trade deals Ghana had concluded with socialist countries like Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia.[131] Soon, Ghana began importing Soviet manufactured goods, such as heavy machinery while the Soviets imported Ghana's primary commodities.[132] At least five months before the deal was finalized, the Ghanaian government welcomed Soviet scientists and diamond experts to explore how best to streamline and tap into the nation's natural resources.[133] In the ensuing few years, the Ghanaian government continued to expand its requests to the Eastern Power. On August 4, 1959, the Ghanaian government requested Soviet aid to construct a semi-large metallurgic plant and hoped that the Soviets could help locate and excavate large iron ore deposits off the Ghanaian coast.[134] This story is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

Soon, Ghanaian officials began to differentiate the Soviets from other white empires due to Padmore's departure, Khrushchev's support for the Congolese leader Patrice Lumumba, and Khrushchev's strong anticolonial stances in personal correspondences with Nkrumah and at the United Nations. The Democratic Republic of Congo signified an important test of Black Africa's independence and the Global North's stance on a genuinely independent Africa.[135] The Congo won its independence from Belgium on June 30, 1960. The Congolese people voted the African nationalist Lumumba into power. Disappointed in the results, Western

[128] AVP RF: d. 210, op. 1, por. 4, pa. 1, October 28, 1957, J. E. Jantuah to Malik.
[129] AVP RF: d. 110, op. 1, por. 2, pa. 1, September 3, 1957, Nkrumah to Malik.
[130] Patricia Masilo Hoeane, "Economic Aid as an Instrument of Soviet Foreign Policy: The Case of Ghana, 1957–1966 (master's thesis, 1981), 58.
[131] PRAAD-Accra, MFA 4/125; PRAAD-Accra, MFA 4/153.
[132] "Russian Trade with Ghana," *Financial Times*, June 11, 1959.
[133] AVP RF: d. 281, op. 2, por. 5, pa. 1, December 1958, the Ghanaian High Commission in London to the Soviet Embassy.
[134] AVP RF: d. I-6, op. 3, por. 4, pa. 2, env. Ghana, August 4, 1959.
[135] Ludo de Witte, *The Assassination of Patrice Lumumba* (London: Verso Press, 2001); Namikas, *Battleground Africa*; Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War*.

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forces sought to remove Lumumba and maintain their access to the Congo's raw materials.[136] By January 17, 1961, Lumumba had been assassinated. The Congo represented the provinciality of Black freedom. African leaders who sought to dismantle the white supremacist international order were put on notice.

In-between Lumumba's ascent to the presidency and his assassination, Ghanaian and Soviet ministers met on four separate occasions in 1960 to address the deteriorating situation in the Congo.[137] Alongside these meetings, Nkrumah and Khrushchev exchanged numerous letters about the best measures to avert the Congo's balkanization, Western attempts both to undermine Lumumba's leadership and control the Congo's resources, and the UN's failure to support Lumumba.[138] In these letters, the Soviet leader often mimicked Nkrumah's positions on anti-imperialism, neocolonialism, and antiracism, and often pushed for Africans to determine their internal affairs. In Nkrumah's eyes, the Congo reaffirmed Western white empires' desire to either exploit, undermine, or dismantle African governments or murder African leaders who sought to dismantle former colonial relationships.[139] Reflecting on Lumumba's assassination in a February 14, 1961, speech, Nkrumah criticized the UN, the United States, and the colonizing powers but praised the Soviets for their attempts to save Lumumba and his fledgling government. Nkrumah commented that Lumumba's murder was the first time a "legal ruler of a country" had been killed due to the "open connivance of a world organization in whom that ruler put his trust." Nkrumah condemned the UN and the West for raising a "howl" when Lumumba's government received "some aircraft and civilian motor vehicles from the Soviet

[136] Ibid.; John Kent, "The Neo-colonialism of Decolonisation: Katangan Secession and the Bringing of the Cold War to the Congo," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (2017): 93–130; William Mountz, "The Congo Crisis: A Reexamination (1960–1965)," *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2014): 151–165; Mazov, "Soviet Aid to the Gizenga Government"; Alessandro Iandolo, "Imbalance of Power: The Soviet Union and the Congo Crisis, 1960–1961," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Spring 2014): 32–55; Anne-Sophie Gijs, "Fighting the Red Peril in the Congo. Paradoxes and Perspectives on an Equivocal Challenge to Belgium and the West (1947–1960)," *Cold War History*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (2016): 273–290.

[137] AVP RF: d. 011, op.4, por. 1, pa. 4.

[138] AVP RF: September 12, 1960, Khrushchev to Nkrumah; PRAAD-Accra RG 17/221, November 8, 1960, Nkrumah to Khrushchev.

[139] Nkrumah, *Neocolonialism*.

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Union" while standing idly by when Belgian arms and military forces supported the rebels.[140] "It baffles many of us," Nkrumah noted in a November 13, 1964 letter to Charles Howard, the African American UN and foreign correspondent from *Howard News Syndicate*, "that in this mid-20th century, the imperialists should still want to re-stage a scramble for Africa, as they are actively doing in the Congo and other areas of our continent." Nkrumah was adamant that "African problems can best be solved by Africans."[141] Lumumba's murder and his ghost continued to haunt and influence Ghana's foreign policy decisions and societal opinions about global international institutions and persons.

In *The Ghanaian Times* on December 24, 1963, Greek socialist poet Rita Boumi Papa published a poem called "Patrice Lumumba." Papa wrote:

Patrice Lumumba
Don't wash the blood from your body
But Slaughtered as you are appear before
God whom Christians
have place on a throne of clouds
do that he may not see their crimes
and Patrice Lumumba ask for justice .... /
Patrice Lumumba
Don't wash the blood from your body
Slaughtered as you are
blinded
blundgeoned [sic]
appear every night, every night
in the room of Hammarskjoeld [sic] and howl
in the room of Boudoen and of Fabiola
in the conference of the U.N. and howl...[142]

Papa explicitly employed Christian symbolism in socialist Ghana to attack the moral bankruptcy of white supremacy and the UN. While published on Christmas Eve, the day before Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, Papa referenced not Jesus' birth but the events after his crucifixion. Papa exhorted Lumumba's spirit not to forgive the UN leaders or turn the other cheek for being complicit in his murder. Papa called on Lumumba not to wash away his blood, spilled at the hands of

[140] AVP RF: d. 720, op. 5, por. 21, pa. 8, Ghana, "Broadcast by Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, President of the Republic of Ghana, on February 14, 1961, on the Death of Mr. Patrice Lumumba, Prime Minister of the Republic of Congo."
[141] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/420, November 13, 1964, Nkrumah to Charles Howard.
[142] Rita Boumi Papa, "Patrice Lumumba," *The Ghanaian Times*, December 24, 1963.

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the imperialists, but to return to Dag Hammarskjold, the UN secretary general, and the UN body, and forever haunt them. Lumumba's blood would not save but condemn. Just as the dead Lumumba was urged not to forgive and to remain in the midst of the living, Ghanaians were warned not to forget Lumumba's fate. White supremacy had spoken and acted. Anti-imperialist Black nations had to be continuously on-guard. Black freedom and life were fragile. As Papa's poem highlights, socialists around the world turned to Ghana to make sense of, mourn, and decry the stench of Lumumba's murder and the West's complicity.

