



## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:       THE EYES OF THE WORLD WERE  
WATCHING: GHANA, GREAT BRITAIN, AND  
THE UNITED STATES, 1957-1966

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This study explores the relationship that developed amongst Ghana, Great Britain, and the United States from Ghana's independence in 1957 to the coup d'état that ended the regime of Ghana's first post-colonial leader, Kwame Nkrumah in 1966. Ghana's position as the first self-governing nation in sub-Saharan Africa captured the attention of the world. Aspiring nationalists, colonial rulers, and Cold Warriors anticipated the impact of Ghana's experience on colonial Africa, and the global balance of power. For Ghana, the transition to independence brought tremendous possibility and complex challenges. While possessing the economic, political, and administrative resources for success, the management of those resources posed rigorous obstacles for Kwame Nkrumah. Nkrumah attempted to unify and strengthen Ghana, making it a leader in African affairs and the world community. For Great Britain, the transfer of power in Ghana began the dismantling of its African empire. The peaceful transition to self-government across British Africa depended upon the results of the Ghanaian experiment. Britain intended to prepare Ghana for success and stability by

providing training and governmental models before independence, and securing Ghana's introduction to Western society during its transition. To provide longer-term support for Ghana, Britain enlisted the assistance of the United States. This coincided with an increased US interest in Africa, especially Ghana, as the newest vulnerable front in the Cold War. The United States hoped that positive relations with Ghana would prevent a Soviet foothold in Africa. Despite a rhetoric of support for democracy and self-determination, the United States favored stability above all else in Ghana, even when this came at the price of decreasing freedoms for Ghanaians and the growing authoritarianism of Kwame Nkrumah. The relationship amongst the three nations continued to develop across the 1960s, bringing periods of prolonged mutual interest and success as well as intervals of heightened tension, culminating in the CIA-aided overthrow of Nkrumah's regime. By exploring the goals and strategies of each country, this narrative contributes to an understanding of the transition from colonial rule to independence; the international context of American foreign relations; and the impact of the Cold War in Africa.

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BRITAIN, AND THE UNITED STATES, 1957-1966

by

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## INTRODUCTION

This project seeks to fill a gap in the historiography of American foreign relations with Africa by focusing on the relationship among the newly independent nation, Ghana; its former colonial leader, Great Britain; and the United States, in the first period of Ghanaian independence, 1957-1966. It would be difficult to overstate the importance of Ghana, the first sub-Saharan African nation to gain independence, in the development of US policy toward Africa. Ghana's impending decolonization and subsequent independence resulted in the first National Intelligence Estimate for Africa, the first National Security Council paper on sub-Saharan Africa, and the first Bureau for African Affairs.<sup>1</sup> US policies created for Ghana became the backbone for policy across Africa as the "wind of change" swept the continent in the 1960s.<sup>2</sup> As existing literature suggests, strategic and economic concerns played a minor role for the United States in Africa, with ideas of international prestige and symbolic victories over

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<sup>1</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter *FRUS*), 1952-1954, Volume XI, pp. 71-89, "Conditions and Trends in Tropical Africa," 22 December 1953. *FRUS*, 1955-1957, Volume XVIII, pp. 75-87, "U.S. Policy toward Africa South of the Sahara Prior to Calendar Year 1960," 23 August 1957. President Eisenhower created the Bureau of African Affairs in 1958. Prior to that time any African policy fell under the rubric of the Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs.

<sup>2</sup> On 3 February 1960, in a speech to the South African parliament, British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan referred to the movement for independence as a "wind of change" blowing through Africa. The speech marked the first public sign that Britain recognized the end of Empire. See Ritchie Ovendale, "Macmillan And The Wind Of Change In Africa, 1957-1960." *Historical Journal* [Great Britain] 38:2 (1995): 445-477.



Communism taking precedence. In no country was this symbolism more important than Ghana, the key to preventing a Soviet foothold in Africa. Despite this unique position of Ghana, the development of its relationship with the United States remains virtually untouched by scholars.

This study attempts to remedy that situation by exploring the development of Ghana-United States relations, focusing on Ghana's first leader, Kwame Nkrumah, policymakers in Washington, DC, and their counterparts in Great Britain. While the story offers analysis of the policies of the Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, and demonstrates the role of Great Britain in facilitating US-Ghana interaction, events in Ghana guide the narrative. Although the United States planned to develop relations with Ghana, it was the government of Kwame Nkrumah, mentored in its early endeavors by British colonial officials, that encouraged and propelled US relations.

The story revolves around several themes: the efforts of the United States and Great Britain to resolve their different positions on decolonization in Africa; Ghana's attempt to solidify its independence through industrial development and a policy of nonalignment; and above all, the primacy of the Cold War over democracy or self-determination in US policy toward Ghana. Rather than a traditional study of US foreign policy, the work is structured as an international history, demonstrating the effects of decolonization on events and policies in three nations. It attempts to weave together Ghanaian political history, British imperial history and American foreign relations history to showcase that the "new

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diplomatic history" requires the melding of diverse fields and international research.<sup>3</sup>

On 6 March 1957, the Colony of the Gold Coast became Ghana, the first sub-Saharan African nation to gain independence, and the eyes of the world were watching. Colonies struggling toward independence hoped the new nation could provide a blueprint for their own success. Reigning colonial powers studied this first African decolonization with more trepidation, fearing a loss of control and stability as their empires collapsed. East and West monitored Ghana's independence as a new front in the Cold War. Where would Ghana stand?

Ghana emerged from colonial status, and joined the British Commonwealth with an above average prospect of economic viability, despite its heavy reliance on a one-crop (cocoa) economy. In 1957 this newly independent nation not only led the world in cocoa exports, but also produced nearly 10% of the world's gold.<sup>4</sup> Rich in diamonds, bauxite, manganese, and other minerals, Ghana additionally had plans for a massive development project on the Volta

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<sup>3</sup> In a 1997 lecture at the annual conference for the Society for the Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR), Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman summarized the call of diplomatic historians to internationalize the field, stating that the "new diplomatic history" examines U.S. foreign policies in both the domestic context of the United States and the world context. See Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, "Diplomatic History and the Meaning of Life: Towards a Global American History," *Diplomatic History*, Volume 21, No. 4 (Fall 1997). SHAFR President Michael Hogan reiterates and updates this argument in the organization's most recent newsletter, Michael Hogan, "Thoughts from SHAFR President Michael Hogan," *Passport: Newsletter of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations*, Volume 34, No. 2 (August 2003): 4.

<sup>4</sup> Sanford J. Unger, *Africa: The People and Politics of An Emerging Continent* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978) p. 380.

River that would bring growth through industrialization. Politically and administratively, Ghana was also in good standing, having worked in tandem with British colonial administrators to create a stable parliamentary government and establish an African-British integrated and well-trained civil service. Ghana's leader Kwame Nkrumah, had assumed a position similar to that of Prime Minister two years prior to independence, giving him de facto control of the Gold Coast government. According to the US representative on the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations, the Gold Coast was, "so much in charge of its own affairs that the British Governor is placed in the embarrassing position of having responsibility without authority."<sup>5</sup> Despite this auspicious start, the government of Ghana descended into authoritarian rule, struggled under the weight of the Cold War, and collapsed, felled by a coup d'état, less than eight years after independence.

