2

Ghost Projects

Contested Cold War Scientific-Technical Liberation Zones

INTRODUCTION

On October 15, 1966, nearly ten months after the National Liberation Council (NLC) instigated a Western-inspired coup d'état against the Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah while he was on route to China,[1] the London-based *West Africa* newspaper published a story about the impending arrival in Ghana of a Texan cotton ginning specialist from the Murray Company to Ghana. The Texan was slated to supervise the construction of a £60,000 cotton textile manufacturing factory in Tamale, Northern Ghana, and to "train Ghanaians" in the processes of cotton ginning. The Americans had an ambitious remit – to initially hire twenty people to produce about 4 million yards "of ginned cotton annually," and then rapidly scale up its operations to support a larger workforce. The *West Africa* claimed that the textile factory was the first of its kind.[2] Yet, contrary to the *West Africa*'s claims, the imminent American-assisted cotton mill factory in Tamale was not the first attempted in Ghana. An earlier Soviet-sponsored cotton mill factory conceived under Nkrumah's government had been initiated, stagnated, and then never completed. On this front, this chapter builds on historian Maxim Matusevich's insightful analysis and rebuke of Soviet construction projects in 1970s and 1980s postcolonial Nigeria – "From Never-ending Surveys to Never-beginning Construction."[3]

[1] Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana*, 9.
[2] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, October 11, 1965, "Author Unknown," "Unknown Title," *West Africa*, October 15, 1966, "pg. 1189, column 2."
[3] Matusevich, *No Easy Row for a Russian Hoe*, 201.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

The two Ghana–Soviet projects and spaces, the cotton textile mill and the Soviet Geological Survey Team (SGST), were meant to represent the literal and metaphorical rupture from the past and reflect a newly imagined socialist decolony and future. As anthropologist Andrew Apter notes, these scientific-technical projects were part of a broader intellectual effort to reject a "return to [African] origins," an Africa that existed prior to European contact, as "the only way toward final [African] emancipation and self-determination."[4] While the Soviet-sponsored cotton mill and other economic initiatives in Ghana were supposed to embody Ghana's new postcolonial socialist modernity and highlight the benefits, opportunities, and possibilities of Soviet partnership, these dreams never fully materialized due to contestations over environmental and worker safety concerns, questions over financial sourcing, and political will. Consequently, in some sense, the mill represented what I call phantom second–third world collaboration and the failure to unite postcolonial optimism and rhetoric with action. They represent and characterize unfulfilled Soviet economic policy in Africa and the tragic optimism and suspended dreams of decolonization's early years in Africa.[5]

While those spaces created new forms of knowledge and permitted the social, cultural, political, and economic architects of Ghana to fashion a new socialist society and achieve lasting African liberation, working-poor Ghanaians employed Ghana–Soviet spaces and the idioms of Ghana's socialist project to orchestrate, highlight, lambast, and challenge ethnic discrimination and favoritism, to contest who had power over their bodies, and to challenge abuse and who could financially benefit from these sites. Indeed, these Ghana–Soviet spaces were sites of contested liberation, Black freedom. These stories – at times converging, tangential, and parallel to each other – go perhaps toward answering historian Asif Siddiqi's call to determine "whose visions" recovering Africa–Soviet technoscience unveils and permits,[6] how "Africans instrumentalize[d] their agency in these collaborative arrangements," and how "scientific work – especially the kind that relied on the production and placement of infrastructure into the African landscape – shape[d] the contours of Soviet and African entanglements during the Cold War" and decolonization.[7] These

[4] Andrew Apter, *The Pan-African Nation: Oil and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 5.

[5] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, October 11, 1965, "Author Unknown," "Unknown Title," *West Africa*, October 15, 1966, "pg. 1189, column 2."

[6] Siddiqi, "Shaping the World," 43. [7] Ibid., 41.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

untold stories are as much technical and economic as they are social and political. They offer a window into the vertical and horizontal relations of power and communication between and within Nkrumah's government and its technical planners, who were caught unawares by the American project. This chapter then uncovers the intimate contacts between African and Soviet personnel and their impact on the literal and metaphorical African landscape within the multifocal lenses and entangled struggles of African and Black freedom, domestic citizenship rights, and a socialist present and future.

* * *

Nkrumah was determined to demonstrate that Africans could govern themselves and establish progressive states. Four months before Ghana's independence in November 1956, the then prime minister of Colonial Ghana told the colonial Legislative Assembly that "we (Africans) must show that it is possible for Africans to rule themselves, to establish a progressive and independent state and to preserve their national unity."[8] On Independence Day, March 6, 1957, Nkrumah echoed his earlier sentiments. He roared: "Today from now on, there is a new African in the world! ... That new African" was ready to "show that after all, the Black man is capable of managing his own affairs."[9] This was not just idle rhetoric. Significant financial, emotional, physical, and intellectual capital and resources were devoted to these goals. Because Ghana lacked the financial capital and "technical knowledge and staff" to pursue industrialization independently, it looked to other countries for additional financing and expertise.[10] It was from this vantage point that Ghana identified the Soviets as a vital wellspring to quench its industrial and socialist thirst and ambitions. As historian Abena Dove Osseo-Asare masterfully argued, Nkrumah sought "scientific equity" and fought for Ghanaians' "access" to "global science" and technology.[11]

Despite the economic and infrastructural challenges, the Ghanaian government was determined to establish industries throughout the nation to ensure that the benefits of development were widely distributed,

[8] Kwame Nkrumah, "On Freedom's Stage," *Africa Today*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (March–April 1957): 4–8, 4.

[9] Kwame Nkrumah, "Independence Speech," in *The Ghana Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, eds. K. Konadu and C. C. Campbell (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 302.

[10] Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*, 97–98.

[11] Osseo-Asare, *Atomic Junction*, 5.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

particularly in the British-neglected North. Although the British sought to develop the South, their development projects were poorly constructed and rushed. The Takoradi Harbor – one of Britain's most celebrated West African colonial constructions from 1919 to 1930 – underscores this reality. Nevertheless, Muslim inhabitants constituted the largest percentage of Ghana's Northern population. Some of the earliest recordings of Islam's spread into present-day Ghana can be traced to the present-day Brong Ahafo region around the 1400s, predating Christianity's arrival. According to Ghana's 1960 census, Muslims made up to 10–15 percent of the nation's inhabitants.[12] In 1900, the British had forcibly brought the Northern Territories within the orbit of its Gold Coast colony and did not invest in significant industrial or infrastructure projects there.[13] Moreover, the British had relied heavily upon the labor of the enslaved, the incarcerated, and the extremely low paying wage labor of children and adults in the North to prop up industrial projects in the South.[14] These migratory patterns mirrored earlier trans-Atlantic slave traffic routes, where Northerners were enslaved and sent to the coast,[15] with depopulation occurring in certain Northern areas due to the insecurity wrought by the slave raids.[16] By focusing on industrialization "beyond the main centres,"[17] Ghana sought to disrupt the legacies of British colonial economic logic and local ontologies – buttressed through centuries of the slave trade and a century of colonialism – that relegated Northerners to second-class status. However, the Soviet-turn to realize this vision was neither apparent nor inevitable.

[12] C. G. Baeta, "Islam," in *Study of Contemporary Ghana: Some Aspects of Social Structure, Vol 2.*, eds. Walter Birmingham, I. Neustadt, and E. N. Omaboe (London: Allen & Unwin, 1967), 243, 244.

[13] David Meredith, "The Construction of Takoradi Harbour in the Gold Coast 1919 to 1930: A Case Study in Colonial Development and Administration," *Transafrican Journal of History*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1976): 134–149.

[14] Kwabena Opare Akurang-Parry, "Labour Mobilization and African Response to the Compulsory Labour Ordinance in the Gold Coast (Colonial Ghana), 1875–1899," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, No. 4/5 (2000–2001): 83–104; Kwabena Opare Akurang-Parry, "The Loads Are Heavier than Usual": Forced Labor by Women and Children in the Central Province, Gold Coast (Colonial Ghana), CA. 1900–1940," *African Economic History*, No. 30 (2002): 31–51.

[15] Benjamin W. Kankpeyeng, "The Slave Trade in Northern Ghana: Landmarks, Legacies and Connections," *Slavery and Abolition*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (2009): 209–221; Katharina Schramm, "The Slaves of Pikworo: Local Histories, Transatlantic Perspectives," *History and Memory*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2011): 96–130.

[16] Kankpeyeng, "The Slave Trade in Northern Ghana," 213.

[17] Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*, 122.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

THE SOVIET-TURN

After the Caribbean Marxist and close Nkrumah associate and confidant George Padmore died in 1959, and the assassination of the Congolese prime minister Patrice Lumumba in 1960, with American, Belgian, and UN support, a public project commenced in Ghana to reorient and (re)introduce its population to the wonders of the Soviet experiment and what lessons the new state might draw from it.[18] Ghanaian newspapers praised the quality of Soviet goods, industrial development, and technical expertise. In November 1960, the *Evening News* maintained that Soviet goods were "prepared of high-quality products" due to "strict" Soviet "technical and sanitary control of the quality of food supplies."[19] The papers highlighted the quality and variety of Soviet vehicles: "lorries, tractors, farming and road-building machines, and aircrafts."[20] The Ghanaian papers informed the reading public that the Soviets had the "greatest number of skilled engineers and other technical specialists" in the world. Whereas the United States granted 35,000 engineering degrees in 1959, the Soviets had given 106,000. The Ghanaian press noted with amazement how the Soviet government had focused on expanding educational access, particularly in the science and math sectors, and "consolidated and enlarged" their technical colleges, and that 40 percent of its students were studying engineering.[21] They marveled that the USSR had produced as much steel as Britain, France, and West Germany combined after being decimated by World War II.[22] It was not simply that the Soviets produced scientific and technical advancements, but that they were willing to share it with the formerly colonized peoples. The press praised the Soviets for providing "scientific

[18] de Witte, *The Assassination of Patrice Lumumba*; Kent, "The Neo-colonialism of Decolonisation," 93–130; United States Senate, "Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders: Interim Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities," November 1975, pp. XIII–70.

[19] "Exchange of Visits between Ghana and USSR Will Bring Closer Relations," *Evening News*, November 7, 1960.

[20] "Vsesojuznoje Objedinenije: Avto-Export," *Evening News*, November 7, 1960; Andrei Subinin, "Soviet Cars," *The Ashanti Pioneer*, July 12, 1962; "Theory and Practice," *The Ashanti Pioneer*, July 14, 1962.

[21] A Special Correspondent, "USSR – The Land of Engineers," *The Ashanti Pioneer*, July 14, 1962.