While Ghanaians and those aligned with its state's socialist ambitions and Black liberationist ethos criticized Western white powers and their supporters for "sacrificing African lives" to maintain white supremacy,[143] they praised the Soviets for their anticolonial efforts. "But for the Soviet Union," Nkrumah remarked, "the colonial liberation movement in Africa would have suffered a most cruel and brutal suppression."[144] Nkrumah's comments represented a break from an earlier position condemning Soviet support for fascism. He was not alone. In August 1960, R. O. Amoako-Atta, Ghana's minister of Labor and Co-operatives, arrived in the USSR and told Sovetskaya Torgovlya, a Soviet trade correspondent, that Ghana was "thankful to the Soviet Union for rendering assistance to our brothers the Congolese people." The Soviet Union's respect of national sovereignty, Amoako-Atta continued, was "a sure way" of developing ties and friendship with Ghana. It was in this sense that Amoako-Atta declared the Soviets Ghana's "real friends."[145] On December 31, 1964, an article called "Whose Finger is in Congo's Pie?" came out in the Ghanaian socialist and Pan-Africanist magazine, *The Spark*. It praised the Soviets and other socialist countries for supporting the Congo in "contrast with the intrigues and subterfuges of the Western powers, the flood of the Western mercenaries and the open military intervention of the U.S. and Belgium." The author reminded the readers that "Neither the U.S.S.R. nor any socialist country has ever opposed the unity of the Congo, interfered in her internal affairs or sent a military mission into the country. Russian action in the Congo has strictly

[143] AVP RF: d. 720, op. 5, por. 21, pa. 8, Ghana, "Broadcast by Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, President of the Republic of Ghana, on February 14, 1961, on the Death of Mr. Patrice Lumumba, Prime Minister of the Republic of Congo."

[144] Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 175.

[145] "Ghana Minister Calls Russians 'Our Real Friends,'" *The Guardian* and *Reuters*, August 25, 1960.

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been humanitarian – deliveries of flour and medical supplies."[146] These moments endeared the Soviets to their Ghanaian counterparts. Khrushchev's memorable two-hour speech denouncing colonialism at the UN General Assembly in September 1960,[147] and the Soviet representative to the United Nations Security Council's Vladimir A. Brykin's call for the Council to "consider the Southern Rhodesian problem" and criticism of Britain for turning Southern Rhodesia's "independence to a 'racist government of white settlers'" in 1963 reaffirmed Ghana's belief.[148] The Congo and the fight against white minority and supremacist regimes in Africa were pivotal litmus tests on whom radical Black Africa might turn to for international support. Soviet support for African liberation went beyond mere rhetoric.

In 1961, Nkrumah's government opened secret guerilla warfare camps to overthrow colonial white supremacist and neocolonialist regimes in Africa. Under the direction of the Bureau of African Affairs, government rest-houses in Mankrong, Worobon, Kwahu Adawso, and Mpraeso were converted into liberation training camps. Mankrong was the site of the first guerilla warfare course in December 3, 1961. Two Soviet instructors ran the program and designed eighteen-week courses, teaching the liberation fighters how to use "Russian rifles, pistols, sub-machine guns, light machine guns, heavy machine guns, rocket launchers and mortar[s]."[149] While Soviet and Eastern European anti-white supremacist and anticolonial words and sentiments would come under intense scrutiny, as we will see in Chapter 3, it was clear that the Ghanaian leadership began to distinguish the Soviets from other white empires due to their public commitment to the African liberation struggles. In the ensuing years, the Soviets would throw their military, political, and economic support behind the Black Southern and Lusophone African liberation movements.[150]

[146] "Whose Finger Is in Congo's Pie?," *The Spark*, December 31, 1964.

[147] TNA, F0371/153633, "UK. Mission New York Telegram No. 878 to Foreign Office," September 24, 1960.

[148] "Soviet Demands U.N. Action on Southern Rhodesia Rule," *The New York Times*, June 13, 1963.

[149] Hoover Archive, Jay Lovestone Papers, box 73. 16, *Nkrumah's Subversion in Africa: Documentary Evidence of Nkrumah's Interference in the Affairs of the Other African States*, pp. 6, 7.

[150] Vladimir Shubin, *The Hot "Cold War": The USSR in Southern Africa* (London: Pluto Press, 2008); Jocelyn Alexander & JoAnn McGregor, "African Soldiers in the USSR: Oral Histories of ZAPU Intelligence Cadres' Soviet Training, 1964–1979," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2017): 49–66; Telepneva, *Cold War Liberation*; Natalia Telepneva, "The Military Training Camp: Co-constructed

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In January 1961, the Ghanaian cabinet took the extraordinary step to abolish visa fees on a "reciprocal basis" between the Soviet Union and Ghana. The cabinet amended its 1960 visas and entry permit regulations to issue "'gratis'" status to Soviet citizens.[151] That month, Ghana agreed to send five Ghanaian military officers to the USSR by May 1, and hoped that three of the officers could witness the Soviet's May Day Celebrations.[152] To further cement relations, the Soviet president Leonid Brezhnev visited Ghana while touring other West African states.[153] In July 1961, six months after Lumumba's murder, Nkrumah and several Ghanaian ministers finally made their trip to the USSR.[154] Nkrumah was emphatic: "We make no apology for the steps . . . taken to strengthen our trade and economic relations with the Soviet Union" and to secure Ghana's sovereignty.[155] In 1960, in front of "a thousand cheering" members of the CPP's youth, the Ghanaian political and literary class, and the world, the elderly W. E. B. Du Bois urged Ghana to "join the Soviet Union and China and usher in the New World."[156] Ghana's political and literary classes had seemingly accepted this clarion call. It was a change from the Presidential Cabinet bill Nkrumah accepted three years prior that any government body "receiving any request for information emanating from a Communist country should be required to pass it to the Ministry of Defense."[157]

From 1960 onward, Ghanaian newspapers featured Soviet scientific and literary successes. On July 6, 1960, *The Daily Graphic* praised the Soviets for successfully returning the dog, "Courageous," from a space rocket. The story also mentioned Laika's unfortunate death in an earlier earth satellite mission in 1957.[158] Laika, a dog, was one of the first animals to orbit the earth and enter space. The following day, *The*

Spaces – Experiences of PAIGC Guerrillas in Soviet Training Camps, 1961–1974," in *Socialist Internationalism and the Gritty Politics of the Particular: Second-Third World Spaces in the Cold War*, ed. K. Roth-Ey (London: Bloomsbury, 2023), 159–176.

[151] PRAAD-Accra, ADM 13/1/30, Ghana Cabinet Agenda Meeting, January 10, 1961.

[152] PRAAD-Accra, ADM 13/1/30, January 31, 1961.

[153] Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 166–167.

[154] The Schomburg Archives, St. Claire Drake Papers, MG 309, box 66 (103), Ghana-Chronology, 1960–1962, "leaving for the USSR on July 9."

[155] John D. Leonard, "Nkrumah Seeks to Industrialize Ghana, Diversify Country's Economy," *Foreign Commerce Weekly*, December 25, 1961.