During its first eight years Ghana struggled to find its place in the world. As Kwame Nkrumah worked to establish his position as a leader, not just of Ghana, but of all Africa, he strove to establish active relationships with the world's major powers through a policy of nonalignment. Nkrumah hoped that in courting the economic support of the West, and the ideological backing of the East, he could steer a path between the blocs of the world, keep the Cold War out of Africa, and lead the continent, united, to a position of strength in the world community. At the same time, Great Britain began to disassemble its empire in Africa. In introducing the United States, Britain provided Ghana access to a

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financially secure world power, and a face of the West untarnished by colonialism. It provided the United States, unprepared in personnel and policy, with advice and guidance in securing positive relations with this first African power. This allowed Britain to maintain good relations with Ghana, and demonstrate to its remaining African colonies its good intentions and success at decolonization. For the United States, Ghana represented the threat of the Cold War in Africa. As the harbinger of independence in this undeclared corner of the world, Ghana's decision to side with the East or the West would decide the world balance of power as the rest of Africa followed its lead. The United States not only laid the Cold War at Ghana's doorstep, but pushed for the centrality of Cold War concerns in every step of their continued relationship. Even to the extent of supporting authoritarian rule as a means of thwarting communism, trading economic aid for the semblance of democracy, and subverting the ruling government in Ghana, the fight against encroaching communism wholly guided US policy in the first free nation of sub-Saharan Africa.

In a 1984 article, historian Thomas Noer refers to US relations with black Africa as "the invisible chapter in any book." Suggesting that diplomatic historians have relegated "United States - Africa relations to a position subservient to every continent except Antarctica," Noer laments the dearth of research in the field.<sup>6</sup> Twenty years later, these comments still accurately describe

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<sup>5</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Volume XVIII, p. 36, "Memorandum from the Representative at the Trusteeship Council (Sears) to the Secretary of State," 15 February 1956.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Noer, "'Non-Benign Neglect': The United States and Black Africa in the Twentieth Century," in *American Foreign Relations, A Historiographical Review*

the lack of attention paid to Africa in surveys of US foreign relations. A 1995 historiographical overview of the field offers no contribution on US-Africa relations.<sup>7</sup> In 1999, a collection of essays representing a century of US foreign relations is similarly silent on Africa, despite the editor having compiled the collection from *Diplomatic History*, the journal of record for historians of American foreign relations.<sup>8</sup> Since Noer's comments, a number of monographs have appeared on United States-Africa relations with the majority focused on southern Africa, particularly South Africa, and the Congo.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, most concentrate on the period after 1960, when scholars traditionally accepted that US relations with Africa began.<sup>10</sup> A notable exception by Ebere Nwaubani,

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Gerald K. Haines and J. Samuel Walker, eds. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984.)

<sup>7</sup> Michael J. Hogan, Ed. *America in the World: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations since 1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.)

<sup>8</sup> Michael J. Hogan, Ed. *The Ambitious Legacy: U.S. Foreign Relations in the "American Century."* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.)

<sup>9</sup> Prior to Noer's 1984 article, the majority of sources on US-Africa relations appeared during the relatively new period of US-Africa relations. These include Vernon McKay, *Africa in World Politics* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963); Rupert Emerson, *Africa and United States Policy* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967); and Waldemar Nielsen, *The Great Powers and Africa* (New York: Praeger, 1969).

<sup>10</sup> Some of the more recent books on US-Africa relations include Thomas Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle: The United States and Southern Africa in the Early Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). Andy DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome: The United States and Zimbabwe, 1953-1998* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 2001). David Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention: Mines, Money and U.S. Policy in the Congo Crisis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). Princeton N. Lyman, *Partner to*

published in 2001, concentrates on the policy of a single US president, Dwight D. Eisenhower, in the specific region of West Africa.<sup>11</sup> Offering an overview of decolonization in West Africa, Nwaubani uses Ghana and Guinea as case studies of American policy. He concludes that although "anti-Sovietism" was an important aspect of US policy, it was not the prime component. Instead he argues that the Eisenhower Administration interacted directly with Africa only when absolutely necessary, preferring to safeguard Europe's interests in Africa with the expectation that Europe would assume responsibility for its former colonies and ensure stability in the region. Eisenhower, he concludes, did not support self-determination, but facilitated a transition from decolonization directly to European neocolonialism.

While Nwaubani's conclusions involve theories of decolonization, he fails to explore the actual event of Ghana's decolonization and transition to

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*History: The U.S. Role in South Africa's Transition to Democracy* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2002). George Wright, *The Destruction of a Nation: United States' Policy Toward Angola since 1945* (London: Pluto Press, 1997). Anthologies on the foreign policies of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, also provide recent contributions to the field. See especially Thomas Noer, "New Frontiers and Old Priorities in Africa," in *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-63*, Thomas G. Paterson, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 253-283. Gerald E. Thomas, "The Black Revolt: The United States and Africa in the 1960s," in *The Diplomacy of the Crucial Decade: American Foreign Relations During the 1960s*, Diane B. Kunz, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 320-360.

<sup>11</sup> Ebere Nwaubani, *The United States and Decolonization in West Africa, 1950-1960* (Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 2001). Also noteworthy is Richard D. Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983). Mahoney concentrates heavily on Kennedy in the Congo, offering additional contributions on actions in Angola and Ghana.

independence as a crucial factor for understanding US relations in West Africa. William Roger Louis and Ronald Robinson attest to the importance of US involvement in African independence as a key subject in Africanist discussions of history of decolonization.<sup>12</sup> Louis further notes the themes of American anti-colonialism and the Anglo-American 'special relationship' in the discourse of British imperial history.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, studies of US relations in Africa must broaden their context to include the emergence of the newly African country from the former metropole. In most cases, separation was not instantaneous, creating a period of fluidity during which US influence could be gradually introduced. Cary Fraser addresses the issue of decolonization and US foreign relations in his study of West Indies from 1940-1964. Describing the transition from national movements in the British colonies, to the British withdrawal, and the assertion of American influence, Fraser's work serves as model that, while prescient, has yet to be replicated in studies of the United States in Africa.<sup>14</sup>

In the inaugural issue of *Ghana Studies*, prominent Ghana historian, Richard Rathbone, discusses the British Documents on the End of Empire Project (BDEEP) and praises the series for carefully cataloguing the transfer of British

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<sup>12</sup> William Roger Louis and Ronald Robinson, "The United States and the Liquidation of British Empire in Tropical Africa, 1941-51," in *The Transfer of Power in Africa: Decolonization, 1940-1960*, Prosser Gifford and William Roger Louis, eds. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982): 31-55.

<sup>13</sup> William Roger Louis, "American Anti-Colonialism and the Dissolution of the British Empire," *International Affairs* [Great Britain] 61:3 (1985): 395-420.