[22] "How the Soviet Union Became an Industrial Power," *Evening News*, November 7, 1960.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

and technical assistance in the peaceful uses of atomic energy to the U.A.R., Iraq and Indonesia."[23] The Ghanaian press demanded its readers carefully scrutinize the Soviets' exploits and adopt the Soviet educational method, which favored "production practice" over the American system, which favored "theoretical subjects."[24]

One article in *The Ashanti Pioneer* noted in 1962 that "long before the East came into popularity in scientific and technical education, the western world had achieved laurels. But surprisingly, within this era of space exploration, the whole world was taken unaware by the Red's sudden supremacy through the first conquest of space by Gagarin, the Columbus of space."[25] Furthermore, in the Convention People's Party's socialist magazine, *The Spark*, Jack Woddis argued that the "phenomenal advances" and successes of Soviet industrialization undercut the conceptions of the "world economist circles" that states had to pursue light industry before "ending with heavy industry." Instead, Woddis argued to Ghanaians that "all the socialist countries have demonstrated brilliantly in practice that a drive for basic industrialisation is the quickest way to advance the whole economy and to raise living standards." In conclusion, Woddis urged African leaders to follow the Soviet economic path.[26] Africans could skip the steps of modernization. The Soviet model illustrated that Africans could achieve industrialization quickly. In a welcome address on January 16, 1962, to Anastas Mikoyan, the first deputy prime minister of the Soviet Union, John E. Hagan, the regional commissioner of the Central Region, informed his audience that Ghana took with great encouragement the "rapid progress and development in trade, science, and technology that" had taken place in the Soviet Union and hoped that Ghana would encounter similar success within "the next two decades."[27]

Pro-Soviet and Eastern Bloc stories were not simply intended to offer hagiographic praise or to support Nkrumah's commitment to geopolitical nonalignment. Instead, they were part of a concentrated movement to dismantle and deconstruct the myth of Western scientific and cultural superiority and anti-Soviet bias, which were introduced and reinforced by Western colonial education and rule. "Our indoctrination in Colonial

[23] "The Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy in the USSR," *Evening News*, November 7, 1960.
[24] "Theory and Practice." [25] Ibid.
[26] Jack Woddis, "The Problem of Industrialisation in Africa (2)," *The Spark*, November 1, 1963.
[27] GARF, f. 5446, op. 120, d. 1726, January 16, 1962, a welcome address by Hon. J. E. Hagan.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

days has induced … a wary attitude towards Soviet blandishments," A. W. Snelling, the UK High commissioner in Ghana, admitted to the British secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations on July 8, 1960.[28] Thus, the Ghanaian press engaged in a deliberate attempt to undo years of British "indoctrination." Centering Soviet success undercut narratives that situated the West as the sole harbingers and inheritors of modernity and science. The logic was simple. If the Soviets could achieve such industrial success, Africans could also. Unlike the West, which had undergone industrialization through slavery and colonial plunder, the Ghanaian press informed the reading public that the Soviet industrial miracle had occurred while fighting two world wars and without slavery and colonialism.[29] This narrative glossed over the atrocities committed during Stalin's tenure and the widespread famines in the Ukraine and Steppe region.[30] While Nkrumah had denounced Stalin as an imperialist – partly due to those revelations and the USSR's failure to intervene in Ethiopia in 1935, the Ghanaian media and state divorced Soviet industrialization from the sufferings of Black and African bodies. Thus, while touring the USSR in 1961, Nkrumah could praise the Soviet Union unironically for "welding many Republics and nationalists together into one great country."[31] It was a task he was trying to accomplish in Ghana and in Africa through his Pan-African ambitions.

Despite the Ghanaian press lauding Soviet technoscience, it was not inevitable that Ghana would accept the Soviet offer to build the cotton textile mill. Numerous foreign companies and investors offered deals to establish a cotton textile mill in Ghana. In 1956, a year before Ghana's independence, Rickson Fenton of the Jamaican Solomon Armstrong Company wrote to Nkrumah's office and other British ministries about

[28] TNA, DO165/23, July 8, 1960, A. W. Snelling to the British Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations.

[29] Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1944); Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London: Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications, [1973] 1983).

[30] Michael Ellman, "Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932–33 Revisited," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (June 2007): 663–693. Between 1931 and 1933, "1.3 and 1.5 million Kazaks (between 35% and 38% of the total population, the highest percentage of any nationality in the USSR) lost their lives." See Niccolò Pianciola and Susan Finnel, "Famine in the Steppe. The Collectivization of Agriculture and the Kazak Herdsmen, 1928–1934," *Cahiers du Monde russe*, Vol. 45, No. 1/2 (January–June 2004): 137–191; Cameron, *The Hungry Steppe: Famine*.

[31] Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 174–175.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

building a textile mill in Ghana.[32] Inquiries into building a cotton mill in Ghana accelerated after independence. Companies from Britain, Israel, India, and Germany argued to Ghanaian officials that Ghana possessed a lucrative internal market for cloth, that constructing a cotton mill, with their support, would address local demand and be a boom for the nascent country's economy.[33] In August 1957, a few months after independence, an Israeli firm, Heros Textile Factory, wrote to the Ghanaian Ministry of Commerce and Industry about "establish[ing] a textile and knitting factory in [Ghana] ... for the production of cotton piece-goods and all kinds of underwear." The company "belie[ved], that executing" the mill "will contribute tremendously for the welfare of the citizens of Ghana," provide jobs, "develop" Ghana's local "textile ... industry," along with "strengthening ... friendly and commercial relations between" Israel and Ghana.[34] While Ghana's leadership publicly positioned and projected itself as vital to international affairs, it never lost sight of the local. It knew its credibility simultaneously rested on improving the material conditions of its citizens, including providing jobs to the unemployed. Companies across the world and countries like Israel knew that, and framed their proposals to Ghana in such idioms. The Ghanaian leadership was acutely aware that their domestic and international goals could only be buttressed by reorientating its economy and wealth to provide for its marginalized subjects. In addition, these technical-scientific projects were not simply designed to bolster capital relations between two nations or provide employment to the unemployed, but were integral to reconstructing new geopolitical blocs. The acts of offering, considering, accepting, or rejecting technical economic projects were part and parcel of (re)shaping global geopolitics. They had the capacity to concretely reimagine and bring to life new non-Western and Afro-Asian constellations of power, relations, and politics.[35] Ultimately, Ghana accepted the Soviets' proposal because it aligned with Ghana's domestic and geopolitical ambitions and needs, including training Ghanaians for leadership and technical roles, the

[32] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/59, November 2, 1956, D. G. Ferguson to E. A. Maynier.

[33] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/59, Vol. I; PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/57; PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/59, Vol. I, May 8, 1958, Britcheck Cotton Limited to the Trade Commissioner for Ghana.

[34] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/59, Vol. I, August 2, 1957, "Heros Textile Factory to the Ghanaian Ministry of Commerce and Industry."

[35] Taylor Sherman, "Indians as Experts on Democracy and Development: South-South Cooperation in the Nehru Years" 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), 237–256.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

Soviet's commitment to Black freedom, and the Soviet's willingness to substantially finance the project. It would not solely come from Ghana's coffers.

While some Ghanaians placed much significance, expectation, and confidence in the Soviets to propel and realize their socialist and industrial ambitions and to dislodge the West's economic monopoly from its political economy, according to historian Siddiqi, the Soviets framed their scientific missions to Africa "as part of socialism's march for modernization in the newly decolonized world."[36] Yet, both parties needed the other to fulfill their prophecies – whether as an advertisement of Soviet industrial muscle or as a testament of Black liberation and the state as a socialist utopia. Without exaggeration or irony, the minister of Industries informed the regional commissioner of Ghana's Northern Region about the USSR's "importance" to Ghana's economy.[37] While it is a gross exaggeration to assert that Ghanaians believed "that Ghana could be developed by the Soviet Union alone" and "that there was no further need to pay attention to the West," Ghana did seek more assistance from the Soviets at this point than at any other moment in its history.[38] Nkrumah's frequent demonization of Western imperialism and neocolonialism, Ghana–Soviet economic contracts, and Ghanaian press reports were all part of a campaign to assure an Anglophone-orientated public that an economic and cultural reorientation toward the Soviets was desirable and profitable. It was under this aegis and crusade in 1962 that the Ghanaian government selected Tamale as the site to host the Soviet geological specialists and to build the Soviet cotton textile mill.

Whether or not these Soviet scientists to Ghana considered themselves as such, they were key cogs of Soviet imperial and global ambition. It was a tall and lofty order[39] for individuals perhaps traveling to West Africa

[36] Siddiqi, "Shaping the World," 43.

[37] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, February 1, 1962, Krobo Edusei to Mumuni Bawumia.

[38] Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 167.

[39] The archival record is littered with Soviet personnel discussing their living conditions, showing that life was never easy. Confusion, accusations, anger, and threats swirled among and between the Ghanaians and Soviets over the latter's living conditions. At times, Soviet personnel became sick and had to leave. For instance, one of the Soviet interpreters became ill during her stint in Ghana and had to depart. In addition, Ghanaian immigration officials monitored the Soviets stay in Ghana closely. When the Soviet experts overstayed their visas, Ghanaian officials wrote to Soviet government officials wondering why a Soviet individual had violated Ghana's immigration laws by not requesting a visa extension. See PRADD-Accra, RG 7/1/615, Vol. 4, June 18, 1962,

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

for the first time and, at times, juggling familial responsibilities.[40] For the Soviet cotton textile team, the task was simple yet difficult – construct a mill in Tamale that could produce 20 million square yards annually.[41] The Soviet geologists had to uncover large quantities of water and minerals for the new nation's development. The Ghanaians inevitably hoped that the Soviet cotton experience would significantly contrast with the violent history of cotton production across Africa.[42]

M. A. Donkor to the Director of the Soviet Geological Survey Team; PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/1693, Soviet Geological Survey Team.

[40] Children under the age of ten joined their parents too, making the Ghana–Soviet arena a familial space also. For instance, the Soviet doctor Rimma Nesterorna Nickoulshina's six-year-old child accompanied her to Ghana. This was not an isolated incident. Other Soviet experts who brought their children included the Tsakoulovs and the Timofeevs. B. S. Tsakoulov was a geological engineer and A. M. Timofeev was the chief engineer in revision-prospecting work. They both had their young children with them. Those Soviet personnel who left their children at home while venturing to Ghana were constantly updated on their children's well-being. At times, they had to return to the USSR to tend to sick children. For instance, one of the Soviet geologists, V. M. Rudakov, learned that "his child [wa]s seriously sick" and returned to the USSR immediately with his spouse. It appears that through training or socialization or a combination of two in the USSR, Soviet women experts, in the Ghanaian context, met and married Soviet men with similar technical, educational, and career backgrounds and interests. For instance, among the initial fifteen Soviet Geological Survey members in Tamale, there were four married couples. It is unclear if the Soviet doctor, Rimma Nesterorna Nickoulshina, was married to M. I. Nickoulshin, the Technical Leader of the Soviet geological team in Bole, Ghana. Furthermore, it is unclear whether the Soviet authorities in the USSR had a strong preference for couples, preferred to send Soviet women specialists alongside a spouse, or if this happened by chance. Because Soviet children accompanied their parents to Ghana, Soviet living conditions in Ghana generated considerable conversation and debate. See PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/536, June 14, 1963, V. Sorokin, Acting Counsellor on Economic Affairs of the USSR Embassy in Ghana, to F. K. Kwofie for Principal Secretary, Ministry of Industries; PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/536, June 11, 1963, M. A. Donkor to The Principal Secretary, Ministry of Industries; PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, July 6, 1962, from D.S. to Sec; PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/536, April 19, 1963, J. B. Bayern to the Principal Secretary Ministry of Industries.