[156] Claude A. Barnett, "Du Bois Praises Russians During Ghana Conference," *The Louisville Defender*, July 27, 1960.

[157] PRAAD-Accra, ADM 13/1/27, January 14, 1958, "Item 33. Cultural Relations with Communist Countries."

[158] "Space Dog Is Returned Alive," *The Daily Graphic*, July 6, 1960.

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Daily Graphic noted that the Soviets had sent a rocket about "8,000 miles from the Soviet Union into the Central Pacific." On August 26, Dr. C. B. Ashanin, a former professor at the University College of Ghana, produced a feature story on Alexander Pushkin, dubbed the father of Russian literature, in *The Daily Graphic*. Ashanin hailed Pushkin's career and life as "extraordinary" and wondered whether his "African ancestry ha[d] something to do with it as well."[159] In early 1962, the first human to enter space, the Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, visited Ghana to much fanfare. Historian Jeffrey S. Ahlman notes that Gagarin's visit "was a national event in Ghana as schoolchildren, workers, party members, diplomats, and others packed the streets of Accra to greet the Soviet space-age hero." The Ghanaian media became "fixated on the Soviet space program," covering the "day-to-day activities of Soviet cosmonauts during their orbits around the earth."[160] Indeed, on July 4, *The Ashanti Pioneer* noted that the Soviets put "another satellite into the orbit around the earth."[161] The reading Ghanaian public were becoming acquainted with Soviet technological-scientific prowess, literary feats, and its history. And through Pushkin's African heritage, writers in Ghana sought to draw a connection between themselves and the brilliance of Pushkin and the Soviets. Pushkin's racial genealogy denoted to the Ghanaian reading public that the USSR's history with Africa, at least in its Russian incarnation, went back centuries. It was not new.

During this moment, Ghanaian officials and professionals ventured to the USSR in growing numbers to study the present Soviet political-economy and particularly its relationship with its non-Russian peoples. On May 10, 1960, Botsio led a Ghanaian parliamentary delegation to Soviet Georgia. The Ghanaian delegation studied the Georgian economy, particularly its collective farms, agricultural machines, how the Georgians priced its agricultural products, and how it organized it agricultural sector.[162] In a speech to the Soviet Management Board of the Association for Friendship with the Peoples of Africa after the tour, Botsio thanked the Soviets for receiving them so warmly. Botsio added that their short visit taught them more about the Soviet Union than they

[159] "What Do You Know about Pushkin — A Famous Russian Poet?", *The Daily Graphic*, August 26, 1960.

[160] Jeffrey S. Ahlman, "Africa's Kitchen Debate: Ghanaian Domestic Spaces in the Age of the Cold War," in *Gender, Sexuality, and the Cold War: A Global Perspective*, ed. Philip E. Muehlenbeck (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2017), 157–167, 165.

[161] "Global Glimpses," *The Ashanti Pioneer*, July 4, 1962.

[162] AVP RF: d 142, op. 4, por. 15, pa. 4, May 10, 1960, pp. 7–9.

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could learn from Soviet tourists and books.[163] In July 1962, two of Ghana's top military brass – Kofi Baako, the minister of Defense, and major general S. Out, the chief of staff of the Ghana Defence Forces – traveled to Moscow and joined the Ghanaian ambassador to the USSR, J. B. Elliott, to meet key players of the Soviet military, including Marshall Malinovsky, the Soviet minister of Defense, Marshall Zakharov, the chief of general staff of the USSR Armed Forces, and Yakov Malik, deputy minister of Foreign Affairs.[164] In the middle of 1963, Victor Adegbite, the chief architect of Ghana's National Construction Corporation, went to the Soviet Union "to study" housing.[165] Fourteen Soviet teachers, comprising ten women and four men, came to Ghana to teach mathematics and science at Ghana's secondary schools (Figure 1.1).[166] Soviet professor Valentin Postnikov, a rector at the Voronezh University in the USSR, arrived in Ghana to give a lecture on the "organisation of higher education in the Soviet Union in the field of natural and technical sciences."[167] These talks were part of broader efforts to internationalize Ghana's educational system.[168]

On December 15, 1960, Regina Asamany, a member of the Ghanaian parliament, wrote to Khrushchev asking whether five Ghanaian police officers, four Ghanaian poultry farmers, three sculptors, and three co-operative society leaders from Ghana could visit the USSR for two to three months in the spring of 1961.[169] Asmany was one of the few Ghanaian women parliamentarians.[170] She hailed from Kpandu in the

[163] AVP RF: d 142, op. 4, por. 15, pa. 4, "Meeting of the Members of the Management Board of the Soviet Association for Friendship with the Peoples of Africa with Parliament Delegation of Ghana."

[164] "Global Glimpses," *The Ashanti Pioneer*, July 12, 1962.

[165] PRAAD-Accra, ADM 13/2/106, July 1963, "Recommendations by the Cabinet Committee on Applications for Permission to Travel Outside Ghana."

[166] "14 Soviets Will Teach Here," *The Ghanaian Times*, November 9, 1963.

[167] "Soviet Rector to Lecture," *The Ghanaian Times*, December 18, 1963.

[168] Elisa Prosperetti, "Writing International Histories from Ordinary Places: Postcolonial Classrooms, Teachers, and Foreign Policy in Ghana, 1957–83," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (2023): 509–530; Malgorzata Mazurek, "The University: The Decolonisation of Knowledge?: The Making of the African University, the Power of the Imperial Legacy, and the Eastern European Influence," in *Socialist Internationalism and the Gritty Politics of the Particular: Second-Third World Spaces in the Cold War*, ed. Kristin Roth-Ey (London: Bloomsbury, 2023), 119–138.

[169] AVP RF: d. 250, op. 4, por. 24, pa. 5, December 15, 1960, Miss Regina Asamany to Khrushchev.

[170] *Ghana Today*, Information Section of the Ghana Office, 1959, p. 10; *Ghana Gazette* (Accra, 1960), 19.

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FIGURE 1.1 "14 Soviets will teach here," *The Ghanaian Times*, November 9, 1963.

Volta Region,[171] and was, according to historian Kate Skinner, "the only woman to make it into the first rank of the Togoland Congress leadership in the 1950s."[172] After British Togoland joined Ghana, Asmany joined the CPP.[173] Now, as a key member of parliament, Asamany hoped that the aforementioned Ghanaians would be able to study how the Soviets organized their police force and how they used scientific methods to rear birds on poultry farms. Furthermore, Asamany hoped that this would be the beginning of personal and professional connections between the two camps. In closing her letter to Khrushchev, the Ghanaian parliamentarian admitted that she was in awe of the Soviet state and was "convinced that Africa and the Soviet Union" needed to "co-operate more and more with each other."[174] Asamany called for a more expansive vision of what future Ghana–Soviet relations might entail. Importantly, Asamany was not the only Ghanaian urging further cooperation between the two states and noting the importance of the Soviet example for Black independence. Once Ghana's leaders had determined that the Soviets were allies in the quest for Black liberation, others from Ghana and the Soviet Union started initiating their own encounters.