<sup>14</sup> Cary Fraser, *Ambivalent Anti-Colonialism: The United States and the Genesis of West Indian Independence, 1940-1964* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994).

colonial power in Africa, particularly in Ghana.<sup>15</sup> This documentation, while of unparalleled value, is necessarily bilateral and ends in 1957, as Ghana declared independence. Autobiographies and monographs on the life of Kwame Nkrumah are also abundant, as are studies of Ghana's more recent socio-economic and political climate.<sup>16</sup> While Ghana's colonial history has thus been keenly explored and Ghana's current affairs are the subject of considerable research, the record of Ghana's initial period of independence is not well represented.<sup>17</sup> This is not to overlook the considerable contribution of Scott Thompson's book on Ghana's foreign relations. Published in 1969, the work covers all aspects of Ghanaian foreign policy for the period 1957-1966, but devotes only short sections to American-Ghanaian relations, and without the benefit of recently declassified documents.<sup>18</sup> In 1984 Thomas Noer published an article analyzing Kennedy's understanding of neutralism through a discussion of US aid for Ghana's Volta River Dam Project. Arguing that Kennedy's use of aid conformed to the

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<sup>15</sup> Richard Rathbone, "Transferring Power in Ghana: Some Thoughts on What Archives Might Be Telling Us," *Ghana Studies*, Volume 1 (1998): 125-35.

<sup>16</sup> For Kwame Nkrumah see, Kwame Nkrumah, *Autobiography* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1957); Kwame Achin, ed., *The Life and Work of Kwame Nkrumah* (Accra: Sedco Publishing Ltd., 1991); and Marika Sherwood, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Years Abroad, 1935-1947* (Legon, Ghana: Freedom Publications, 1996). For Ghana's more recent development see, Martin Kwamina Panford, *IMF-World Bank and Labor's Burdens in Africa: Ghana's Experience* (Westport, CT., Praeger, 2001); Jeffrey Herbst, *The Politics of Reform in Ghana, 1982-1991* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>17</sup> For Ghana's late colonial period see Richard Rathbone, *Murder and Politics in Colonial Ghana* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

<sup>18</sup> Scott W. Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy, 1957-66: Diplomacy, Ideology and the New State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969).



traditional pattern of demanding deference to the West, Noer offers the most recent contribution to the history of US policy toward Ghana in the 1960s.<sup>19</sup>

My study is the first to explore the development of US relations with Ghana, from its transfer of power through Great Britain, to its rocky attempts to solidify independence and establish its identity, to the end of Ghana's first government, an overthrow aided, if not engineered, by the United States. Based in part upon records of the State Department located at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., my work in the United States also incorporates records at the Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson presidential libraries. Answering the call of leading diplomatic historians to internationalize research, I have also explored Anglo-American relations and Anglo-Ghanaian relations at the Public Records Office in London. This allowed me access to the correspondence of the British Foreign Office with the Department of State, some of which remains sealed in the United States, despite the standard thirty-year rule for the declassification of documents.

While British and American sources provided an introduction to the tripartite relationship of my study, these documents necessarily present the history of Ghana from an outside perspective. Resources at the Public Records and Archives Administration in Accra, Ghana helped me to understand Ghana's history through its own records, revealing Ghana's agency in structuring independence. Research in Ghana proved the most challenging aspect of my

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<sup>19</sup> Thomas J. Noer, "The New Frontier and African Neutralism: Kennedy, Nkrumah and the Volta River Project," *Diplomatic History* 8 (Winter 1984): 61-

work, necessitating the most patience and creativity. It is also, unfortunately, the most incomplete segment of my research. Subsequent to the rule of Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana underwent a series of political and military coups. Each regime, seeking to surmount the authority of its predecessor, destroyed government files, often preventing a detailed reconstruction of governmental goals and strategies. As Ghana has not yet fully accepted attempts to rehabilitate Nkrumah's reputation, those families that hold the personal papers of Nkrumah's Cabinet members are largely unwilling to open these files for research, further limiting the accessibility of Ghana's early history.

As is true for Nwaubani's study of Eisenhower in West Africa, my work presents policy formation as the domain of bureaucrats. While nongovernmental agents and citizen lobbying groups increasingly participated in the discussion of US policy toward Africa during the period of this study, I have not found evidence that these groups impacted policy formation related to Ghana. Recent books by Brenda Gayle Plummer, Michael Krenn, and Mary Dudziak augment Thomas Noer's earlier work on the influence of the American civil rights movement on US policy formation in Africa.<sup>20</sup> Plummer, in particular, argues that

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<sup>20</sup> Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and US Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). Michael L. Krenn, *Black Diplomacy: African Americans and the State Department, 1945-1969* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1999). Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000). Thomas Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985).

pursuing the involvement of African Americans in international affairs affords a fresh perspective for historians of American foreign policy.<sup>21</sup> While persuasive arguments can be made for the effective engagement of African Americans in discussions on South Africa, Rhodesia, and Angola, US policy in Ghana did not engender significant debate outside the circle of policymakers in Washington.

Finally, this study is a narrative of US-Ghanaian relationship in its earliest stages of development, woven together with themes of decolonization, democracy, and Cold War ideology. It is an attempt to marshal the most recently declassified source materials for a multi-national contribution to what remains the least studied area of US foreign relations. My work seeks to contribute to the newest efforts at bridge-building in the academic community. In combining African, diplomatic, and imperial history I hope to be among the group of scholars who reinvigorates each field with interdisciplinary research. Nowhere could this be more important than in diplomatic history, as the discipline continues to redefine itself.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Plummer, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> In recent years diplomatic historians have hotly debated the orientation of their historical field. Some have suggested that international and interdisciplinary research responds to criticism of the discipline as outdated and ethnocentric, and enhances the field. Others have maintained that these studies are not true to the definition of diplomatic history, and more properly contribute to other fields, such as social and cultural history. Still others argue that diplomatic history, once an independent field, must now be subsumed into a larger discipline of foreign relations or international history. For an enlightening discussion of these positions and examples of the highly charged level of debate, see the "State of the Field" thread, October 1997 Discussion Log, H-DIPLO Discussion List, H-NET List-Serve, <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo>, and Hogan, "Thoughts from SHAFR President Michael Hogan," p. 4.

## CHAPTER 1

### GHANA, GREAT BRITAIN, AND THE UNITED STATES: DECOLONIZATION, DEBATES, AND THE COLD WAR, 1950- 1956

In 1950, after more than one hundred years of colonial rule in West Africa, Great Britain began the decolonization of Ghana. Although independence would not become a reality until 1957, the six intervening years presented challenges for Great Britain, Ghana, and the United States. Great Britain worked to leave Ghana with a stable government that would allow the new nation to operate independently yet maintain positive relations with the Commonwealth. Ghana endeavored to direct its independence, shaping policies, rather than simply receiving sovereignty from British hands. The United States struggled to respond positively to Ghana's goals for independence while maintaining strong ties with Great Britain and other European colonial rulers. At the same time each nation recognized the potential for Soviet interest in Ghana and the beginnings of the Cold War in Africa.