[41] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, December 11, 1963, from Kodjo Tsikata to the Principal Secretary, Water Resources and Power Secretariat (Accra); the Chief Electrical Engineer, Electricity Department (Accra); the Chief Engineer, Water Supplies Division (Kumasi); the Senior Electrical Engineer, Electricity department (Tamale); PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, November 29, 1963, V. Ivliev to Kodjo Tsikata.

[42] Allen F. Isaacman and Richard Roberts, eds., *Cotton, Colonialism, and Social History in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1995); Richard Roberts, *Two Worlds of Cotton: Colonialism and the Regional Economy in the French Soudan, 1800–1946* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996); Allen F. Isaacman, *Cotton Is the Mother of Poverty: Peasants, Work, and Rural Struggle in Colonial Mozambique, 1938–1961* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1996); Angela (Andrew) Zimmerman, "A German Alabama in Africa: The Tuskegee Expedition to German Togo and the Transnational Origins of West African Cotton Growers," *American Historical Review*,

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

COTTON INDEPENDENCE: THE SOVIET TEXTILE COTTON MILL

In 1962 the Ghanaian government eagerly awaited the arrival of five Soviet technicians – chief engineer V. G. Ivliev; the senior engineer on technology, Priklonskya; the senior engineer on electricity, Gzouzdev; the senior engineer on sanitary and sewage; and the interpreter, Menshova – to survey Tamale, in Northern Ghana, for two months to collect information to build the textile mill.[43] It "was a privilege" for Soviet personnel to travel abroad, even to West Africa, for "assignments."[44] While Soviet men dominated travel to Ghana during the Nkrumah-era, Ghana–Soviet spaces were not entirely male or single male arenas. Soviet women traveled to Ghana as engineers, politicians, typists, secretaries, teachers, spouses, and mothers.[45] For instance, out of the five Soviet cotton textile specialists who arrived in Accra from Moscow in June 1962, two were women, including the interpreter.[46] While we know little about these figures charged with spearheading Ghana's cotton independence dreams and creating economic opportunities for its citizens, the progress of history stood behind them. Their success would highlight the transferability of Soviet technical and economic success to Black Africa and the world.

In the 1960s, the Soviets advertised the industrial and social transformations of Soviet Central Asia to formerly colonized countries, particularly its "cotton growing" and "infrastructural large-scale projects," as

Vol. 110, No. 5 (2005): 1362–1398; Sven Beckert, "From Tuskegee to Togo: The Problem of Freedom in the Empire of Cotton," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 92, No. 2 (2005): 498–526.

[43] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, June 26, 1962, Victor D. Adu to the Regional Commissioner of the Northern Region; TNA, DO165/23, June 2, 1962, letter from M, Soammell to K. Taylor.

[44] Iandolo, *Arrested Development*, 17.

[45] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/1693, April 2, 1962, A. Goloubkov to Principal Secretary of the CECEC; PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/1647, June 19, 1962, V. D. A. Adu to the Manager of Mendskrom; PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/1647, June 26, 1962, V. D. A. Adu to The Regional Commissioner of the Northern Region.

[46] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/647, June 15, 1962, A. Goloubkov to Imoru Egala; The names of the five individuals were: V. Ivliev – the Chief Engineer; V. Priklonskya – Senior Engineer of Technology; N. Ggousdov – Senior Engineer of Electricity; J. Khlechnikov; Menshova – Interpreter. See PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/647, June 19, 1962, V. A. Adu to the Manager, Mendskrom; PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/647, May 7, 1962, "Draft Contract of No. 562 – Cotton Textile Mill"; PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/647, May 7, 1962, "List of Specialists to be Deputed to Ghana | Appendix No. 1"; PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/647, June 4, 1962, A. Goloubkov to the Principal Secretary of the CECEC.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

signifiers of the wonders of the Soviet economic model.[47] Through cotton production and ideologies of "cotton autonomy," the Russian Empire and its Soviet incarnation, in part, framed their march to modernity and legitimatized its colonial conquest and civilizational superiority over the local nomadic Turkestan and Central Asian populations.[48] In some measure, the Ghanaians bought into the Soviet developmentalist imperial and colonial myth. The Ghanaian press had also "presented Central Asia as a colonial territory of tsarist Russia that had been liberated by the Soviet Union"[49] and reported on the transformation of Siberia "as a 'wonderland of technological construction and human progress.'"[50] The seeming technological-scientific transformation of Asiatic USSR provided a blueprint for Ghanaians.

The Ghanaian government selected Tamale as the preferred site for cotton production because it sat comfortably within Nkrumah's government's amalgamated liberational, modernist, and socialist lexicons and vision. Situating the mill in Tamale would simultaneously readdress British underdevelopment in the region, provide at least 420 jobs to an area suffering from unemployment (of which women were expected to comprise of at least 20 percent of the workforce),[51] "considerably" assist "in opening up the area ... to attract more industries," provide electrical and water supplies for people there, and serve as somewhat of a "blank" canvas on which to paint their vision(s) of socialist modernity.[52]

Unlike the Second World Black and African Festival in Nigeria in 1977, "which rejected the opposition between civilization and barbarism," according to anthropologist Andrew Apter, and "celebrated themes and objectives ... of a distinctive Black and African modernity," the

[47] Julia Obertreis, *Imperial Desert Dreams: Cotton Growing and Irrigation in Central Asia* (Gottingen: *Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht*, 2017), 334; Artemy Kalinovsky, *Laboratory of Socialist Development: Cold War Politics and Decolonization in Soviet Tajikistan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2018); Maya K. Peterson, *Pipe Dreams: Water and Empire in Central Asia's Aral Sea Basin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

[48] Obertreis, *Imperial Desert Dreams*, 55, 60.

[49] Łukasz Stanek, *Architecture in Global Socialism: Eastern Europe, West Africa, and the Middle East in the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021), 5.

[50] Ahlman, "Africa's Kitchen Debate," 165.

[51] The mill's designers envisioned a gendered factory. They outlined a building with separate lavatories and showers, and even drinking fountains for men and women. PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/647, December 4, 1963, Industrial Health Specialist/Port Health Office to The Chief Administrator, Medical Public Relations Committee, in the Ministry of Health.

[52] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, "Notes on Site Proposed for Textile Factory Tamale – By the Town Planning Officer."

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

Ghanaian state mapped the colonial logics of modernity within its internal boundaries while projecting a Black and African socialist modernity internationally.[53] In the intertwining cosmologies of modernization theory, colonial economics, and doctrinal Marxism, Tamale and Northern Ghana occupied a backward place that could be brought to the fore of modernity. The mill's construction was part of Ghana's broader vision to transform its economy from an agriculture-centered one to an industrialized one. As Chapter 4 will point out, the mill was just one of the approximately fifty state industries the new Ghanaian government was constructing or had proposed to build in order to shift economic power away from the West and toward itself.

However, Tamale was not a uniformly popular site to host the mill. Soviet scientists remained unconvinced. The reasons the Ghanaians provided for the necessity of the mill's construction in Tamale – insufficient electrical power and water supplies – were the same excuses why the Soviets balked at the idea. They pushed their Ghanaian counterparts to explain how Tamale could "augment" its current electrical and water generating capacities to satisfy the factory's needs.[54] Tamale's town planners and its electrical engineering division were tasked with solving these concerns. Ghanaian technocrats tied the mill's fate to the completion of the Volta River Project, also known as the Akosombo Dam, in 1966. Tamale's planners were confident that the dam would solve electrical capacity and water supply shortages.[55] While scholars like Ali A. Mazrui and Adu Boahen have argued forcefully that the Volta River Project's terms with Kaiser were neocolonial, Ghanaian technicians and planners tied the success of other state industrial projects to it. Without the dam, Ghana's socialist industrial dream would evaporate. The dam was both Nkrumah's "baby" and foundational to creating the state's energy capacity to "transform the country" and achieve the socialist modernity Nkrumah envisioned.[56]

Yet, officials unconvinced by the mill's necessity or the state's broader Soviet turn criticized the Soviet engineers' construction plans.[57] They

[53] Apter, *The Pan-African Nation*, 5.

[54] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, July 18, 1962, Electrical Engineer to the Chief Electrical Engineer; PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, July 20, 1962, George Daniel, Secretary to the Regional Commissioner, to the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Industries in Accra.

[55] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, November 29, 1963, the Soviet Chief Engineer V. Ivliev to Kodjo Tsikata.

[56] Miescher, "Nkrumah's Baby."

[57] Unfortunately, I do not have much information on the broader political views of the Ghanaian workers and technocrats that were involved in the building of the mill.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

voiced their concerns in the vernacular of neocolonialism – a term that held much currency and circulation within Ghana.[58] Critics remarked that Ghana would need to import 2,100 tons of cotton annually to produce 20 million square yards. To bleach, print, or finish the gray cloth, the Ghanaian-operated mill would need to send the materials to a British firm in the newly constructed coastal and industrial city of Tema, in southern Ghana.[59] Tying the production and distribution of cotton to British and Western firms and markets was antithetical to the new state's aspirations and conceptions of itself. These steps increased the possibility that Ghana would further subsume itself within a neocolonial economy before it could break free – realizing Nkrumah's greatest fear.[60] Ghanaian officials noted that immediate provisions had to be made to ensure that the "utilization ... of local raw cotton" was secured to prevent the necessity of importing "the yarn needed at the mill even though cotton will be grown in the Country."[61] Outside of neocolonial concerns, debates over worker safety stalled the project.

After the 1961 workers' strikes that paralyzed the Ghanaian state and, according to some critics, almost toppled Nkrumah's government, concerns over the workers' support for the political regime – which could ebb and flow on issues ranging from pay to safety – could not be dismissed easily. The astute and outspoken British medical doctor, C. S. Hoffman, who served as Ghana's principal medical officer during this moment, played upon the state's vulnerability to workers' concerns in an attempt to halt the mill's creation – bringing him into direct confrontation with the Soviet chief engineer, Ivliev. Hoffman's role in Ghana was a curious one. After Nkrumah's fall in 1966, he was demoted as Ghana's chief medical officer and appointed as the Central Region's chief medical officer. Hoffman then became embroiled in a public scandal for distributing "fishing nets received as gifts from foreign donors" in 1969.[62] Ivliev, on the other hand, lacked a sophisticated grasp of Ghana's domestic political scene, underestimating the Ghanaian state's vulnerability to mutinous workers and the political sensitivity around worker safety.

[58] Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*, 102.
[59] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, July 9, 1962, Chief Engineer Ivliev to Mumuni Bawumia, the Regional Commissioner of the Northern Region.
[60] Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*, 102.
[61] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, George Daniel to Principal Secretary of the Minister of Industries.
[62] "Central Hospital," *The Daily Graphic*, June 24, 1969; "Fishermen Call for a Probe," *The Daily Graphic*, June 18, 1969.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

Hoffman leveraged insider knowledge – the internal contradictions and dialogical relationship between the state and its workers – and contemporary medical data to blunt Ivliev's offensive and dash Soviet hopes of replicating in Ghana the "industrial success" they had fomented in Central Asia.