[171] Also spelled Kpando. [172] Skinner, *The Fruits of Freedom in British Togoland*, 77.
[173] Ibid., p. 236, footnote 66.
[174] AVP RF: d. 250, op. 4, por. 24, pa. 5, December 15, 1960, Regina Asamany to Khrushchev.

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Just like Asamany, Nina Popov and Iryna Yastribova sent a friendly congratulatory telegraph to the Ghana–USSR Friendship Society urging the two nations to strengthen their "economies, friendship, cultures, and cooperation."[175] Popov was the former president of the Union of Soviet Socialists Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations on Foreign Countries and Yastribova was the vice-chairman of the Board of the Soviet Association for Friends with the people of Africa. Popov had made a real impression on the Ghanaians. The Ghanaians had wished for both to attend their Republic Day festivities on July 4, 1960 and 1961, respectively. In March 1960, Nkrumah had personally informed the Soviet Foreign Affairs Ministry to pass along his deep appreciation and good will to Popov and Potekhin.[176] The archival record is silent on whether Popov attended. Despite Popov's absence, the Soviets agreed to export industrial items to Ghana[177] and provide £G15 million pounds in credit at a rate of 2.5 percent interest per year to support Nkrumah's vision. The Ghanaians negotiated all payments to be done in Ghanaian pounds to maintain its foreign cash reserves.[178] This tactic allowed the newly independent state to continue to engage in foreign trade activities with other nations.

Just as Ghanaians were venturing to the USSR to study their society, Soviet delegations were traveling to Ghana to learn about the "bourgeoning postcolonial . . . socialist state" and its peoples.[179] In 1963, an eleven-person Soviet Parliamentary delegation team toured Ghana. They were led by Madam Yadgar Sodykovna Nasriddinova, chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Uzbek Socialist Republic and Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Soviet (Figure 1.2). Chairperson Nasriddinova's image, movements, and words filled the Ghanaian newspapers. An image of a smiling Nasriddinova receiving "palm wine," a welcoming alcoholic lubricant provided to strangers, guests, and friends, circulated around the new

[175] "Ghana-USSR Friendship Society Receives Telegram," *The Ashanti Pioneer*, July 4, 1962.

[176] AVP RF: d. 012, op. 4, por. 2, pa. 4, March 18, 1960, "The Ghanaian Embassy (at the Ukraine Hotel in Moscow") presents its compliments to the CCCP foreign affairs ministry. Moreover, Ghana also really wanted Potekhin, at the Republic Day Celebrations. See AVP RF: d. 012, op. 4, por. 2, pa. 4, June 13, 1960. Officially, the Soviets sent Daritri D. Degtyas and Mikhail P. Georgadze. See AVP RF: d. 142, op. 4, por. 15, pa. 4, August 15, 1960, Ako Adjei to Gromyko.

[177] PRAAD-Accra, RG 17/221, August 4, 1960, "Schedule A: Appendix to the Trade Agreement between the Republic of Ghana and the U.S.S.R."

[178] PRAAD-Accra, RG 17/221, August 4, 1960, "Trade Agreement between the Republic of Ghana and the U.S.S.R."

[179] Ahlman, "Africa's Kitchen Debate," 158.

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FIGURE 1.2 "USSR Team in Tomorrow," *Evening News*, October 24, 1963.

nation. Another image of her "clink[ing] glasses" with Nkrumah at the State House in Accra made headlines. A "Toast of Ghana–Soviet Friendship," *The Ghanaian Times* declared (Figure 1.3).[180]

The paper then posted an image of a glowing and happy Nkrumah and Nasriddinova dancing together to a Ghanaian highlife tune at the Osu Castle in Accra (Figure 1.4). It was a "demonstration of Ghana–Soviet solidarity" – it was "solidarity highlife."[181] Even the Asantehene Nana Sir Osei Agyeman Prempeh II, the leader of the Ashantis, whose followers generally held Nkrumah's regime and Nkrumah himself with deep contempt, was present at the dinner festivities (Figure 1.5). His presence projected a broader Ghanaian societal project to garner national support for Ghana's increasing warmness toward the Soviets.[182] These military delegations, lectures, dinner receptions, and gifts certainly lubricated the Ghana–Soviet relationship, demonstrating Ghana's independence (Figures 1.6 and 1.7). If certain commentators were so enthralled by Nkrumah's dances with British royalty, then, watching Nkrumah dance with a Soviet woman perhaps elicited new geopolitical fears. While historian Elizabeth Banks shows that other leading Soviet women like Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman cosmonaut and general secretary of the Committee of Soviet women, repeatedly ignored requests from the Organization for the Mozambican Women for slightly over a decade to

[180] "Toast of Ghana–Soviet Friendship," *The Ghanaian Times*, November 6, 1963.
[181] "Solidarity Highlife," *The Ghanaian Times*, November 5, 1963.
[182] "Soviet MPs Entertained," *The Ghanaian Times*, November 5, 1963.

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Toast of Ghana-Soviet friendship.

MEMBERS of the Soviet Parliamentary delegation who have been touring Ghana for the past eleven days, flew home yesterday at the end of their visit.

Before their departure, Madam Yadgar Nasriddinova, leader of the delegation, expressed her gratitude to Osagyefo Dr Kwame Nkrumah for inviting them to "this wonderful country."

Madam Nasriddinova, who is chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic, wished Ghanaians every success in their socialist revolution.

The Soviet M.P.s fulfilled a large number of engagements during their stay here.

★

In the picture on the right, Osagyefo and Madam Nasriddinova clink glasses after a toast of friendship between their two countries had been proposed at a dinner party held in honour of Osagyefo at the State House, Accra

Baako says 'bon voyage'

HERE, it's a parting handshake as Defence Minister Kofi Baako and Leader of the National Assembly, says "bon voyage" to Madam Nasriddinova at Accra Airport just before the Soviet M.P.s flew back home.

Looking on (third from left) is Mr J. H. Asiedu, Speaker of the National Assembly, who saw them off.

Nasriddinova tastes our palm wine

AS part of their extensive tour of the country to see developments, the Soviet M.Ps paid a two-day visit to Kumasi.

While in the Ashanti capital, the M.Ps visited the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, the Fibre Bag Manufacturing Corporation and the National Cultural Centre.

★

In the picture on the right, Madam Nasriddinova is being served with palm wine as part of the traditional welcome organised for them at the Cultural Centre.

Looking on is the Ashanti Regional Commissioner, Mr S. W. Yeboah.

FIGURE 1.3 "Toast of Ghana-Soviet Friendship," *The Ghanaian Times*, November 6, 1963.

travel to Mozambique,[183] prominent Soviet women like Nasriddinova did make their way to Africa.

[183] Elizabeth Banks, "Sewing Machines for Socialism?: Gifts of Development and Disagreement between the Soviet and Mozambican Women's Committees, 1963–87,"

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FIGURE 1.4 "Solidarity highlife," *The Ghanaian Times*, November 5, 1963.