#### Approaching Decolonization

At the time Britain colonized the West African region of the Gold Coast in 1844, the British Empire extended to all parts of the globe.<sup>1</sup> By its peak in the

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<sup>1</sup> The West African nation known today as Ghana, was known as the Gold Coast from the late fifteenth-century until its independence in 1957. From 1950 to 1956 the name "Gold Coast" is used almost exclusively by Great Britain, while the United States used "Ghana" and "Gold Coast" interchangeably.

early twentieth century the Empire encompassed over twenty-five percent of the world's population and included land in North America, the West Indies, India, Africa, Asia, Australia and Antarctica. It is estimated to have covered more than 1/6 the landmass of the earth. By the end of World War II, however, the hey-day of colonialism was coming to an end. In addition to scrutiny from the United Nations, and the United States, its WWII ally, Britain also faced serious challenges from the colonies it occupied. Anti-colonial campaigns in India that had started in the 1920s finally resulted in the creation of India and Pakistan in 1947-48. By 1949 Ceylon and Burma also had achieved freedom. Anti-imperial protests increased rapidly in Sudan and Malaya in the early 1950s, and a violent challenge to British colonial rule in Africa occurred in the bloody Kenyan Mau-mau of 1951. The Gold Coast began organized agitation for its own freedom in 1947 and the British government decided in 1950 to begin plans for the eventual independence of the colony<sup>2</sup>.

At the forefront of the Gold Coast nationalist movement was Kwame Nkrumah. The son of a goldsmith, Nkrumah had been educated at local mission schools and earned his teaching credentials. After teaching in the mission system

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<sup>2</sup> For an overview of Britain and decolonization, see John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonization: The Retreat from Empire in the Postwar World* (London: MacMillan, 1988). For a thorough discussion of the nationalist movement and Ghana's push for independence, see F.M. Bourret, *Ghana: The Road to Independence, 1919-1957* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1960); and Austin, *Politics in Ghana 1946-1960* (London: Royal Institute of African Affairs, 1964). For the documentary record of Ghana's decolonization, see Richard Rathbone, ed., *British Documents on the End of Empire: Ghana*, 2 volumes (London: HMSO, 1992).

from 1930-1932, he pursued higher education in the United States at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. At Lincoln, Nkrumah achieved a bachelor's degree in economics and sociology. He continued his studies at the Lincoln seminary, where he earned a degree in theology, before heading to the University of Pennsylvania. After acquiring a master's in Philosophy in 1943, Nkrumah abandoned his pursuit of a doctorate and instead traveled to London, where he pursued courses at the London School of Economics. Nkrumah had been greatly influenced by his studies of American independence and revolution, and was further politicized in London through his association with George Padmore, the West-Indian champion of anti-colonialism. While in London, Nkrumah founded the West African National Secretariat, and served as the Joint Secretary for the 1945 Fifth Pan-African Congress.<sup>3</sup>

Following this twelve-year absence from his homeland, Nkrumah returned to the Gold Coast in 1947, and quickly established himself as the leader of Ghanaian nationalism and the push for independence. In August 1947 he became the general Secretary of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), and in this capacity endorsed the series of riots by students and former soldiers that plagued Accra throughout 1948. Great Britain responded to the unrest with the creation of the Watson Committee, charged with investigating the causes of and

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<sup>3</sup> More detailed bibliographical information for Kwame Nkrumah can be found in Basil Davidson's *Black Star: A View of the Life and Times of Kwame Nkrumah* (London: Allen Lane, 1973); or Kwame Nkrumah, *Autobiography*. For a detailed analysis of Nkrumah's education at Lincoln, and its impact on his leadership in Ghana see Lalbila Yoda, "The Influence of the USA on the Political Ideas of Kwame Nkrumah." *Round Table* [Great Britain] 326 (1993): 187-198.

recommending responses to the unrest in the colony. Dissatisfied with the British response, Nkrumah also found the UGCC to lack sufficient motivation to pursue freedom with the speed and force he advocated. He founded the Convention People's Party (CPP) in 1949 to push toward his goal of immediate independence. In January 1950 the CPP spearheaded a series of general strikes that successfully paralyzed much of the colony. When the British government declared a state of emergency, Nkrumah was immediately arrested and imprisoned. His arrest greatly enhanced his political prestige, and the ranks of the CPP swelled. During Nkrumah's thirteen months in jail, he continued to organize the political activities of the CPP. His memos and directives, written on scraps of toilet paper and smuggled out of the prison, guided the actions of his friend and confidante Komla Gbedemah, who managed the CPP in Nkrumah's absence. At the same time, the Watson Committee concluded its investigations, recommending that Her Majesty's Government (HMG) draft plans for the prompt independence of the Gold Coast colony. Great Britain scheduled the colony's first general election, and Gbedemah mounted a legal challenge to have Nkrumah listed on the ballot *in absentia*. Gbedemah won the court battle, and in December 1950, Nkrumah won the election with a staggering majority. HMG, finding no viable alternative, released Nkrumah in January 1951. He emerged from prison a national leader with a stronger following than before his incarceration. In March 1952 British authorities elevated Kwame Nkrumah to the status of Gold Coast Prime Minister.

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At the same time that Great Britain found itself struggling to accept the end of its colonial empire, the Gold Coast prepared for independence, and the United States worked to reinforce its post-WWII role as leader of the non-communist world. While historians debate the beginning dates of the Cold War, there is no argument that by 1955 the battle of competing economic systems and ideologies held the center stage of world politics.<sup>4</sup> In 1952, then candidate for the U.S. presidency, General Dwight D. Eisenhower campaigned on the promise of a "new look" for American foreign policy. Elected in a landslide with a majority of popular and electoral votes, Eisenhower worked with his Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, to strengthen the worldwide commitment to freedom and democracy. Grounded in the Cold War rubric, Eisenhower-Dulles policy sought to deny any new ground to the Communist Bloc.<sup>5</sup>

Historical scholarship on Eisenhower foreign policy focuses on its entrenchment in cold war battles in Europe. Stephen Ambrose, Robert Divine, Robert Ferrell, and others discuss US support for European allies and their campaigns to deny the USSR any footholds on the continent.<sup>6</sup> To this point, little

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<sup>4</sup> The standard monograph on the origins of the cold war is the aptly titled work by John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972).

<sup>5</sup> For a detailed discussion of the Eisenhower-Dulles "New Look" strategy see John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp.127-163.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower: The President* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1984); Robert A. Divine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *The Eisenhower Diaries* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981).



mention has been made of the Administration's realization of the importance of the emergence of Africa.<sup>7</sup> As the decolonization of Africa became imminent, however, along with the realization that U.S. allies, such as Great Britain, stood to lose their influence in these areas, Africa appeared as the newest vulnerable power vacuum where the United States feared Soviet penetration. In this way, the late 1950s can be viewed as a crucial convergence of fears, goals, and strategies in the United States, Great Britain and sub-Saharan Africa.