Hoffman denounced the Soviet plan for failing to protect workers from byssinosis – a lung disease causing asthma or "chronic bronchitis and emphysema" from the inhaling of cotton dust, particles, flax, and hemp.[63] Contemporaneous medical knowledge supported and underpinned Hoffman's assessments. By 1962, the Western medical establishment linked cotton production in factories to byssinosis, dispelling prior beliefs that it was a Lancashire problem and not one endemic to cotton production.[64] Researchers had reached a broad consensus that byssinosis led to "fever(s), headache(s), nausea, vomiting," a dry cough, "disablement, and death."[65] Ivliev disagreed with this medical data, arguing that the chances of contracting byssinosis in a factory were "very small." He remained unconvinced that it was a serious health concern.[66] Byssinosis was not the only health-related dispute the pair clashed over. Ivliev's analysis often existed in direct opposition to contemporary Western medical theories, suggesting that worker health and safety concerns were exaggerated.

Ivliev dismissed concerns over workers' mental well-being as overblown – sparking another sharp exchange with Hoffman. Ivliev's proposed mill lacked daylight and favored luminescent light and air-conditioners to ensure greater worker productivity in the Tamale heat.

[63] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, July 16, 1962, Principal Medical Officer, C. S. Hoffman to Mumuni Bawumia, the Regional Commissioner of the Northern Region; PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, July 10, 1962, "Minutes of the Meeting of the Regional Commissioner, Northern Region, with the Russian Technicians at the Regional Office on Tuesday, 10th July, 1962."

[64] S. A. Roach and R. S. F. Shilling, "A Clinical and Environmental Study of Byssinosis in the Lancashire Cotton Industry," *British Journal of Industrial Medicine*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (January 1960): 1–9.

[65] "Byssinosis and Bagassosis," *The British Medical Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 4279 (January 9, 1943): 46; A. Bouhuys, S. E. Lindell, and G. Lundin, "Experimental Studies on Byssinosis," *The British Medical Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 5169 (January 30, 1960): 324–326; A. Bouhuys and S.-E. Lindell, "World-Wide Byssinosis," *The British Medical Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 5307 (September 22, 1962), 781; E. Tuypens, "Byssinosis among Cotton Workers in Belgium," *British Journal of Industrial Medicine*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (April 1961): 117–119; Mostafa A. El Batawi, "Byssinosis in the Cotton Industry of Egypt," *British Journal of Industrial Medicine*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (April 1962): 126–130.

[66] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, July 9, 1962, Chief Engineer Ivliev to Mumuni Bawumia, the Regional Commissioner of the Northern Region.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

He justified the plan by referencing the factories in the USSR, Japan, the United States, and India that lacked sunlight provisions. Therefore, Ivliev "saw no objection to the establishment of the factory without daylight."[67] Hoffman scoffed at Ivliev's ideas, arguing that fluorescent lamps would create more problems than they would solve. It was "medically unsound ... particularly in view of labour accustomed to open-air-life, and with a rustic background" to undergo "8 hours" of "monotonous work in an artificially illuminated 'tunnel.'" Besides, if the workers adapted to artificial light, Hoffman pointed to recent studies from the UK's Atomic Energy Research Establishment that radioactive fallout from fluorescent lamps was dangerous. Air-conditioners would also exacerbate, not alleviate, health risks.[68]

Multiple health and environmental concerns remained unresolved and hotly contested. Hoffman expressed deep skepticism that air-conditioners would solve heat problems during the dry season. He feared that the workers would contract tuberculosis – a contagious bacterial disease that attacked the lungs. Moreover, Hoffman dismissed the possibility of workers working during the night, using fluorescent lamps, to avoid the brunt of the heat, and remained skeptical that the workers could overcome this issue with mental fortitude, as though it was "Matter Over Mind," as Ivliev had wryly suggested. Hoffman cited the work of leading Western industrial psychologists who declared that "every effort should be made to provide the worker with a congenial [work] environment." Hoffman concluded that it was only through this means that workers would become optimally efficient and alert, resulting in fewer work accidents (and fewer workers' compensation claims!). The Ghanaian chief medical doctor urged the Northern Regional minister to contact R. S. P. Schilling, a leading professor of Industrial Medicine and Occupational Health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, to substantiate his claims.[69] The issue of environmental waste was also left unresolved.

Initial discussions in 1962 called for the factory's waste to be mixed with "the domestic wastes, and treated by a suitable sized septic tank followed by oxidation ponds." A Ghanaian technician, R. Quist-Arcton,

[67] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, July 10, 1962, "Minutes of the Meeting of the Regional Commissioner, Northern Region, with the Russian Technicians at the Regional Office on Tuesday, 10th July, 1962."

[68] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, July 16, 1962, Principal Medical Officer, C. S. Hoffman to Mumuni Bawumia, the Regional Commissioner of the Northern Region.

[69] Ibid.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

was adamant that the Mill's "proprietors" bear the "responsibility" for the "proper treatment of the waste water."[70] Yet, toward the end of 1963, C. K. Annan, the chief Ghanaian engineer in Tamale, remained concerned about how and where the factory's waste would be disposed, amplifying calls for the creation "a proper ... disposal system." Annan hoped that addressing this matter could actually be the "basis of a future sewage disposal system for Tamale."[71]

The local government faced competing opinions on the mill's potential health impacts on workers, the need to increase the economic viability of Ghana's Northern Region, and the local government's ability to spearhead, shepherd, and construct a functioning, developmentalist factory with international partners. While engaged in strong debates, Ghanaian technocrats, survey and land specialists, engineers, the regional commissioner of the Northern Region, and the Soviet specialists concluded that the factory's need to provide "employment to the people in the Northern Region" should take precedence over the potential health risks.[72] The factory had to be built. Ivliev's position had won.

As the end of 1965 approached, three years after the Hoffman–Ivliev debates, the mill's fate and location remained opaque, however. On December 18, 1963, Annan informed Kodjo Tsikata that "we still do not know where this factory would be built in Tamale."[73] Annan was informed, however, that the factory would no longer be built in 1965 but in 1966. Annan wrote that the new date of 1966 was desirable as it gave them "time to plan and provide the necessary service by the due date." On January 21, 1964, G. Aidoo, the new secretary to the regional commissioner of the Northern Region, suspected that the mill would be built in Tamale's burgeoning industrial area, but needed confirmation from Tamale's town planning officer.[74] On February 1, almost two years after the Soviets had arrived in Ghana to establish the mill, the Northern

[70] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/647, September 1962, "Russian Cotton Textile Mill," Draft by R. Quist-Arcton.

[71] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, December 18, 1963, C. K. Annan, Chief Engineer to Kodjo Tsikata.

[72] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, July 10, 1962, "Minutes of the Meeting of the Regional Commissioner, Northern Region, with the Russian Technicians at the Regional Office on Tuesday, 10th July, 1962."

[73] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, December 18, 1963, C. K. Annan, Chief Engineer to Kodjo Tsikata.

[74] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, January 21, 1964, G. Aidoo, Secretary to the Regional Commissioner of the Northern Region, to the Regional Engineer, Water Supplies Division.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

and Upper regions' town planning officer wrote to the principal secretary of the Ministry of Industries that no communication had occurred between his office and the mill planners' about the mill's location since July 1962. While the town planning officer was not against building the cotton mill in Tamale, he requested a "copy of the final site plan, or, better still, the proposed layout plan of the Mill" to finalize Tamale's industrial area, where the mill would feature prominently.[75] On August 31, 1965, a year after the last letter, the new secretary of the regional commissioner, A. Okyere-Twum, begged the Ministry of Industries to "be kind enough to let me [them] know what the position" of building the mill in Tamale continued to be.[76] After three years of negotiation, surveys, and discussions between the Ghanaians and Soviets to build the mill, the factory remained little more than a fanciful blueprint.

The mill's financing also remained murky. Annan noted that the planning remained conditional "of course that necessary funds bec[a]me available for work required."[77] Two years into the proposed project, it was unclear whether the factory would be funded and why a definite answer to the question had remained elusive. The Soviet leadership began to question deep financial commitments in West Africa. "By the time of Khrushchev's demise as First Secretary of the CPSU in October 1964," historian Alessandro Iandolo argued, "the Soviet presence in Guinea and Ghana was reduced to some advisers and a few uncompleted projects."[78] As October 11, 1965, approached, Okyere-Twum felt weary and anxious about the sluggishness of the mill's development and the continued silence from the Ministry of Industries, prompting a further letter to Imoru Egala, the minister of Industries' principal secretary, insisting that he would "be grateful ... to learn what progress has so far been made" on the Soviet-led textile mill in Tamale.[79]

Okyere-Twum's exasperation juxtaposed with the initial optimism that attended the mill's beginnings. Perhaps the Ghanaian leadership

[75] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, February 1, 1964, the Northern and Upper Regions Town Planning Officer Wrote to the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Industries in Accra.

[76] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, August 31, 1965, A. Okyere-Twum, to the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Industries.

[77] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, December 18, 1963, C. K. Annan, Chief Engineer to Kodjo Tsikata.

[78] Iandolo, "The Rise and Fall," 701.

[79] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, October 11, 1965, A. Okyere-Twum to the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Industries.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

had wished they had signed a deal for the mill with a different entity. After a long hiatus, the principal secretary finally responded on October 18, indicating to the regional commissioner that the Ministry was still deliberating the mill's feasibility. Thus, it came as a huge a surprise to everyone when, a year after the coup, the *West Africa* announced the impending American mill in Tamale. Perhaps the Soviet Geological Survey Team had found better fortune.

MINERAL INDEPENDENCE: THE SOVIET GEOLOGICAL SURVEY TEAM

Ghana had an "expressed policy ... to vigorously exploit all mineral resources of the country to bolster rapid industrialisation."[80] Locating copious amounts of precious minerals and metals that could be exported to overseas markets in exchange for precious foreign cash reserves was crucial to furthering the state's domestic agenda. At that moment, the Ghanaian government was overly reliant on cocoa exports for foreign capital. However, the price of cocoa was dwindling. Like its dreams of cotton independence, Ghana linked the Soviets to its vision of mineral independence.