The Soviet party traveled "extensive[ly] across the country to see developments."[184] They even visited the Ashanti Region, the heart of Nkrumah's opposition. There, they visited "the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, the Fibre Bag Manufacturing Corporation and the National Cultural Centre."[185] This was not a one-off incident. Soviet experts toured other Ghanaian industrial facilities, like the Pioneer Tobacco Factory in Takoradi. This is an important reminder and corrective that it was not only Ghanaian specialists who toured the USSR to learn about production.[186] The Soviets toured Ghanaian technological and industrial sites as well. Ghanaians taught the Soviets about

Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, Vol. 41, No. 1 (May 2021): 27–40, 35–37.

[184] Iandolo has an image of Madam Yadgar Sodykovna Nasriddinova arriving in Mali as well, implying that she might have become the Soviet Union's foreign policy charm offensive. See Iandolo, *Arrested Development*, 166.

[185] "Toast of Ghana-Soviet Friendship."

[186] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/647, September 26, 1962, "Visit to Pioneer Tobacco Factory Takoradi."

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FIGURE 1.5 "Soviet MPs entertained," *The Ghanaian Times*, November 5, 1963.



FIGURE 1.6 "She Receives an Album Gift" & "Soviet Woman M.P. Praises Kwame," *The Ghanaian Times*, November 6, 1963.

their own technical-scientific and educational methods. Knowledge sharing and production were reciprocal. It was not solely unidirectional from Eastern Europe and the USSR to Ghana (Figure 1.8).

Graham and Kislev's early visions on strengthening cultural ties between Ghana and the USSR had gained traction. Cultural and educational ties

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FIGURE 1.7 "Soviet Party," *Daily Graphic*, July 13, 1963.



THEY HEAR TALK ON SOVIET TRADITIONS

DR Nikolai Shamota, director of the Kiev Institute of Literature in the Soviet Union (pictured right), speaking to a large number of people at the Commonwealth Hall, University of Ghana, Legon.

Dr Shamota, who is in the country at the invitation of the university, spoke on "Soviet realism of the 19th century and its traditions in contemporary literature".

He told the audience (above) that every nation had its own past and every nation naturally appreciated all that was worth appreciating.

"The Soviet people too have a great respect for their ancestors" he said, adding:

"But we believe that to preserve and to respect the past means to be able to use the heritage for the benefit of the people today".

Present at the lecture were Mr K. Ohugunov, literary critic and deputy chairman of the foreign commission of the Soviet Workers' Union and Dr Conor Cruise O'Brien, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana.

FIGURE 1.8 "They Hear Talk on Soviet Traditions," *The Ghanaian Times*, December 4, 1963.

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FIGURE 1.9 "Ghana's Airways service to Moscow," *Daily Graphic*, February 3, 1963.

between the two states gathered momentum and exhibitions were held in both countries to promote knowledge exchanges. In July 1962, twenty-six Soviet acrobatic artists performed in Kumasi in front of Ghanaian dignitaries and toured Ghana.[187] That same month, the Ghana–Soviet Friendship Society had been established[188] and a Soviet industrial exhibition was held in Accra. During the showcase of Soviet socialist industrial might, the Soviets hosted a dinner reception at the Ambassador Hotel in Accra – diplomats, businesspersons, and the Soviet deputy minister of Foreign Trade and Ghanaian cabinet ministers attended.[189] In February 1963, the Soviets gave Cape Coast University College about 100 science books and booklets.[190] The Ghana Institute of Languages added Russian to its repertoire alongside French, Hausa, German, Arabic, and English.[191] That same month, Ghana Airways commenced direct flights from Accra to Moscow (Figure 1.9).[192] In December, geographical maps and atlases of Ghana and other African

[187] "Russian Artistic Display," *The Ashanti Pioneer*, July 3, 1962; "R. C. and Others See Russian Display," *The Ashanti Pioneer*, July 10, 1962.
[188] "Ghana-USSR Friendship Society Receives Telegram."
[189] "200 Attend Soviet Reception," *The Ashanti Pioneer*, July 12, 1962.
[190] "100 Soviet Books for Varsity," *Evening News*, February 18, 1963.
[191] "Ghana Institute of Languages," *The Daily Graphic*, January 2, 1965.
[192] "Ghana Airways Starts Flight to Moscow," *Evening News*, February 18, 1963.

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countries were featured at an exhibition hosted and curated by the Soviet Academy of Sciences Library in Moscow.[193]

Ghana was not simply a site of geopolitical assistance and relations, but a new destination for and of Soviet leisure and entertainment. In November, six Soviet tourists – men and women – ventured to Ghana.[194] Their happy faces alongside Ghanaians were captured and reproduced in the Ghanaian papers. By January 8, 1965, the Third Soviet Film Festival in Ghana had been completed. Free admissions permitted anyone in Ghana to enjoy the new Soviet screenings like "Optimistic Tragedy," "My Friends and Me," "Your Own Blood," "The Word about Mother," and "Hamlet."[195] Ghana–Soviet spaces were not only diplomatic but cultural and leisurely as well. Moreover, people could and did move in and out of and in-between multiple Ghana–Soviet spaces. Most people were not stuck in a solitary Ghana–Soviet space. Nonetheless, at the diplomatic level, Ghana–Soviet spaces were lubricated through words.

Ghanaians and Soviets expressed solidarity and support to each other through honorific praise words. On October 2, 1962, while dining with the Moscow City Soviet members in Moscow, the leader of the Accra City Delegation and head of the Ghana Council for Nuclear Disarmament, C. F. Hughes, dressed in kente, enthusiastically thanked his hosts for a wonderful trip and the "warm heartedness and genuine friendliness" exhibited toward them.[196] The Ghanaians reciprocated. After his February 1963 tour of Ghana, Gamid Yelechiyv, the chairman of the Azerbaijan Republican Committee of the Building and Industrial Building Materials Workers' Union and Head of the Soviet Trade Union delegation, apparently declared in Moscow that "Wherever we went in the country (Ghana), we felt the warmth of friendship." Moreover, he pledged that the Soviets would "substantially contribute to the economic development of the new Ghana."[197]

[193] "Ghana Maps Feature at Soviet Show," *The Ghanaian Times*, December 4, 1963.
[194] "At Party for Soviet Tourists," *The Ghanaian Times*, November 15, 1963.
[195] "The Third Soviet Film Festival in Ghana," *The Daily Graphic*, January 2, 1965. However, Soviet films were not the only ones shown in Ghana during this period. In January 1965, the US Embassy premiered a film about their late president, John F. Kennedy, in Sunyani, Northern Ghana, to more than 800 people. The United States also attempted to promote US interests in Ghana through film. See "800 See Film on Kennedy," *The Daily Graphic*, January 27, 1965.
[196] AVP RF, f. 800, op. 26, por 26. pa.11.
[197] "Soviet Unionist Impressed by Our Strong Will," *The Ghanaian Times*, February 19, 1963.