### US Interest in Africa in the 1950s

Historians often point to the lack of official Africa staff, or official Africa policy, to illustrate the Eisenhower Administration's lack of interest in the continent. It is true that in the early 1950s no US policy for Africa existed. Instead, officials interested in Africa relied upon the catchall policy statements found in the 1952 National Security Council resolution 135/3 (NSC 135/3), "Reappraisal of U.S. Policy. " From this document, they extrapolated such snippets as the US resolve to "promote internal stability in areas outside Soviet orbit...reduce communist and neutralist tendencies...[and] combat anti-American propaganda," to become the beginnings of US policy on the continent.<sup>8</sup> Anything

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<sup>7</sup> A notable exception is an article by Robert McMahon, "Eisenhower and Third World Nationalism: A Critique of the Revisionists," *Political Science Quarterly* 101:3 (1986): 453-473.

<sup>8</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, Kansas (hereafter referred to as DDEL), White House Office Files (hereafter referred to as WHO), National Security Council Staff Papers (hereafter referred to as NSC), Special Staff File Series (hereafter referred to as Special Staff), Box 1, Africa South of Sahara (3), NSC 135/3, "Reappraisal of U.S. Policy," attached to "Some Basic U.S. Interests in Africa," 22 March 1954.

more specific would have come from Department of State country papers, of which there were none. Even the Advisory Committee on Under-developed Areas stated that each agency dealing with Africa operated "on its own assumptions as to the purpose of U.S. activities...and the principles to be followed in that activity."<sup>9</sup> No specific policy meant no coordinated efforts.

It also was true that affairs in Africa were not on par with those of Europe, or any other world region, in terms of staffing at the Department of State. In 1954, the United States had an "Office" but not a "Bureau" of African affairs. This office came under the Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs, with a desk officer and a staff member assigned to each of the three regions of Africa: North, South, and East-West-Central. This lack of policy and lack of staff does not mean, however, that there was no interest in African developments.

The 1953 files of the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) suggest that the US policymakers were quite aware of Africa, the power vacuum that could come to exist there, and the need for the United States and not the USSR to fill that vacuum. More specifically, the United States identified the British colony of the Gold Coast, as the first place a power vacuum would become a major policy problem, further noting the colony's importance for the whole of Africa. In

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<sup>9</sup> DDEL, WHO, NSC, Psychological Strategy Board, Central Files Series (hereafter referred to as PSB), Box 85, Folder: 092.3, "An Exploratory Study to Identify the Problems Incident to Africa South of the Sahara, to Define the Interest of the United States Therein and to Establish a Requirement for a Psychological Strategy Plan Thereafter, 13 April 1953, p.33.

September 1953, the PSB circulated a list of the members of the Gold Coast government who would be arriving in Canada for discussions of the Volta River project, a massive-scale development project that the Gold Coast and Great Britain regarded as crucial for successful Gold Coast independence. The PSB report referred to recent *US News and World Report* article about Africa as the next step for communism. "Knowing that Dr. Nkrumah, the Prime Minister, and several of his immediate party were, at least, tinged with communism in the past and perhaps have some of that tinge remaining... it may be a good move to invite one or more of the party to the U.S. for a short tour, at least of our Eastern Coast."<sup>10</sup> Administration officials agreed, and in so doing, effectively pre-positioned the United States to meet with the probable future leaders of an independent Ghana. Far from being unaware of Africa, the PSB report concluded with the suggestion that the State Department produce, "a more straightforward statement on the actual U.S. policy vacuum that exists" in Africa.<sup>11</sup>

By 1954 the Joint Chiefs of Staff echoed the PSB belief that a Soviet presence must not be allowed to encroach upon African soil. According to the JCS, communist presence in sub-Saharan Africa was not currently strong. The report continued, however, "the rising fight by native groups against

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<sup>10</sup> DDEL, WHO, NSC, PSB, Box 14, Folder: PSB 091.4 Africa, Enyart to Acting Director, 1 Sept 1953. Nkrumah was sometimes referred to as "Dr. Nkrumah," as he had received an honorary doctorate in 1951 from his alma mater, Lincoln University, in Pennsylvania.

<sup>11</sup> DDEL, WHO, NSC, PSB, Box 14, Folder PSB 091.4 Africa, Reckord to Enyart, 20 April 1953.

colonialism... is rapidly increasing the vulnerability of the entire region to the same communist pressures which brought the downfall of China...."<sup>12</sup> According to the Joint Chiefs, the power vacuum in Africa would be created by the end of colonialism, and by the desire of the former colonies to cut all ties to their former colonial rulers. In this scenario, new nations in Africa were unlikely to seek positive relations with the United States, if it were seen as a supporter of the colonial powers. This fear of delivering Africa to the Soviets in the hands of colonialism became more pronounced with the approach of the Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Conference, to be held in Bandung, Indonesia. Attended by twenty-nine nations and a handful of representatives from African colonies hoping to become independent, Bandung was, in the eyes US officials, the forum the Soviets and Chinese Communists most likely would use to draw so-called "temporarily neutral" nations into their sphere of influence. To do so, the Chinese Communists, at the direction of the Russians, would highlight the struggles against colonialism that they shared with the conference attendees. They would necessarily move next to highlight close ties between the colonizers and the United States, making colonialism the West's Achilles' heel.<sup>13</sup> When the conference convened in 1955, US officials learned that the Soviet Union was

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<sup>12</sup> DDEL, WHO, NSC, Special Staff, Box 1, Folder: Africa South of Sahara (3), "Africa: Major U.S. Military Interests," 19 March 1954, attached to Smith memo, "State Papers on Africa," 13 March 1956.

<sup>13</sup> DDEL, WHO, NSC, Operations Coordinating Board Central File Series (hereafter OCB), Box 85, Folder: OCB 092.3 (9), Memo for the Executive Officer, 21 January 1955.

actively lobbying Bandung participants for an invitation to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Afro-Asian conference to be held in Cairo the following year. This would mean an open door for the USSR in Africa. Foreign service posts in nations participating at Bandung were alerted to keep their ears open for any discussion that seemed hostile toward the United States. US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles even composed an official US greeting to conference participants, convinced that even this brief show of support could have immensely positive propaganda value.<sup>14</sup>

To note US interest in Bandung is not to suggest, however, that the United States was always pleased to have to deal with the emergence of Africa, and strategize how to win over African nations to the West. In fact, members of the Eisenhower Administration sometimes regarded being on the side of the nationalists and independence movements as more distasteful than they wished to admit publicly. At an April 1955 NSC meeting where Bandung was the topic of discussion, President Eisenhower facetiously suggested that perhaps the best way to get the Bandung delegates on the US side was give each "a few thousand US dollars." He added that he would even approve of "any methods up to but not including the assassination of the hostile delegates." Vice President, Richard M. Nixon went even further, expressing the opinion, not so facetiously, that the United States would do better to "ensure the failure of the Congerence [*sic*] rather than to try to get the 'ill-assorted' group of nations to side with the West." This

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<sup>14</sup> DDEL, WHO, NSC, OCB, Box 85, Folder: OCB 92.3, State to OCB, 28 March 1955.

perhaps was a foreshadowing of Nixon's later tendencies to "arrange" the failures of his opponents.