In December 1958, Ghana welcomed Soviet scientists and diamond experts to explore how best to streamline and tap into the nation's natural resources.[81] On August 4, 1959, Ghana 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.[82] Western geologists had previously surveyed Ghana's iron ore deposits and concluded that Ghana was "unsuitable and uneconomic for [ore] exploitation." Nkrumah hoped that Khrushchev's geologists might find a more favorable answer. He was not disappointed. Three Soviet geologists arrived in Ghana and provided a more encouraging response within the first two months of 1960.[83] Nkrumah thanked Khrushchev for the reports and wondered whether the Soviets would assist in constructing an iron and steel plant in Ghana in light of their findings.[84] Ghana soon signed "an agreement with the U.S.S.R. Government for technical

[80] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, February 1, 1962, Krobo Edusei to Mumuni Bawumia.
[81] AVP RF: d. 281, op. 2, por 5, pa. 1, December 1958, the Ghanaian High Commission in London to the Soviet Embassy.
[82] AVP RF: d. I-6, op. 3, por 4, pa. 2, env. Ghana, August 4, 1959.
[83] TNA, FCO 371/146818, February 5, 1960, J. S. H. Shattock to Boothby.
[84] AVP RF: f. 250, op. 4, por. 24, pa. 5, March 19, 1960, Nkrumah to Khrushchev.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

assistance for geological survey and mapping, revision prospecting and hydrogeological survey through the entire country."[85] Other African states had followed Ghana's lead in bringing Soviet geological specialists to their countries. Throughout the 1960s, Soviet scientists surveyed other African countries' mineral deposits.[86] Despite having twelve vacancies, fifty-five Soviet geological specialists would arrive in Ghana to undertake one of the most important surveys in the new nation's history. Their number was significantly larger than the team sent to build the cotton textile mill.[87] While Tamale would headquarter the SGST's operations, the Soviet specialists resided and operated in numerous cities and towns across the country, particularly in the North.[88]

The Soviets insisted they were going "to Ghana to find the minerals 'which the Imperialists have missed.'"[89] Indeed, they had also been particularly interested in doing a deep geological exploration of Ghana's known manganese ore, gold, cement, and salt deposits in addition to Nkrumah's requests.[90] Historian Siddiqi notes that the Soviets used "scientific research" as a "euphemism" for prospecting the "natural resources of the locale."[91] Moreover, as historian Robyn d'Avignon argues, such "work" was predicated on the prior geological knowledge of local African interlocutors and prospectors.[92] Soloviev, the Soviet's geological chief specialist, admitted as much, noting the Soviets would be exploring "already known" deposits in Yakow-Himakrom Kalimbi, Dokurupe, and Yoyo "to find out the expediency of detailed prospecting there."[93]

On May 13, 1962, in Tamale, K. Amoa-Awuah, Ghana's deputy minister of Industries, at the official launch of the Soviet Geological Survey project, acknowledged that Africans and Europeans had conducted prior geological surveying and speculating in Ghana. "Over the past few

[85] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, February 1, 1962, Krobo Edusei to Mumuni Bawumia.
[86] Siddiqi, "Shaping the World," 48; Iandolo, *Arrested Development*, 146–196; Robyn d'Avignon, *A Ritual Geology: Gold and Subterranean Knowledge in Savanna West Africa* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022), 129–152.
[87] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/615, Vol. 4, "The List of the Parties the Geological Team Having Started Field World / Appendix No. 2," N. Soloviev, Chief Specialist of the Soviet Geological Survey Team.
[88] These cities and towns were Takoradi in the south and Sunyani, Wenchi, Kintampo, Bole, Wa, and Damongo in the north. See PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/615, Vol. 4, ibid. Soloviev is also spelt Solovjev in some Ghanaian records.
[89] TNA, DO165/23, May 29, 1962, D. W. Hennessy to V. C. Martin.
[90] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/615, Vol. 4, N. Soloviev, pp. 570–572.
[91] Siddiqi, "Shaping the World," 45–46. [92] d'Avignon, *A Ritual Geology*.
[93] TNA, DO165/23, May 29, 1962, letter from D. W. Hennessy to V. C. Martin.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

years," Amoa-Awuah noted, "our Geological Survey Department has completed a reconnaissance survey over the whole country. In the course of this reconnaissance survey, all rocks that outcrop have been examined and the manganese ores, the bauxite and the diamond fields that were discovered are now being worked." Amoa-Awuah continued, "Although the Department has also discovered more gold d[e]posits, the greater part of our known gold deposits were discovered by African prospectors long before the Europeans first came to our shores. In the North, the Survey has discovered Iron deposits at Shievi, gold in Nangodu and Banda, and limestone in Daboya." Indeed, the deputy minister pointed out that while Africans and Europeans had found surface-level mineral deposits, he hoped that the Soviets' much vaunted technical prowess and skills, which had been echoed and outlined in the Ghanaian press, could locate "those minerals which do not reveal themselves by surface indications." Amoa-Awuah reminded the remaining skeptics that if Ghana's own Geological Survey department could undertake this enormous expenditure and task, the Ghanaian state would not be seeking Soviet assistance. However, this work was necessary and "clearly beyond the present capacity of our [Ghanaian] geological Survey Department, and that is why the Government decided to seek technical assistance in this field from various countries, particularly the Soviet Union."[94] As with the case with most Ghana–Soviet projects, the USSR was one of many countries or firms Ghana discussed terms with before accepting the Soviet's proposal. Besides minerals, the Soviets were also searching for water deposits that would help alleviate water shortages in the area.

Historian Iandolo argues that geological experts in Ghana, whose knowledge of the area the Soviets needed to tap into, were less than enthused with the Soviets' impending arrival. Iandolo noted that local geologists "resented" Soviet geologists "meddling in their area of competence." They complained to the government that their geological surveys would be "greatly impaired if the Soviet team, for the next three years, is allowed to hop about all over the country checking the work of the rightful local geological Survey." They warned that "Two cooks in one kitchen have many problems, but to ask them to cook in the same pot at

[94] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/615, Vol. 4, May 13, 1962, K. Amoa-Awuah, "Address Delivered by the Deputy Minister of Industries Mr. K. Amoa-Awuah on the Occasion of the Official Launching of the Geological Survey Project. At Tamale, On Monday 13th, May, 1962."

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

the same time brings chaos."[95] Even after political independence, former British colonial officials and technicians were still employed in the Ghana Geological Survey Department.[96] It is possible that the continued presence of British officials and technicians in Ghana's geological survey department spurred some of the initial resentment against the incoming Soviet geologists. It would have been part of a broader British effort to limit or stifle the increasing Soviet presence in Ghana and arrest Britain's diminishing power in their former colony.

But, there were already more than two cooks in the proverbial pot. Before the Soviets, Yugoslav and Rumanian geologists were already operating in Ghana. Furthermore, Polish engineers assisted Ghana's geological survey team to conduct a "geological investigation" of Ghana's iron ore deposits in the Shieni area in the Northern Region. Ghanaian officials also expected a team of eleven Polish geological specialists to conduct further investigations into those deposits concurrently with the Soviet geological specialists.[97] Consequently, the Ghanaian principal secretary was worried about the duplication of teams and that the Ghanaian team, which was already understaffed by 50 percent, would be stretched even thinner.[98]

Despite the misgivings of some Ghanaian technocrats, cabinet officials stressed the importance of collaboration between all Ghanaian stakeholders and the Soviets to make the Soviet Geological Survey Team, this Ghana–Soviet space, a success. "The importance which Osagyefo the President and the Government attach to this project cannot be overemphasised," noted Amoa-Awuah. "Such is the importance of the task," Amoa-Awuah spoke, "that we [Ghana] trust that only the experts of the highest professional calibre may be deputed by the Government of the Soviet Union to the Republic of Ghana, so as to enable us to accomplish it

[95] Iandolo, *Arrested Development*, 167.

[96] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/1614, April 18, 1962, Brian Nice to CAK Hasford; Rowena M. Lawson, "The Transition of Ghana's Fishing from a Primitive to a Mechanised Industry," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, Vol. 9 (1968): 90–104.

[97] PRAAD-Accra, ADM 13/2/95, August 1962, "Report by the Team of Polish Engineers on the Result of Their Investigation Into the Iron Ore of the Geological Deposits in the Shieni Area of the Northern Region"; PRAAD-Accra, ADM 13/2/95, August 1962, "Shieni Iron Ore Deposits," by the Minister of Industries. For more information on Polish geologists in West Africa in the 1960s, see Justyna A. Turkowska, "The Reordering of Space and Reference: Polish Geologists in West Africa and Their Mapping of the Postcolonial Order in the 1960s," in *Rethinking Socialist Space in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Marcus Colla and Paul Betts (Cham: Springer Link, 2024), 135–158.

[98] PRAAD-Accra, ADM 13/2/95.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

in the shortest possible time."[99] "I am counting on you," Edusei pressed upon Bawumia, "to seek co-operation of your District Commissioners, Chiefs and the people in your Region to facilitate the assignment of the Soviet team of Geologists."[100]

While some technocrats found the surveys unnecessary or redundant, other high officials in less economically developed areas pushed for their regions to be included in the survey. They believed that Soviet intervention would procure active benefits to their constituents. A. Asumda, the regional commissioner of the Upper Region, wrote to the minister of Industries on May 16, 1962, begging for the Soviet hydrological survey to include the Upper Region and not just the Northern Region. "I consider that the Upper Region," he wrote, "deserves consideration for inclusion in the programme especially for a hydrological survey in view of its dense population and the recurrent incident of water shortages."[101] The commissioner then went on to offer concrete ways localities in the Upper Region could be incorporated into the SGST's survey plans. Asumda believed that the Soviets' work would bring concrete development to the area and lobbied for their involvement. Egala agreed. He assured Asumda that the survey would include the Upper Region, writing "... there should be no apprehension about part of the Upper Region not being covered."[102] Moreover, Krobo Edusei informed A. M. Bibochkin, the Soviet chief of the Ministry of Geology, that hydrogeological work was necessary in "supplying the most needy towns and villages with drinking water." Thus, it was important the Soviets pay considerable "attention" to the "Northern and Upper Regions."[103] While some officials believed the impending Soviet geological program would benefit their community, farmers operating in or around SGST designated areas were going to lose their crops and potentially their livelihoods. The state placed the burden on those affected to "collect all claims and pass them on to Lands Secretariat for verification" and hopefully compensation.[104] While there was a compelling government and local incentive

[99] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/615, Vol. 4, May 13, 1962, K. Amoa-Awuah, "Address Delivered by the Deputy Minister of Industries Mr. K. Amoa-Awuah on the Occasion of the Official Launching of the Geological Survey Project. At Tamale, On Monday 13th, May, 1962."
[100] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, February 1, 1962, Krobo Edusei to Mumuni Bawumia.
[101] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/615, Vol. 4, May 16, 1962, A. Asumda to Imoru Egala.
[102] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/615, Vol. 4, May 23, 1962, Imoru Egala to A. Asumda.
[103] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/615, Vol. 4, May 1962, Krobo Edusei to A. M. Bibochkin.
[104] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/615, Vol. 4.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

to locate additional water reservoirs to alleviate chronic water shortages in certain parts of the country, livelihood and crop destruction and displacement were guaranteed.

The pace at which the Soviet Geological Survey Team was formed meant that no funds had been allocated to it. Consequently, the minister of Industries wrote to the budget secretariat to manipulate the budget or raise an extra £G639,200 to finance the SGST's first year, or else the SGST's efforts would be protracted or halted.[105] As Krobo Edusei noted, "No sacrifice on the part of any Ghanaian would be too great, in view of the ultimate benefit of the results of the geological work being undertaken by the Soviet team."[106] Thus, it was important for government officials to manipulate the annual state budget to finance the SGST operations. In addition, Ghanaian officials tasked their subjects with providing free food,[107] renting or selling their guest and rest houses, chalets, or properties,[108] procuring household items such as wardrobes, table lamps, writing desks, or releasing funds immediately for the "erection" of bungalows, and other furniture for the incoming Soviets. They also pushed citizens to construct water tankers for the Soviets due to the "heavy shortage of Water."[109] All these tasks were urgent, and the government wanted its impacted citizens to know that there was no sacrifice or gesture

[105] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, "Work of the Geological Survey Team from the Soviet Union – Contract No. 393" by the Minister of Industries, Krobo Edusei.