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The Soviets continued to lavish praise upon and fuel Nkrumah's anticolonial positions with the Lenin Peace Prize in 1962. After receiving the award at the Ghanaian State House in July, Nkrumah noted that the "medal . . . represented a moral force generated by the burning desire of people of all nations for peace." Dmitirij Skobeltzyn, the chairman of the International Committee of the Lenin Peace Prize, praised Nkrumah's liberation and anticolonial efforts: "Osagyefo is a man who had devoted all of his life to the liberation of peoples from colonial oppression." Moreover, Skobeltzyn called Nkrumah "one of the most prominent leaders of the new Africa" and quoted several of Nkrumah's most memorable ideas, such as "the liberation of Ghana will be meaningless unless it is linked with the total liberation of the African continent," that colonialism was one of the "greatest of evils of our times," and the need to "abolish colonialism" and that world peace, and lasting peace, was inextricably tied to the abolishment of colonialism on the African continent.[198] G. M. Rodionov, the Soviet ambassador to Ghana, on Nkrumah's birthday on September 21, 1964, penned a piece in *The Spark*, insisting that "every Soviet citizen" knew Nkrumah "as an outstanding leader of [the] national-liberation movement in Africa, an implacable opponent of colonialism and neo-colonialism, devoted and tireless advocate of the consolidation of peace and friendship among all the nations." Rodionov informed Ghanaians that the Soviets "appreciated" Nkrumah for seeking to "strengthen relations between Ghana and the USSR," that all three of Nkrumah's books had been translated into Russian and were "in wide circulation" in the USSR. They could be "found on the shelves of all public libraries, reading rooms, as well as in the many personal libraries of Soviet workers, peasants and intellectuals."[199]

Nasriddinova praised the warm and friendly attitude Ghanaians accorded her and her touring party. She also lauded Nkrumah, Ghana's socialist project, and Ghana's quest for African liberation. She praised Ghana for choosing "the road to socialism" and for its "efforts towards the unity and freedom of the entire continent of Africa." Moreover, Nasriddinova toasted the "talented and hard-working people of Ghana, to the strong and unbreakable friendship between the peoples of the Soviet Union and the Republic of Ghana, to the outstanding statesman

[198] "Peace Prize Award: Osagyefo Stresses on Peaceful Co-existence," *The Ashanti Pioneer*, July 4, 1962.

[199] G. M. Rodionov, "He Is Known by Every Soviet Citizen," *The Spark*, September 21, 1964.

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of our time and our sincere friend, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, and to universal peace." In response to Nasriddinova, Nkrumah noted that Ghana "was pleased to associate herself with the highly advanced countries of which the Soviet Union is one."[200]

Despite the effervescent adulation showered by both parties to one another, Nkrumah's response to Nasriddinova underscored that Ghana continued to view the Soviets as one of its partners, and not its sole partner. Yet, what was apparent was the key role high-ranking Ghanaian and Soviet women played in strengthening and urging further ties between the two states. In addition, whether or not Rodionov's claims about the widespread distribution and knowledge of Nkrumah's books in the USSR were entirely accurate, his and Nasriddinova's statements do perhaps speak to the Soviets' need to acknowledge Nkrumah as both a statesman and an intellectual, and Ghana as a key conduit of global anticolonialist and anti-imperialist struggles and as a radical site of decolonization theories.

Gift exchanges between the two sides further served to cement the relationship. In the USSR, an "Armenia-born Soviet sculptor" created a "sculpture" of Nkrumah and "handed" it to Ghana's ambassador to the USSR, J. B. Elliott.[201] In February 1963, an eight-person Soviet trade and economic mission was "honoured" at the Ambassador hotel in Accra.[202] Nkrumah followed moments of Soviet scientific prowess by congratulating Khrushchev.[203] The two leaders exchanged New Year pleasantries[204] and happy birthday wishes.[205] Nkrumah's wife, Madam Fathia Nkrumah, their two children, and their entourage vacationed in the Soviet Union in 1961.[206] As a token of goodwill, the Soviets bequeathed Nkrumah's son, Gamal Kwame Nkrumah, a pair of "special shoes" and two more upon request, as the child loved the shoes.[207] In an October

[200] "Osagyefo Dreaming a Happy Future for Ghana," *The Ghanaian Times*, November 6, 1963.
[201] "Moscow," *The New Ashanti Times*, March 2, 1963.
[202] "Soviet Trade Mission Honoured in Accra," *The Ghanaian Times*, February 21, 1963.
[203] AVP RF, f. 140, op. 5. por 15. pa. 7, August 8, 1961, Nkrumah to Khrushchev.
[204] AVP RF, f. 140, op. 5. por 15. pa. 7, January 3, 1961, Nkrumah to Khrushchev; December 30, 1961, Khrushchev and Brezhnev to Nkrumah.
[205] PRAAD-Accra RG 17/1/211, April 14, 1964, Nkrumah to Khrushchev.
[206] AVP RF, f. 012, op. 5, por. 2, pa. 7, August 3, 1961, Ghanaian embassy to Soviet Foreign Ministry.
[207] AVP RF, f. 012, op. 5, por. 2, pa. 7, October 16, 1961, Ghanaian embassy to the Soviet Foreign Ministry; AVP RF, f. 012, op. 5, por. 2, pa. 7, November 29, 1961, letter from the Ghanaian embassy to the Soviet Foreign Ministry.

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1963 Ghanaian National Assembly Parliamentary session, the Ghanaian speaker placed a vase gifted to him by the Soviet delegation on the center table for everyone in parliament to witness.[208] Both the small gift and its placement at the center of the Ghanaian parliament were indicative of a broader shift in Ghana's attitudes toward the Eastern power and the Soviet Union's growing prominence in Ghana's foreign policies.

Just as geopolitical concerns over Western efforts to destabilize the Congo and undermine Black freedom bolstered Nkrumah and Khrushchev's relationship, so too did Western attempts to sow division, fear, and to destabilize Black freedom in Ghana through violence and assassination attempts on Nkrumah's life. In August 1962, a young girl presented a bouquet of flowers to Nkrumah at Kulungugu, northern Ghana. Unbeknownst to the child, a bomb was placed in the flowers and it exploded.[209] While Nkrumah suffered minor injuries from the incident, four people, including the child, were killed and another fifty-six were injured.[210] Subsequently, Nkrumah postponed his vacation plans to the Soviet Union later that year.[211] On September 9, while 2,000 people gathered around the Flagstaff House to support Nkrumah, another bomb exploded, killing 3 children, and injuring another 63. A few weeks later, two explosions rocked Accra "during a torchlight parade . . . honoring" Nkrumah's "53rd birthday." Six people, "mostly young supporters of Nkrumah," died from the attacks.[212] These attacks on the eve of Queen Elizabeth II's highly anticipated visit to Ghana nearly derailed it. After the British monarch's very celebrated visit, bomb attacks in Ghana continued. In the beginning of 1963, a grenade exploded in Accra "shortly after" Nkrumah's speech. While Nkrumah was unharmed, another four were killed and eighty-five were hurt. Many

[208] AVP RF, f. 800, op. 26, por 26. pa. 11, November 28, 1962, O. N. Oku to Elliott, see DO166/12, October 29, 1963, "The Parliamentary Debates Official Report."

[209] PRAAD-Accra RG 17/1/211, September 21, 1962, Khrushchev to Nkrumah.

[210] "4 Killed, 85 Injured in Nkrumah Bomb Plot," *Chicago Daily Defender*, January 10, 1963.

[211] PRAAD-Accra RG 17/1/211, September 21, 1962, Khrushchev to Nkrumah; ibid., September 6, 1962, Nkrumah to Khrushchev.