Some of the frustration expressed by US officials on the issue of Africa had to do with feelings that their hands were tied in how they could hope to influence the continent. In 1954, the National Security Council laid out the United States' three major interests in Africa as: strategic military positioning; raw materials; and a stabilizing colonial presence in the area. Since colonial rule persisted in the areas in Africa that most interested the United States, America would have to be satisfied with supporting the colonial powers and entrusting them with the responsibility of "stability, progress and adherence of Africa to the free world."<sup>15</sup> This frustration extended not only into the area of policy development for Africa, but also into the issue of positive economic development, which would tend to draw Africa towards the West. According to the Department of Defense, development programs in colonial African nations "follow the narrow designs of the reigning metropole - do not allow for foreign investment and are "paternalistic" rather than designed to develop industry or expand, even slowly expand, markets."<sup>16</sup> US interest in Africa and the prospects of developing an independent policy toward Africa seemed continually thwarted by the colonial system.

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<sup>15</sup> DDEL, WHO, NSC, Special Staff, Box 1, Folder: Africa South of Sahara (3), Koons to Cutler, 15 March 1954.

<sup>16</sup> DDEL, WHO, NSC, Special Staff, Box 1, Folder: Africa South of Sahara (3), "Some Basic U.S. Interests in Africa," 22 March 1954.

## "U.S. - For Or Against 'Colonialism'?"<sup>17</sup>

The United States found itself in a quandary when faced with the question of support for colonialism and/or the colonial powers. On one hand the U.S. proffered full support for the colonial powers, its European allies, and firmly believed that the maintenance of these alliances was the key to success in the Cold War. US support of Europe was crucial in the battle with the Russians, owing to Europe's close proximity to the USSR. Essentially, Europe served as the first physical line of defense in the Cold War. At the same time, the United States wished to offer support to those colonies in Africa who sought independence. US leaders believed that the inevitable collapse of colonialism would create a power vacuum in Africa. Fledgling nations vulnerable to the influence of communism could quickly and easily be drawn into the Soviet orbit, upsetting the world balance of power. This slide toward the East could be prevented only if the United States, with its own history of overthrowing colonial rule, offered support and guidance to the African nations. How could the United States support both colonizer and colonized? Given the delicate balance of power, how could it afford not to support each?

The United States became acutely aware of this contradiction, as it sought to define its interests in sub-Saharan Africa. In 1953 the Psychological Strategy Board began to explore conflicts in Africa south of the Sahara in the hopes of

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<sup>17</sup> This title is taken from a pamphlet and questionnaire by the Foreign Policy Association, New York, "U.S. - For or Against 'Colonialism'?" DDEL, WHO, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (hereafter SANSA), NSC Series, Subject Subseries, Box 6, Folder: Nuclear Testing (4), 1957.

recommending a uniform US policy for the region. According to the PSB study, conflicts in Africa followed no uniform pattern except that they emerged primarily as a result of antagonisms between the emergent nationalist movements and the metropolises. The PSB stated the resulting policy dilemma succinctly, "In order to maintain stability in the short term, we must support the existing power, that of the metropole.... Successful as it is in the short run, our support of the metropole will compromise our long term objective [stability]." The PSB then formed the Africa Working Group specifically to address this dilemma, and to offer recommendations towards its resolution. The working group suggested a propaganda campaign aimed at toning down the rhetoric on both sides of colonialism debate. In finding a way to "de-emotionalize" the issue for both sides, the United States could promote stability. This plan included the idea that, for the colonized peoples, "exploitation" had been drastically overstated. Certainly colonialism had benefited the standard of living for many Africans. As for the metropolises, colonial personnel had endured poor living conditions, disease, and violence. The maintenance of colonies had become almost prohibitively expensive, while engendering the disdain of the international community. Colonialism had been a mixed blessing, and certainly not worth maintaining at all costs. Overall the campaign sought to achieve the balanced view that each side had derived some benefits and endured some suffering from the colonial system.



Its stated goal was for the United States to "explore avenues of retreat from non-cooperation" for both metropolises and nationalists.<sup>18</sup>

By 1956, discussion of the US response to colonialism had exceeded the confines of the PSB meetings. State Department officials complained that while the US stake in Africa was "real and increasing," the ways in which the United States could influence Africa remained limited due to the confines of colonialism, "The Problem of Africa presents in its most acute form the issue of colonialism. The colonial powers...expect us to support their policies. A more independent U.S. policy toward Africa would raise immediate problems."<sup>19</sup> So paralyzed was the United States by its uncertainty over how to handle the "Africa problem" that even in 1956, no National Security Council document existed to outline US actions in the region, let alone recommended policy goals.<sup>20</sup> According to the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, who lamented the lack of knowledge on Africa, and advocated the assignment of a State Department staff member to research Africa, the Administration had too many papers "dealing

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<sup>18</sup> DDEL, WHO, NSC, PSB, Box 14, Folder: PSB 091.4, Tauey to Craig, 20 April 1953; and the attached, "The United States, the United Nations and Africa," Vernon McKay, Department of State *Bulletin*, 16 Feb 1953.

<sup>19</sup> DDEL, WHO, NSC, Special Staff, Box 1, Folder: Africa South of Sahara (3), "State Papers on Africa," 13 March 1956.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. Interestingly, this memo also notes that in 1954 the NSC Planning Board attempted to respond to Nixon's suggestion that there be a draft paper on Africa, and abandoned the effort calling it an "insurmountable" task.

with crises in existence, and not enough dealing with areas where a sound policy might avert...crisis."<sup>21</sup>

Secretary of State John Foster Dulles responded to the increasing attention over the colonial situation in a discussion initiated by United States representative to the United Nations, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. According to Lodge, the future of US efficacy in the world arena lay rooted in the resolution of the colonial issue. Arguing that the young people of the world regarded the United States as sympathizing with and supporting the "[colonial] blimps," Lodge recommended that President Eisenhower make a public statement hailing the first 10 years of the UN, during which nations totaling 600 million people emerged from dependence to independence. "While colonial powers like Great Britain and France would not welcome this resolution," Lodge conceded, "it is in their interests for us to have good standing in areas where they cannot have it." Lodge further recommended supporting independence for US territories, and the cessation of public association with the colonizers. Dulles' brief reply to Lodge acknowledged that while he and the President had long discussed the progression of public attitude on this subject, "My feeling is that conditions are not yet ripe for such a change."<sup>22</sup>

Dulles' comment suggests that he and Eisenhower were not prepared to make a change in the Administration's public stance on colonialism. President

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<sup>21</sup> DDEL, WHO, SANSA, Special Assistant Series, Chronological Subseries, Box 3, Folder: March 1956 (3) Dillon to Lay, 13 March 1956.

<sup>22</sup> DDEL, Ann Whitman File (hereafter referred to as AWF), Dulles-Herter Series 7, Box 5, Folder: Dulles, Foster, June 1956, Lodge to Eisenhower, Secret and Personal, 26 June 1956; and Dulles to Lodge, 29 June 1956.