[106] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, February 1, 1962, Krobo Edusei to Mumuni Bawumia.

[107] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, April 25, 1962, A. Goloubkov, Counsellor on Economic Affairs of the USSR Embassy in Ghana to Krobo Edusei; PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, April 30, 1962, Principal Secretary to the Secretary to the Regional Commissioner of the Northern Region to the Supervisor of the Catering Rest House and A. Goloubkov.

[108] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, February 22, 1962, Secretary to the Regional Commissioner to the Senior Officer at the Lands Department, Tamale; PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, February 23, 1962, the Secretary of the Regional Commissioner to the Supervisor, Catering Rest House; PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, March 7, 1962, Senior Lands Officer to The Secretary to the Regional Commissioner of the Northern Region.

[109] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, February 2, 1962, District Commissioner to the Secretary of the Regional Commissioner; PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, February 24, 1962, District Engineer to the Secretary of the Regional Commissioner of the Northern Region; PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, February 22, 1962, Secretary to the Regional Commissioner to the Senior Officer at the Lands Department, Tamale; PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, February 23, 1962, Secretary to the Regional Commissioner to the Supervisor, Catering Rest House; and PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, February 24, 1962, District Engineer to the Secretary to the Regional Commissioner; PRAAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/615, June 5, 1962, Imoru Egala to A. Asumda.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

too small or large to realize its socialist project through Soviet assistance. The Ghanaian geologists and locals accepted the mandate to provide Soviet experts with "maximum co-operation" and "provision."[110] With those directives from above, Ghana's leading geologist, J. E. Cudjoe, ignored his colleagues' earlier concerns and swallowed his pride and toured the Northern Region with his Soviet counterparts in February 1962.

As the cotton mill's progress was stalling, the Ghanaian government pushed the Soviet geologists to follow their timelines and guidelines. This was part of a larger attempt by Ghanaian officials to extract the maximum work and benefit from Soviet cooperation. While the Soviet geologists wished to provide preliminary reports after the end of their three-year term, the Ghanaians believed that this was "not enough work." Instead, the Ghanaians wanted a detailed report after twelve months showing: (1) a "Geological map of the whole area to be surveyed"; (2) a "mineral map showing the distribution of minerals in the area; (3) a "Hydro-Geological map showing the occurrence of underground water; and (4) "Other minor information." In short, the Ghanaian state wanted a report on the "most promising areas for further work" and "an indication of the amount of our [Ghana's] reserves of the mineral deposits they may discover."[111] Ghana was in a rush. It was in a hurry to untap and unleash the economic potential of Black liberation and delink itself from foreign capital and its constraints. Moreover, its concurring experience in another Ghana–Soviet space, the mill, propelled them to closely monitor the Soviets in the geological sphere if they wanted to reach their nirvana quickly.

CONTESTED LIBERATION AND FREEDOM ZONES: DISCRIMINATION AND CITIZENSHIP CLAIMS

As unemployment persisted in Ghana, word about job opportunities within this Ghana–Soviet space spread quickly among the population.[112] Ghanaians from across the country sent handwritten letters to Imoru Egala, the principal secretary for the Ministry of Industries, offering their

[110] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, February 1, 1962, Krobo Edusei to Mumuni Bawumia.
[111] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/615, Vol. 4, May 29, 1962, "Meeting on Contract No. 393 – Russian Geological Survey Team."
[112] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, April 30, 1962, Amoa-Awuah to Mumuni Bawumia. The advertisements appeared in *The Daily Graphic*, *Ghanaian Times*, and *Evening News* on April 10, 11, and 12, 1962, respectively.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

services to the SGST. For instance, on May 29, 1962, twenty-four-year-old Japhet R. K. Dzebu from the Ho District, Volta Region, expressed a desire "to apply for the vacancy existing in the Soviet Geological Team as a Motor Mechanic." Twenty-one-year-old Stephen Darkey from Koforidua, Eastern Region, sought employment as a "Pupil Laboratory Assistant." On May 30, twenty-five-year-old Samuel K. Aidoo from Agona Nyakrom, Ashanti Region, requested employment as a "Draughtsman or an Assistant Surveyor." Aidoo continued: "I beg to offer myself for employment with the Soviet Geological Team or in any of your Departments." To support their case, all of the applicants referenced their positionality to the state, particularly that they were Ghanaian citizens. For instance, Dzebu wrote that he possessed "a Ghanaian nationality," while Darkey conveyed that he was a "Ghanaian by birth." As the following chapter will highlight, claims to citizenship by birth were dubious since anyone older than three was too old to have been born a Ghanaian. Instead, they were born as British colonial subjects. Besides attempting to prove their subjectivity and loyalty to the new state, the writers included their educational and professional qualifications in their letters. They hoped that the totality of these markers would make them suitable for employment in the new Ghana–Soviet space.[113]

Not only were there immediate employment opportunities in the Ghana–Soviet space, but the Ghanaian government included a provision in their agreement with the Soviets to train Ghanaian geological assistants. Amoa-Awuah outlined the government's Africanization goals in relation to the SGST team: "Our Ghanaian experts will, no doubt, give their fullest co-operation and support, and we expect that by the end of the contract, many of our own men would have benefited [sic] through their association with, or training in Soviet techniques, so that they will be able to continue where the Soviet team leaves off."[114] Thus, this Ghana–Soviet space fit within the Ghanaian government's larger Africanization and decolonization goals of signing contracts with countries and

[113] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/615, Vol. 4, May 30, 1962, Samuel K. Aidoo to Imoru Egala; PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/615, Vol. 4, May 1962, Stephen Darkey to Imoru Egala; PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/615, Vol. 4, May 29, 1962, Japhet R. K. Dzebu to Imoru Egala.

[114] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/615, Vol. 4, May 13, 1962, K. Amoa-Awuah, "Address Delivered by the Deputy Minister of Industries Mr. K. Amoa-Awuah on the Occasion of the Official Launching of the Geological Survey Project. At Tamale, On Monday 13th, May, 1962"; PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/615, Vol. 4, June 9, 1962, Director of the Geological Survey Department to the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Industries.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

companies that were willing to train Ghanaians to ultimately replace the foreign experts and workers.

Ultimately, this Ghana–Soviet space created 547 Ghanaian jobs. These positions included artisans, language interpreters, security guards, learner field assistants, accounting officers, cooks, typists, store men, pupil geological assistants, pupil laboratory technicians, and camp laborers. These jobs drew from the working class and sought to create a bureaucratic and technical class.[115] The Ghanaian government intended these jobs to provide opportunities to Northern Ghanaians and alleviate generational anti-Northern biases. Indeed, from 1957 to 1966, historian Benjamin Talton has argued that Nkrumah's government had "placed many northerners in positions of power ... [and] increased the number of Ghana's districts to reduce ... tribalism."[116] Yet, despite these attempts, the fissures of Ghanaian society (re-)appeared or, rather, were inflamed, within Ghana–Soviet spaces.

In June 1962, Abudulai Moshie, an SGST guard, argued that he was dismissed because he was a Northerner. In his complaint against F. E. Darko, the senior executive officer at the SGST, Moshie charged that Darko slapped his mouth, called him a fool, and stated that he was not a good man because he was a Northerner. Darko had lived in the Northern and Upper Regions for twenty years and had previously occupied a wide range of positions, including as a "Clerk, Chief Commissioner's Office at Tamale, District Clerk at Navrongo, Assistant Accountant, Postal Clerk, Senior Health Inspector at Gambaga," and as a local council member at Nalerigu for the British colonial government and Ghana.[117] Darko's wife was also employed at the SGST. Darko had only been appointed as the senior executive officer in May 1962, a month prior to these allegations.[118] Moshie wrote that Darko lamented the fact that Northerners "got ... free work to do" because "better people" were "ready with

[115] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, "Work of the Geological Survey Team from the Soviet Union – Contract No. 393" by the Minister of Industries, Krobo Edusei; PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/615, Vol. 4, Krobo Edusei to A. M. Bibochkin.

[116] Talton, *The Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 128.

[117] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13; PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, May 18, 1962, Secretary to the Regional Commissioner to F. E. Darko; PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, June 23, 1965 Darko to the Soviet Director.

[118] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13; PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, May 18, 1962, Secretary to the Regional Commissioner to F. E. Darko; PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, June 23, 1965 Darko to the Soviet Director.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

money to apply."[119] Anti-Northerner allegations would worsen over the years.

On September 24, 1964, Stephen Fianoo, a Northerner and an SGST employee, sought a pass to leave the SGST compound to transfer to Kintampo, another Northern town. The guard denied Fianoo's request and grabbed Fianoo's bicycle and keys. A physical altercation between the two ensued. The police intervened, sending both to court. The court fined Fianoo £G8 and the guard £G1. Fianoo paid the fine and transferred to Kintampo. A few days later, J. B. Baryen, the A. G. principal personnel officer, informed Fianoo that he had "been suspended because of the fine" he "paid." On October 10, Fianoo wrote a scathing letter to the minister of Industries protesting his suspension and highlighting discrimination against Northerners. Referencing an SGST executive officer Ossei Kusi's case, an Ashanti convicted of physically assaulting a subordinate, Fianoo furiously questioned why an individual fined £G8 could "not work in this Department," but an "Ex. Convict" could hold an "important" post in the "Department?" Fianoo continued, "It appears now that Ashantis are the only people given fair deal in this Department and I am therefore appealing to you for your kind consideration."[120] In another incident, the Northern regional secretariat claimed that an SGST executive officer "received a bribe from a driver and during the investigation" into the bribe "brutally assaulted (sic) the driver Adam Mahama," a Northerner. The Tamale Magistrate Court fined the executive £25. The Northern regional secretariat claimed that the executive was simply fined rather than dismissed because "he is an Ashanti." In contrast, the secretariat noted that Sandow, "a Northerner," who "was merely reported" for not carrying "out an alleged instructions (sic) has been earmarked for being redundant."[121]

At the SGST Damongo site, Mumuni, a lorry driver from the North, wrote a lengthy complaint entitled, "Corrupt Practices," to the heads of the SGST team, the regional commissioners, and the Ghanaian Trade Union Congress officers. Mumuni attributed his firing as retaliation for his protests against anti-Northern bias. Mumuni highlighted a larger pattern of anti-Northern discrimination and sentiments within this

[119] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/11, June 28, 1962, Abudulai Moshie to the Personal Officer, SGST Tamale, and Darko.

[120] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/15, October 10, 1964, Stephen Fianoo to the Minister of Industries.