[212] "Ghanaians Remember the Day," *The Daily Graphic*, January 4, 1965; "4 Killed, 85 Injured in Nkrumah Bomb Plot"; "People and Events: More Hurt in Tries on Nkrumah's Life," *New Journal and Guide*, September 29, 1962; "Bomb Explodes," *Michigan Chronicle*, August 11, 1962; "Ovation Greets President Who Escaped Death," *New Journal and Guide*, August 18, 1962; "Two Killed by Bomb at Nkrumah Palace: 2 Killed by Bomb at Fete in Accra Early Reports Put Dead at 5 Dictatorial Pattern Emerges," *The New York Times*, September 10, 1962.

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more would suffer emotional and psychological trauma. Not all was merry in Ghana. Scribbled on buildings in Ghana's capital were the words: "NKRUMAH ABDICATE OR MORE BOMBS."[213] A wave of terror had descended upon the nation – and Nkrumah. Some in the African-American media landscape wondered publicly whether the Kulungugu attack "was a full-scale Russian plot to gain their long-wanted foothold in Africa."[214] George Padmore, who had alerted Nkrumah to assassination plots against him during the colonial days, was no longer alive. New confidants were needed. Whether or not the attacks were US, Soviet, or Ghanaian-inspired, Nkrumah turned toward the USSR to bolster his security arrangements.

Nkrumah's health became a subject of deep concern for Khrushchev. Khrushchev sent Nkrumah a personal security guard and encouraged Nkrumah to stay the course against Western imperialism: "We (the Soviets) are quite sure that the people of Ghana will under your leadership overcome all the difficulties and will defeat all intrigues of imperialists and internal reactionaries." Khrushchev continued, "Ghana is not alone in Her (sic) just fight, She (sic) has true and reliable friends."[215] Soon, Soviet security personnel occupied essential positions in Nkrumah's presidential guard.[216] From delegations to birthday wishes, a new attitude of friendliness expressed from Cape Coast to Moscow underlined a new reckoning between Ghanaians and the Soviets. Ghanaians increasingly identified with the Soviet socialist experiment as an intellectual, ideological, and economic barometer and mirror of what Ghana could follow and learn from. The closer Ghana–Soviet relations became at the state level, the more anxiety and overblown reports emanated from the West.

Like the Soviets who thought Ghana's increasingly friendly policies and relations with the West were due to Western pressure, some American lawmakers and British officials and scholars framed Ghana's bourgeoning relationship with the Soviets as a result of Soviet cunning and African stupidity. In a May 16, 1962, letter to C. T. E. Ewart-Biggs in the British Foreign Office, R. W. H. du Boulay noted that

[213] "Ghana: Evil Spirits for Nkrumah," *Time*, October 5, 1962.
[214] Rhonda Churchill, "See Red Plot to Grab Ghana," *Chicago Daily Defender*, September 10, 1962.
[215] PRAAD-Accra, RG 17/1/211, September 6, 1962, Nkrumah to Khrushchev; PRAAD-Accra, RG 17/1/211, September 21, 1962, Khrushchev to Nkrumah.
[216] Oye Ogunbadejo, "Soviet Policies in Africa," *African Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 316 (July 1980): 297–325, 319.

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it is the general position of Nkrumah vis-à-vis (emphasis in original) the Russians and his own extremists, which the (US) State Department are however watching with anxiety. They wonder whether the Russians are not beginning to pile on the pressure on, and are doubtful of Nkrumah's ability to withstand pressure of this sort. They consider him weak, unstable and the merest amateur compared with the Russian professionals.[217]

Political Scientist Thompson argued that the Soviet ambassador to Ghana, Georgi Rodinov, from 1962 to 1966, completely "dominated the diplomatic scene in Accra" and had a "great influence" on Nkrumah.[218] Quite astonishingly, Thompson claimed that the Soviets "encouraged him [Nkrumah] to speak out on precisely the issues where Russia did (and Ghana did not) have interests; out of vanity he did speak out."[219] In Britain's "1965 Annual Information Review" about British propaganda efforts in Accra, P. R. Spendlove, the director of Britain's Information Services in Ghana, bemoaned that the "Russians have it all their own way in Ghana." Playing to the idea that Nkrumah's government and Ghanaians were communist stooges, Spendlove alleged that Ghana "unhesitating(ly) accept(ed) Government, Party, Press and radio of communist postures on almost every conceivable question and their automatic rejection of the British case." Spendlove complained that the *Ghanaian Times* and *Evening News* simply copied and pasted "news items and features" from the Soviet embassy's daily bulletins. Spendlove concluded that Soviet officials frequented and yielded tremendous influence over Ghana's "press, radio and information apparatus." Furthermore, he alleged that Russians distributed "reading material in English on a prodigious scale, gratis and for sale." While Spendlove was delighted that the Ghana–Soviet Friendship Societies, which brought Soviet speakers and showcased and discussed Soviet film and literature, had been shut down, he noted that the two states had "a generous two-way visitors' programme, a vigorous scholarship scheme, readily accepted training facilities for journalists and radio people and regular book presentations."[220]

[217] FO 371/154801, May 16, 1962, R. W. H. du Boulay to C. T. E. Ewart-Biggs.
[218] Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 48; "Busia, U.S.A. and Ghana," *The Spark*, July 19, 1963.
[219] Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 176.
[220] DO192/33, December 20, 1965, P. R. Spendlove, "Re Annual Information Review: Accra, 1965."

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FIGURE 1.10 "Ghana is No Satellite of Russia," *Daily Graphic*, July 16, 1963.

However, the US State Department rubbished claims that Ghana was a Soviet puppet (Figure 1.10). "In our judgement," the US State Department noted in July 1963,

> information available does not support the suggestion that Ghana has become a Soviet satellite … Ghana follows a policy of … positive neutralism and … has established relations with both Western and Eastern bloc countries. Ghana has not aligned itself with either grouping … Ghana has a long history of close association with the West and there exists a basic goodwill among the Ghanaian people for the U.S. and the West in general.[221]

Indeed, it is undeniable that Ghana's trade with every country, including the Soviets, bar the UK, increased, and in some cases, quite dramatically so, from its conception on March 6, 1957. This was deliberate and did not mean Ghana's early leaders had become beholden to the Eastern Bloc. To secure Black state sovereignty and blunt the white supremacist geopolitical structures and powers, the new state had to diversify its economy and foreign relations.

Indeed, Ghana's leaders actively mediated conflicts between and within the Afro-Asian Bloc and the Communist world. While Khrushchev campaigned for "peaceful co-existence between capitalism and socialism," China's leader, Mao Zedong, pushed for a violent confrontation, a revolution, against imperialism and capitalism.[222] Addressing the Afro-Asian

[221] "Ghana Is No Satellite of Russia," *The Daily Graphic*, July 16, 1963.