Eisenhower recollected, however, that he had tried and failed to convince Great Britain of the mixed blessings of colonialism long before it became a topic for study by his Administration. At the end of WWII Eisenhower suggested to Prime Minister Winston Churchill that he should end the colonial system, and could even capitalize on this end by publicly giving England's colonies the choice of staying within the British empire.<sup>23</sup> According to Eisenhower's Chief of Staff, Andrew Goodpaster, these attempts resulted from Eisenhower's firm belief in self-determination as the core of the American system.<sup>24</sup> If Eisenhower's arguments with Churchill went unheeded, his later appeals to Prime Minister Anthony Eden had even less effect, other than to sour their relationship. For Eden, the end of colonialism would mean the end of the British government and he intended to go down fighting. Eisenhower constantly pushed Eden on this point, asking how one could ever disengage from a battle over colonialism. The U.S. President maintained he would not support the British if their efforts to maintain colonial power turned military, and proved his point by refusing to support the British over the Aswan dam in 1956.

### Britain's Own Colonial Dilemma

While the United States struggled to support their British allies as well as the African nationalists, Great Britain struggled with its own colonial dilemma.

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<sup>23</sup> DDEL, AWF, Ann Whitman Diary Series, Box 5, Folder: acw (2), "record of Conversation with Malcolm Muir about Colonialism, " May 1955.

<sup>24</sup> DDEL, Oral History Series, 47, Interview with Andrew J. Goodpaster 10 April 1982.

British officials prepared for the beginning of decolonization in Africa with the independence of Ghana wondering how to garner the support, particularly financial support, of the Americans, without allowing them any degree of actual control over the process of decolonization.

Prior to the US-UK split on the issue of the Aswan Dam, Great Britain certainly was aware of the dilemma that colonialism presented for the United States. In 1955 Great Britain shared the fears of the United States regarding the Afro-Asian People's Congress in Bandung. In Geneva, November 1955, Dulles discussed the matter with British Foreign Secretary, Harold MacMillan. At that time Dulles suggested the possibility of what Macmillan would later call a "Bandung in reverse," that is a conference among the western powers and those colonies likely to gain their independence, to discuss the circumstances and policies that would make such independence stable and successful. Dulles claimed that he and Eisenhower had been working "for years" on having the British take the lead in decolonization. By January 1956, the plans for such a conference were under discussion by Chatham House in the UK and under the supervision of Dean Rusk, then President of the Rockefeller Foundation, in correlation with the Council on Foreign Relations, in the United States.<sup>25</sup>

Also in 1956, British Prime Minister Anthony Eden visited the United States for talks that included a discussion of the Soviet Union, its expansionist

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<sup>25</sup> DDEL, John Foster Dulles Papers, 1951-59 (hereafter JFD), Subject Series, Box 7 Folder: Policy of Independence for Colonial Peoples, Memorandum of Conversation (hereafter referred to as Memcon) with Dean Rusk, 6 April, 1956.

objectives, and the proposed Western response. A recurrent U.S. theme during the talks was the US contention that Russia would prey on neutral nations, hitting them over and over with the notion of a shared belief in anti-colonialism. US arguments were infused with the idea that Western colonialism gave the USSR an unprecedented edge with these as yet undeclared nations, leaving Britain with no doubts as to the United States disdain for the colonial system.<sup>26</sup> In fact Great Britain was not only aware of the attention America paid colonialism, but in fact courted it, hoping to replace disdain with a slightly more positive interest in decolonization. This desire to reorient the American attitude seemingly played a role in the joint "Declaration of Washington" by Eden and Eisenhower, declaring American and British resolve to "uphold the basic rights of peoples to governments of their own choice."<sup>27</sup>

The British Foreign Office regarded the issue of colonialism as the only issue that could give rise to controversy between the United States and Britain, and agreed that the Americans' lack of knowledge of Africa was largely to blame for misperceptions and misunderstandings of the British system. There was a general feeling, expressed in handwritten notes on Foreign Office memos, that London must "educate the Americans about our various policies in Black

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<sup>26</sup>DDEL, AWF, International Series, Box 22: Eden Visit, Folder: Jan 30 - 1 Feb 1956 (3), Undated Briefing Paper for Discussion between Eden and Eisenhower re: "General Estimate of Soviet Objectives and Policies."

<sup>27</sup> DDEL, AWF, International Series, Box 22, Folder: Eden-Eisenhower (6), "The Declaration of Washington, 1 February 1956.

Africa...H.M.G.'s policies are different in different areas...."<sup>28</sup> Both the Colonial and Foreign Office disagreed with US officials over how to respond to attempts by Russia to use anti-colonialism as a foothold in Africa. The British considered foolhardy the American belief that combating the USSR lay in being even more anti-colonial than the Soviets. The UK hoped to convince America that they could not credibly take this approach. Rather than being seen as sincere, Africa would regard in America as self interested, i.e., the Americans wanted Europe out of Africa so the Americans could assume colonial rule for themselves. Instead, the UK hoped to convince the United States that the best response to the USSR was a gradual and well-planned transition to independence for African colonies.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Public Record Office, Kew, United Kingdom (hereafter referred to as PRO) Foreign Office (hereafter referred to as FO), Record Group 371, Subseries 118683/62929, Marnham to Diggins, 17 December. It is evident in the handwritten notes attached to this memo that some of "the Americans" engendered a greater source of frustration than did others. In particular, British ministers were concerned over vociferous criticisms of British colonialism made by Mason Sears, U.S. Representative to the UN Trusteeship Council. Referred to in these notes as "honest but not very perceptive (and consequently rather dangerous)," Sears was also called a "dreadful man", whose only saving grace, in the eyes of the British, was his apparent lack of credibility within the US policymaking community.

<sup>29</sup> While this argument prevailed, there was in fact marked disagreement between the Colonial and Foreign Office over how to approach the Americans. The Foreign Office wished to focus on convincing the Americans that the British colonial system would provide the best way to bring independence to Africa, and therefore merited US support. In contrast, the Colonial Office preferred to emphasize the point that these African "nations" were in fact still British colonies, under the direction of the British Colonial Office. Colonial Officers suggested that the British Prime Minister impress this simple fact upon President Eisenhower and ask him to "rubber stamp" any and all Colonial Office policies in Africa. This debate between two branches of the British government corresponds directly with the inter-office rivalry described in Nicholas Owen, ed., and

What the British wanted from the Americans on the issue of colonial policy and decolonization was "support without interference." As Cold War allies, it was certain that the United Kingdom and the United States would not come to blows over the issue of British colonialism. At the same time, neither would country roll over to accept wholly the policy of the other. The United States had assumed a certain degree of latitude in publicly denouncing colonialism. For their part the British wanted to pursue their own plans for gradual decolonization without being "shuttlecocked about between the African nationalists and American idealists in a way that would be to no-one's advantage."<sup>30</sup>

British officials knew American interest in Africa was rapidly escalating, and hoped that such increased interest had primed the American attitude for an overhaul. Fortuitously for the British, the change in attitude they hoped to affect was enunciated perfectly by a member of the U.S. Congress. In August 1956, Congresswoman Frances P. Bolton (R-OH) released a report on her 1955 visit to sub-Saharan Africa. With a phrase nearly tailor made for the aims of the Foreign Office, Bolton asserted that British colonialism, far from the prevailing American opinion, was in fact, "a progressive force" in Africa. In handwritten comments attached to the report, British Ministers noted that the British should embrace

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Anthony Kirk-Greene, Introduction, "Decolonisation and The Colonial Office." *Contemporary Record* [Great Britain] 6:3 (1992): 497-535.