[121] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, April 3, 1965, Northern Regional Secretariat to the Regional Commissioner.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

Ghana–Soviet space, lamenting that Northerners were dismissed for minor offenses while Southerners, committing more ostentatious offences, went unpunished. He argued that Darko, who "took the Department Boards and an expensive Wardrobe," which was "built for him by the Carpenters of the Department," faced no sanctions because "he is a Southerner." Furthermore, Mumuni bemoaned the case of a Southern carpenter who went unpunished after taking "away 25 lbs. of wire nails." Hasford informed Mumuni that he could take his complaints and "could go and see our Northerners (sic) Ministers," and that he had "a better superior officer than our Northern Ministers to see, and that nothing will happen to him."[122] Officers from the South played upon anti-Northern sentiments and boldly projected impunity vis-à-vis the Northern ministers.

In 1955, two years before Ghana's political independence from the UK, J. A. Braimah, "a minor chief" among a Northern ethnic group, the Dagomba, and a "member of the Legislative Assembly," proclaimed – "Down with Black Imperialism in the North," regarding Southern ministers working in the North. From these stories above, it appears that Northern pre-independence fears that Southern officers in the North represented "'Black Imperialism'" seemed to hold some currency, and a premonition perhaps.[123] Mumuni concluded his letter with an urgent appeal "for a thorough investigation into the affairs of the Soviet Geological Survey Team in Tamale as far as Staff are concerned, with a view of wiping out the favouritism, tribalism or discrimination."[124] Mumuni was not the only individual requesting a thorough investigation into the logic and practices of anti-Northern discrimination in the socialist de-colony. In April 1963, Charles C. Yorrah complained about anti-Northern discrimination to Egala and Nkrumah's office. Yorrah wrote:

> The Soviet Geological Survey Team now in Ghana with the Head Office in Tamale, should have been a sort of blessing to the Northern boys because it will help solve the unemployed to some extent in the North but for the personal hatred

[122] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/11, Mumuni to the Principal Personnel Officer, SGST Tamale; the Minister of the Ministry of Industries; the Director of the Geological Survey; the Regional Commissioner of the Northern Region; the Regional CPP Secretary; and the TUC Regional Productivity Officer.

[123] Talton, *The Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 128.

[124] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/11, Mumuni to the Principal Personnel Officer, SGST Tamale; The Minister of the Ministry of Industries; the Director of the Geological Survey; the Regional Commissioner of the Northern Region; the Regional CPP Secretary; and the TUC Regional Productivity Officer.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

he [M.A. Donkor] has for the Northerners, all key the posts in the Establishment are all occupied by persons of close relationship with him.

Yorrah continued: "The few Northerners that are in the Establishment; he is working all possible ways and means to get rid of them and to get people of the same origin with him." Further in the letter, Yorrah accused Donkor of simply transferring a Southerner who had "mishandle[ed]" a Soviet "interpreter." Yorrah also complained that Donkor's wife was listed as an executive officer, being paid a handsome salary, and had been given the contract to sew the "door," "window blinds, cushions, etc., for the new Russian bungalows." The writer wondered how, "With this Socialist country of Ghana it would be possible for her to discharge her duties as an Executive Officer and a Seamstress Contractor at the same time." Moreover, Yorrah noted that an accountant named Anderson tried to forcibly "have sexual intercourse with the telephonist," "a wife of a co-worker ... in the office during office hours," and suffered no serious repercussions. Donkor not only "sheltered" Anderson from disciplinary action but transferred the woman's husband "out of Tamale." Yorrah found it quite distressing and appalling that individuals with these "major offences" should still work for the SGST while Northerners with "lame and personal excuses" should be terminated.[125]

Widespread disillusionment among Northern Ghanaians about the Ghana–Soviet space was crystalizing. Northerners were initially buoyed by its economic potential but deeply frustrated by its stark limitations. Yorrah's account portrayed a Ghana–Soviet space where sexual assault and sexual violence transpired without punishment. The attack did not occur in the shadows but during broad-daylight at the office. The impunity with which the perpetrator acted underscored how corrosive this particular Ghana–Soviet space was or had become. Moreover, these letters highlighted the contradictions between Nkrumah's message and the present state of affairs at the SGST. An anonymous petitioner noted that while Nkrumah was "fighting hard" to "stop nepotism" in "our Socialist Ghana," the A. G. principal personnel officer was firing Northerners who worked diligently at their station. The anonymous petitioner maintained that the officer sat "in the main office doing thing" and "has no interest in any Northerner and in-fact, he has no pity on any human being," and dismissed them. The author begged the minister to assist the Northern Region's regional commissioner to fix this

[125] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/536, April 1963, Charles C. Yorrah to Imoru Egala.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

unfortunate situation.[126] Thus, a contradiction and schism appeared between state policy and local actions. Simultaneously, Nkrumah's policies had created a channel and state-sanctioned idioms for Northerners to vent their frustrations. Like other sophisticated actors, these individuals used the promise, hope, and language of Nkrumah's socialist vision to claim equal treatment in this Ghana–Soviet space. They applied global and universal ideas to their particular, local situations to garner expedited and favorable responses. Against the socialist vision state officials imagined and projected, the SGST site simultaneously recast and hardened the lines of ethnicity while providing a space for Northerners to deconstruct and construct the new state as one explicitly against ethnic chauvinism – a state where the indignities and humiliations of ethnic discrimination should be trapped and put into a bottle and deposed in the sea.

Unfortunately, rather than punish the perpetrators, these accounts suggest that those who complained about horrific acts faced retaliation. They were transferred or fired. Physical violence was not absent within the Ghana–Soviet space and Soviet personnel were not spared from it. An unnamed Soviet interpreter, who probably was a woman, was also manhandled. Soviet personnel were also part of the complaint ecosystem; they helped craft and initiate petitions to Ghanaian authorities. For instance, in a May 1, 1963, letter, Kojo Balantyne, an SGST fitter, acknowledged to Egala, that "The Soviet Engineer" had urged him to "write to the Ministry about" reversing his suspension and eventual sacking for driving without a license and crashing one of the SGST's jeeps with the aforementioned Soviet engineer onboard.[127] Fortunately for the SGST workers, the Ghanaian Trade Union Congress (TUC) took a keen interest in their affairs.

The TUC strongly backed some of the SGST employees' demand for the minister of Mines and Mineral Resources to set up a commission "into the termination of [Ghanaian] Soviet employees,"[128] leading to open hostility between the TUC and the SGST administration. The SGST accused the TUC of intentionally sabotaging its operations. The TUC countered that their only mission was to ensure that the most important component of Ghana's socialist project – the workers – were

[126] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/50/17.
[127] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/536, March 5, 1963, Transport Officer to Kojo Balantyne; PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/536, M. A. Donkor to Kojo Balantyne.
[128] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/50/17.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

treated fairly. TUC officials noted that they had "an important role in our (Ghana's) economic development" because they were "helping the workers" and that any investigation into worker mistreatment or discrimination "should not be taken that they were interfering with ... or sabotaging" SGST operations.[129] These letters and accusations prompted a series of meetings within the SGST leadership team. While investigating the "Reduction of Labour," the leadership team noticed that "eight out of the ten drivers declared redundant were Northerners." They were horrified that Northerners were being replaced with "Ashanti home boys" while Tamale faced acute unemployment issues. The Tamale district commissioner was so "shocked" by "this discrimination" that he was "eager to persue (sic) the issue when the time is due."[130] Eventually, the SGST leadership responded to the overwhelming amount of evidence of malpractice on its doorstep. Importantly, these accusations had struck at the heart of the state's modernizing vision to bring industry to the North and undermined its domestic and global projections of itself as a site of Black freedom and socialist modernity.

While many complaints were ignored, the sheer magnitude of discrimination claims provoked the state into action. Hasford was replaced.[131] Hasford's downfall was swift. He had only been appointed two years prior.[132] Furthermore, Imoru Egala, the minister of Industries, felt that only someone from the North could deal with the complex problems emanating in Tamale. Soon, a "Clerk to the local Gonja Traditional Council in Damongo" was hired to alleviate the ongoing tensions.[133]

SCRUTINIZING SOVIET QUALITY AND GOODS

While earlier Ghanaian newspaper reports celebrated the quality of Soviet technology and marked the Communist power as a symbol of non-Western modernity, Ghanaian technicians and officers had approached Soviet technology cautiously. Ghanaians who interacted with Soviet

[129] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, [1965?] Chairman of meeting, E. W. T. Akumiah.
[130] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, April 3, 1965, Northern Regional Secretariat to the Regional Commissioner.
[131] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, June 23, 1965, Darko to the Director of the Geological Survey Team; PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/15, July 7, 1964, E. P. O. Kwapo to the Principal Secretary of the Establishment Secretariat.
[132] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, April 27, 1962, K. K. Appeadu to A. Goloubkov.
[133] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/15, June 16, 1964, George F. Daniel to the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Industries.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

equipment became increasingly frustrated by their poor quality. From the onset of their relationship, Ghanaian officials had sought, "at length," official guarantees from the Soviets about the quality of their equipment and materials, pushing their Soviet counterparts to submit "a Guarantee of Quality for [Soviet] equipment and materials" and "certificate of Quality" with all goods sent to Ghana.[134] Despite these assurances, M. A. Donkor, the principal personnel officer of the Soviet Geological Survey Team, complained to Ghana's chief transport officer and the Soviet director about the substandard quality of Soviet vehicles imported into Ghana.[135] Donkor reported that Soviet vehicles which had only been in service for less than eight weeks constantly broke down and consumed too much fuel and worried that it would ultimately cause their "field operations" to "come to a standstill."[136] Donkor noted that six Soviet trucks "have broken down completely."[137] He urged the Ghanaian government to examine immediately the "condition of the Soviet vehicles sold to" the country "as soon as possible."[138] In a 1965 investigation, the committee overseeing the SGST team noted that they needed about £G9,000 in "spare parts to overhaul most of the organisation's vehicles," indicating that they failed in Ghanaian conditions.[139] Similarly, Appeadu, the principal secretary of Ghana's Ministry of Industries, complained that industrial projects from the Eastern Bloc in Ghana "have been falling down." He suspected "secondhand" goods were being "painted to look new." Appeadu bemoaned that both "vital parts [were] missing" and that service maintenance was "very poor."[140] Ghanaian drivers had suffered numerous accidents – no doubt in part caused by the unreliability of some of the vehicles.