[222] Tony Cliff, "The 22nd Congress," *Socialist Review*, Transcribed by Einde O'Callaghan, November 1961, www.marxists.org/archive/cliff/works/1961/11/22congress.htm, accessed September 12, 2022. For a more thorough account of these debates see Danhui Li and

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Solidarity Conference in 1963, Nkrumah called on "China and the Soviet Union" to "eliminate their differences."[223] While that fight was brewing, another between China and India was breaking at the seams. This battle was not ideological, per se, but territorial.[224]

Ghana employed the spirit of Bandung to soothe tensions between China and India. Ghana joined Burma, Cambodia, Egypt, and Indonesia at the Colombo Conference in Sri Lanka in December 1962 to try and stop the clash between the Asian powers. A few years later, in January 1964, Nkrumah employed the spirit of Bandung to make present and future claims for peace in front of the Chinese premier Zhou Enlai and a party of Chinese state officials. Nkrumah commented that "we adhere so steadfastly to the five principles of co-existence established at Bandung, namely, respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in each other's affairs, equality and mutual benefit and co-existence."[225] During their bilateral discussions with China, Ghana brought up the "state of the Sino-Indian border since the Colombo Conference." In response, China thanked "the peaceful efforts made by Ghana and other Colombo powers" on the issue.[226]

Ghana feared that discord, particularly military collisions, within the Afro-Asian Bloc would destabilize projections of Afro-Asian geopolitical

Yafeng Xia, "Competing for Leadership: Split or Détente in the Sino-Soviet Bloc, 1959–1961," *The International Review*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (September 2008): 545–574; Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Sergey Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009); Austin Jersild, *The Sino-Soviet Alliance: An International History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 156–226; Danhui Li and Yafeng Xia, "Jockeying for Leadership: Mao and the Sino-Soviet Split, October 1961–July 1964," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Winter 2014): 24–60.

[223] Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 298.

[224] For more information about the origins of the conflict and the war itself, see David R. Devereux, "The Sino-Indian War of 1962 in Anglo-American Relations," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (2009): 71–87; Jacob Abadi, "The Sino-Indian Conflict pf 1962 – A Test Case for India's Policy of Non-Alignment," *Journal of Third World Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1998): 11–29; Neville Maxwell, "Sino-Indian Border Dispute Reconsidered," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 34, No. 15 (1999): 905–918.

[225] Kwame Nkrumah Speech, "The Visit of Chou En-Lai: State Dinner in Honour of The Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China," January 13, 1964, in *Selected Speeches, Vol. 4: Kwame Nkrumah* (Accra: Afram Publications1997), 1–2.

[226] "Joint Ghana-China Communique," January 16, 1964, in *Selected Speeches, Vol. 4: Kwame Nkrumah* (Accra: Afram Publications, 1997), 9.

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solidarity, undercutting Black sovereignty. Ghana's efforts to navigate the split between the Chinese and the Soviets and the Chinese and the Indians highlight the Black state's continued attempts to carve out their own independent space within a neocolonial global order and the fracturing Communist and the Afro-Asian blocs. Despite their internal beliefs and policy decisions, Ghana avoided the appearance of favoring either the Chinese, Indians, or Soviets. Instead, Ghanaian policymakers urged state and party officials to adopt a strict policy of neutrality.[227] Neutrality did not imply standing on the sidelines, however. Far from being a puppet state or bullied into relations or non-relations with foreign powers by other powers, Ghana followed a foreign policy of Black sovereignty.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has re-historicized Ghana's relationship with the USSR through the prisms of race, white supremacy, and African agency. Discourses of race and neocolonialism were more central to defining the terms of Ghana's geopolitical positioning than the capitalist and communist ideological framework of the Cold War. Once viewed as a bastion of anti-racial and anticolonial support, the Soviet alliance with Germany, its refusal to support Ethiopia, and its treatment of Black dissidents in the USSR in the 1930s underscored to Blacks that they were on their own. In the minds of Ghana's early leaders, there was no serious distinction between white imperial empires where Black independence was concerned. From this vantage point, swapping one set of white masters for another was a central concern and would not happen. A contemporary of the period, David E. Apter wrote: "Nkrumah never had any intention of jeopardizing [Ghana's] autonomy by allowing Ghana to fall into the Soviet Union's crocodile jaws."[228]

Rather than rush into foreign policy and economic deals with white empires, at independence, Ghana sought to restructure its economy away from its colonial and neocolonial trappings. As Ghana increasingly saw the Soviets as necessary and amenable to achieving this goal, it expedited its relations with the Eastern empire. Anxieties over another "white" imperial power manipulating Ghana's leaders reverberated in London,

[227] PRAAD-Accra, April 23, 1964, W. W. K. Vanderpuye to Kwame Nkrumah.
[228] David E. Apter, "Ghana's Independence: Triumph and Paradox," *Transition*, No. 98 (2008): 6–22, 8.

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Moscow, and Washington, DC. These concerns were underlined and motivated by two overlapping ideas. First, a conscious or unconscious racist worldview that Black people were feebleminded, naïve, and susceptible to seductive white rhetoric. This assumption and presumption shaped the imperial white powers' geopolitical conclusions and discourses about Ghana's actions. That is, white supremacist thinking was deeply embedded within their geopolitical considerations. Second, if each white power claimed that the other white power controlled Ghana's actions, then, it actually demonstrates that Ghana dictated its own actions and policies despite public and private pronouncements to the contrary. Subsequently, there was an ironic cognitive (perhaps unironic) dissonance at play amongst the white imperial powers and certain scholars.

After Padmore's death and the Soviet Union's support for the murdered Congolese prime minister Patrice Lumumba and African liberation, a shift in Ghana's foreign policy attitudes toward the Soviets commenced and Ghana increasingly considered the Soviets as sympathetic to Black liberation. Consequently, a new geopolitical reality and set of attitudes between the Ghanaians and Soviets were being expressed from Cape Coast to Moscow. This was underlined through a series of cultural, diplomatic, economic, personal, and social exchanges. What had hitherto been absent in the history of Ghana–Soviet relations had become a reality. Exchanges in the spheres of culture, economics, education, military, politics, science, sports, and tourism commenced. In the public glare and domain, Ghana–Soviet leaders and officials toasted each other, published photographs with each other, bestowed awards and titles to each other, and celebrated each other's successes and birthdays. Visa fees between the two were abolished. Individual travel between the two nations was now possible and further enhanced by the establishment of flights between Accra and Moscow. As Nasriddinova's and Yelechiyv's visits to Ghana and Ghanaian visits to non-Soviet Russia demonstrated, Ghanaians encountered and studied people and places from the vast Soviet empire. Present-day "Russia" was neither the sole nor the only image people in Ghana had or knew about the Soviets despite at times labeling entire Soviet spaces and people, "Russian." The events outlined in this chapter represented a radical break from Ghana's political history. Hitherto, there had been minimal to no political connections with the Soviet Union. Consequently, taken together, these moments outlined a new geopolitical awakening. The Ghana–Soviet space was being forged within and parallel to Black freedom.

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Chapter 2 moves from the diplomatic and political to the technoscientific and social Ghana–Soviet space. It zooms into two sites: a cotton textile mill Soviet technicians were supposed to construct in Tamale, northern Ghana, and the Soviet Geological Survey Team (SGST). As we will read, these Ghana–Soviet spaces were hijacked by everyday Ghanaians seeking to make citizenship claims. In effect, they became zones of contested liberation.

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