[134] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/615, Vol. 4, May 22, 1962, Principal Secretary to Knsaniov and A. Goloubkov.
[135] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/11, June 10, 1962, M. A. Donkor to the Soviet Director; PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, June 25, 1962, Chief Transport Officer to the Secretary of the Regional Commissioner's Office.
[136] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/11, June 10, 1962, M. A. Donkor to the Soviet Director; PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, June 25, 1962, Chief Transport Officer to the Secretary of the Regional Commissioner's Office.
[137] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/11, June 10, 1962, M. A. Donkor to the Soviet Director; PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, June 25, 1962, Chief Transport Officer to the Secretary of the Regional Commissioner's Office.
[138] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, June 25, 1962, Chief Transport Officer to the Secretary of the Regional Commissioner's Office.
[139] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, Chairman E. W. T. Akumiah.
[140] TNA, DO 165/23, May 9, 1963, memorandum from S. J. Gross to Davies.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

Ghanaian suspicions that Soviet equipment was secondhand or subquality undercut an overarching framework of trust that had turned Ghana's leaders to the Soviets in the first place. The Ghanaian government had spurned numerous overtures of a West German firm to build a secondhand cotton and spun-rayon spinning and weaving mill in Ghana on the grounds that it did not want to "purchase" "second-hand equipment, only new" ones.[141] The Ghanaian state did not want to purchase secondhand machinery unless absolutely necessary. Ghanaians wanted and deserved the latest and newest gadgets. What was good for the Europeans in Europe was equally good for people in Ghana. This underlay Ghanaian officials' heightened sense of vigilance regarding the quality of goods and personnel entering its shores. Ghana's leaders' visions of Black independence did not include Ghana as a dumping ground of barely functioning goods, goods with a short shelf-life, or barely qualified foreign specialists. Ghanaians were seeking to achieve historian Abena Dove Asare-Osseo's "scientific" and technological "equity." Moreover, Ghanaians were interested in firms that were "interested in [the] technical, management, training of Ghanaians," and committed to discharging "substantial financial investment" into the nation.[142] Thus, the Ghanaians chose the Soviets not because they were socialist but because they proposed new equipment and to train Ghanaians. And, in this, the reports suggested that the Soviets were failing.

Other Soviet-sponsored projects in Ghana came in for severe criticism. A. W. Osei, a United Party parliamentarian from Ahafo, lamented that the "Russian"-run state farm at Adidome was "a failure" and insisted that if Ghana continued to let "Russians" operate these state farms, they would "waste our money for nothing." Conversely, Osei noted that the Ghanaian manned Nkwakubew state farm was "100 percent better than the Russian manned state farm at Adidome."[143] From as early as 1961, as historian Keri Lambert noted, Nkrumah's government had wanted Soviet assistance in mechanizing and modernizing Ghana's farms, particularly rubber farms in the Western Region. However, Ghanaian and Soviet officials and technicians clashed. What equipment the Soviets gave to

[141] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/90, December 8, 1960, E. B. O Anderson to the General Manager of the Ghana Industrial Development Corporation; PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/90, October 3, 1960, Messers. Württembergische Baumwollspinnerei and Weberei & Esslingen/Neckar to the Embassy of Ghana.

[142] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/90, December 30, 1960, E. A. Agbozo to the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

[143] October 28, 1963, A. W. Osei, *Ghana National Assembly Parliamentary Debates*.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

the Ghanaians, who thought it was a gift, came at a cost. Like their Geological counterparts, the Ministry of Agriculture lamented that the Soviets were "selling obsolete equipment – sometimes repainted to look new – for exorbitant prices, and then refusing to provide service or spare parts."[144] Ironically, the Israeli-managed state farms in Ghana did not receive the same criticisms.[145] While other parliamentarians criticized Osei's analysis as insufficiently grounded in reality,[146] his rebukes were simultaneously pro-Ghanaian and anti-Soviet. Osei's detractors noted that Osei's words conveniently overlooked other factors, such as the weather, that could have contributed to the alleged production failures.[147]

CONCLUSION

While many of Ghana's writers, politicians, and leaders had placed great expectations and expended tremendous political, literary, and financial capital into the success of Ghana–Soviet projects, they had always been wary of the Soviets' ability to deliver. They had always suspected that if the projects failed, the Soviets would blame them. In internal communications, Ghanaian experts and politicians planned to structure and divide labor between themselves and the Soviets in a clear manner that hindered the potential for the Soviets to blame the Ghanaians for any of their own failings. "It is realised that the Russians will be held solely responsible for the success of their own work," the director of the Ghana Geological Survey team wrote to the principal secretary of the Ministry of Industries on June 15, 1962: "Occasional visits will be paid to … discuss any Technical [sic] problems; but the actual on-the-spot – supervision may amount to interference. They [the Soviets] might not hesitate then to blame us [the Ghanaians] for their shortcomings."[148] The Ghanaians'

[144] Keri Lambert, "It's All Work and Happiness on the Farms': Agricultural Development between the Blocs in Nkrumah's Ghana," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (2019): 34.

[145] PRAAD-Accra, ADM 13/2/95, August 1962, "State Farms Corporation."

[146] October 28, 1963, J. D. Wireko, *Ghana National Assembly Parliamentary Debates*.

[147] For a more robust conversation and history of state farms in Ghana, see Sarah Kunkel, "Modernising the Village: State Farms, Agricultural Development, and Nation-building in 1960s Ghana," *Zeitschrift für Unternehmensgeschichte* , Vol. 67, No. 2 (2022): 219–244.

[148] PRAAD-Accra, RG 7/1/615, Vol. 4, June 15, 1962, the Director of the Ghana Geological Survey to the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Industries.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

premonition became a reality. As Ghana–Soviet projects came to a standstill toward 1965 and 1966, historian Iandolo notes that the Soviets insisted that Ghanaian "incompetence" lay behind the projects' inability to translate themselves from an idea to reality.[149] From the onset, however, the Ghanaians had anticipated this criticism. They had always been wary that the Soviets would shift the blame toward them.

Other African states had turned to the Ghana–Soviet SGST example as a warning about dealing with the Soviets. Historian Maxim Matusevich notes that in the early 1970s, Nigerians, frustrated by the Soviets' "slow progress" in building the Ajaokutu steel mill, noted that they had "to profit from the Ghanaian experience and subject Soviet experts to rigid control and supervision." The Nigerians remarked that it was "only after such measures had been taken ... did the Soviet survey of Ghana begin to produce results."[150] Furthermore, the Nigerians had concluded that collaborating with the Soviets meant economic and "political invoices." If one did not settle their "invoices" with the Soviets, Olujimi Jolaoso, a Nigerian diplomat noted, the Soviets would ensure that "spare parts and repairs" would be "difficult to secure."[151] Thus, the Ghanaian–Soviet space both foreshadowed future Africa–Soviet technoscientific relations and became emblematic of the Soviets' modus operandi with other African nations.

Toward the last year of Nkrumah's presidency, the two Ghana–Soviet projects under discussion faced bleak and uncertain futures. The SGST faced severe problems. Thirty-eighty percent of the executive officers and many others were made redundant.[152] Under the National Liberation Council, the new regime post-Nkrumah, the SGST's troubles were expedited. In July 1966, the SGST collapsed into the Geological Survey Department and transferred from Tamale to Saltpond in Southern Ghana, which was, ironically, the birthplace of Nkrumah's political party during the colonial days. The SGST ceased to be an autonomous entity and was submerged under Ghana's Geological Survey Department.[153] Within five years, the Soviet geologists had been repatriated.[154] The Ghanaian

[149] Iandolo, *Arrested Development*, 146–196.
[150] Matusevich, *No Easy Row for a Russian Hoe*, 194. [151] Ibid., 195.
[152] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/30/13, [1965?] Chairman of meeting, E. W. T. Akumiah.
[153] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/50/17, July 5, 1966, J. B. Baryen to All Heads of Government Departments, Corporations, Regional Administrative Officers, District Administrative Officers, and Firms.
[154] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/50/15, January 1, 1971, Nyamechel Gonja to The Officer-in-Charge of the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation Division in Tamale and the Regional Chief Executive of the Northern Region in Tamale.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

geologists who had complained earlier about two cooks operating in the same pot had gotten their way. As for the mill, as the chapter's introduction revealed, the Ghana–Soviet contract had been sidelined for a new deal with the American cotton-ginning company. The factory's American links signaled the new government's break from Ghana's socialist philosophy and relations with the Communist world.

From a material standpoint, the Ghana–Soviet space stopped existing. Phantom Nigerian–Soviet projects, historian Matusevich noted,

> stand as silent monuments to the failed ambitions of Nigerian rulers to exorcise by fire and steel the demons of the colonial past. They stand as a silent reminder of the lost grandeur of the Soviet empire, which, terminally ill as it was, tried to fitfully plant its peculiar concept of modernization in a remote African nation, tried and failed.[155]

It is easy to read these "ghost projects" as markers of failure, indications of Soviet or African incompetence or inability to realize the dreams they envisioned. Yet, Elizabeth Banks, Robyn d'Avignon, and Asif Siddiqi urge us to resist "the temptation to read the Africa-Soviet modern as a failure" but to "redirect our attention … to an aspirational world – a space of possibility – and through it, its material outcomes." They maintain that the incompleteness of "the African-Soviet Modern represent[s] a kind of theatre of unbounded aspiration where its principal actors – students, planners, scientists, activists, and diplomats – could play out their 'small' roles in a grand and iconoclastic desire for futurity."[156] In fact, it is these *small* figures – the town planners, lorry drivers, district commissioners, etc. – who were the engines or perhaps the drivers of the state's foreign policies and socialist agenda.

Development projects were contested at the local level. Moving between local and global scales unpacks how parochial issues, and not simply international geopolitical concerns, drove and shaped the success or failures of Cold War and postcolonial socialist projects. Top-level cabinet officials often remained absent in these complex webs of discussions, negotiations, and counteroffers. In fact, the Ghanaian cabinet was ever-changing. Ministries frequently had different leaders.[157] Government

[155] Matusevich, *No Easy Row for a Russian Hoe*, 189.
[156] Banks et al., "The Africa-Soviet Modern," 3.
[157] This was not because, as per Dennis Austin allegations, changes to the Ghanaian Ministers' portfolios were only due to a series of falling-outs with Nkrumah or different factions vying for or assuming power. This is a house of cards theory. See Dennis Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946–60* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004

ministries were also changed, added, deleted, or merged; cabinet officials had their portfolios chopped and changed almost yearly, so new leaders had to learn new roles afresh and quickly. It underscores, perhaps, why many projects were never finished. These changes reflected a new government coming to terms with the limits of its power, an acknowledgment of its evolving priorities, and how best to implement and streamline its programs better. It also meant that development projects were left to the figures on "the periphery," the technocrats, who became key interlocutors and cogs in thinking about, developing, and implementing the contours of the relationship and socialist dreams of the newly independent African state and the world's biggest communist power.[158]

Chapter 3 continues to unpack Ghana–Soviet and Ghana–socialist bloc spaces as sites of contested liberation. Whereas Chapter 1 examined Ghana–Soviet relations from a diplomatic vantage point and Chapter 2 unpacked Ghana–Soviet relations from a scientific-technical lens, Chapter 3 looks at the Ghana–Soviet, Ghana–Eastern bloc, and Ghana–global spaces through a cultural and social historical vantage point. Chapter 3 also looks at the concept of "racial citizenship," of how anti-Black racism in Ghana, Bulgaria, Romania, the United States, and the USSR helped redefine what it meant to be a Ghanaian and what it meant for a Black socialist state to think about the welfare of its subjects domestically and globally.

[158] PRAAD-Tamale, NRG 8/6/124, July 25, 1962, Electrical Engineer to the Chief of the Soviet Cotton Textile Mill Team.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 11 Nov 2026 at 20:27:06, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009601481.004