<sup>30</sup> PRO, FO 371/118714/62929 British Embassy, Washington, DC (hereafter referred to as WDC) to British Consulate General, San Francisco, 28 May 1956.

Bolton's report, despite its many factual mistakes, for trying to educate members of Congress that the different metropolises often followed vastly different policies in administering their colonial regimes. Anxious to disassociate their colonial system from that of the Belgians, the British were pleased to read Bolton's summary that the UK planned to grant independence only to colonies with a reasonable prospect of stability, and the economic and social progress of its inhabitants. Bolton concluded her report with the advice that Britain seemed to have decolonization on the right track. While the United States could not avoid being involved in decolonization, it should do so through offerings of encouragement to the British "without attempting to interfere."<sup>31</sup> The British could not have said it better themselves.

### The Bermuda Conference

While one cannot discount the importance of Bolton's comments, owing to her position on the House Foreign Relations Committee, it was the impending possibility of a Soviet foothold in Africa with the clock counting down to Ghanaian independence that pushed the US and UK officials to a meeting of the minds. To defend best against communist advances, the two countries sought to

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<sup>31</sup> PRO, FO 371/118683/62929/J10345/3. British Embassy WDC to FO, 22 August 1956. One has to wonder as to Bolton's ties to the British in penning such a glowing report. While she may indeed have found the British system to be the least of all colonial evils, she clearly overstates the case when she suggests, "Colonialism ... has meant a new orientation towards the rights of the individual, the raising of the status of women, the eradication of disease, the development of education, and in general an uplift in the standard of living of individuals peoples." In fact Bolton was aware in advance of her British audience, as she specifically requested that copies of her report be sent not only to the Colonial and Foreign Offices but also to each Colonial Governor.



establish a clear and shared policy in Ghana and Africa. In what would become an annual strategy session, the two nations organized the Bermuda conference, a series of bilateral meetings on African policy issues, held in March 1957. By the end of the four-day conference, officials reached agreement on a joint paper that outlined the means of combating communist influence in Africa. According to the final paper, Africa's political, economic and military importance to the West dictated that Western political influence be maintained. "It would be a major victory for the Sino-Soviet bloc if Tropical Africa could be detached from the West both economically and politically."<sup>32</sup> The best means of countering Soviet aims, H.M.G. and the US government agreed, would be a policy to lead dependent nations as rapidly and as practically possible toward stable self-government. The two governments also agreed that in addition to future, formal, meetings, "periodic, informal exchanges of views" between the two nations would be vital in understanding each other's policies and maintaining a common objective in Africa.<sup>33</sup>

UK- US agreement on the final paper, drafted jointly by the British Embassy in DC and the State department, was far from immediate, despite recognition that neither country could afford to appear at cross-purposes in Africa

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<sup>32</sup> PRO, FO 371/125292/62975, British Embassy WDC to Foreign Office, 13 March 1957.

<sup>33</sup> PRO, FO 371/125292/62975, "Text of Joint Paper for Bermuda Talks: Means of Combating Communist Influence in Tropical Africa," undated.

as they had been in the Middle East.<sup>34</sup> The United States stringently objected to any language suggesting that it supported British colonial policy as a means to the end of preventing communist subversion in Africa. For its part, Britain objected to the American proclivity for anti-colonial rhetoric, and suggested that rather than publicly denouncing British colonialism, the United States should "discuss it with us quietly rather than criticise us publicly."<sup>35</sup> Staff at the British Embassy believed that, while spokespersons for the Administration did not attack the UK on specific policies, "they (and especially Mr. Dulles in some of his less felicitous impromptus) frequently give vent to their general view that they are holier than we because we have Colonies and they have not (ignoring such accidents as Okinawa!)" The Embassy referred to Dulles as the "chief offender" in publicly lashing the UK, and conceded privately that this made it impossible to make much progress on the issue at the official level. Still they did manage to argue in Bermuda, that any anti-colonial statements by the United States, that "shakes our position in the colonies makes it likely that balance will be lost and that only the communists gain by your negative comments."<sup>36</sup> There was an understanding on the part of the British that despite being able to formulate this joint statement, there remained widespread anti-colonial feeling in the United States, often

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<sup>34</sup> PRO, FO 371/125292/62975, Bermuda Conference Records, Extract from Second Meeting, 23 March 1957.

<sup>35</sup> PRO, FO 371/125292/62975, British Embassy, WDC to FO, 13 March 1957.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

directed at Britain and that this statement would not stop such public figures as members of congress from airing these views<sup>37</sup>

## Gold Coast Independence and the Invitation List

Despite the success of the Bermuda Conference to hammer out a broad US-UK policy toward Africa, Great Britain privately hoped that the U.S. would remain an interested but benign force in the decolonization of the Gold Coast. Instead, U.S. attempts to influence the character of the new nation began even before independence became a reality. In January 1956 dispatches from the Consulate General at Accra warned of the possible attendance of the Soviet Union at Ghana's independence ceremonies. The Department of State responded quickly on several fronts. Voicing concern that an invitation would encourage the quick establishment of diplomatic relations between Ghana and the USSR, Herbert J. Hoover, Jr., Undersecretary of State and chairman of the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB), argued the familiar State Department line that Soviet penetration of the Ghanaian economy would be the end result. "Once a Soviet mission is established in an African state, " he wrote, "it becomes only a matter of time before Russian blandishments and enticements of economic and technical assistance are likely to be accepted." <sup>38</sup> Donald Dumont, head of the divisions of East and West African Affairs within the Office of African Affairs then called Archie Campbell, British colonial attaché at the British Embassy in Washington,

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<sup>37</sup> PRO, FO 371/125292/62975, Caccia to FO, 11 March 1957.

<sup>38</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Volume XVIII, pp. 363-365, "Instruction from the Department of State to the Consulate General at Accra," 20 February 1956.

D.C., and requested that the latter stop by the State Department to discuss an issue that "deeply troubled" them. According to Campbell, Dumont produced a letter from Donald Lamm, US Consul-General in Accra, outlining the plans of Kojo Botsio, future Minister of State for an independent Ghana, to invite the USSR to independence ceremonies. Campbell noted that it was highly unusual for the State Department to call him to a meeting. Additionally, Campbell expressed his surprise at the intensity of American fear over communism in West Africa, as the United States previously had increasing, but in no way substantial, interest in the region. Dumont told Campbell that Russian initiatives toward Libya had made them apprehensive about communist activity in the region as a whole.<sup>39</sup>

Great Britain did not share the United States' air of urgency on the matter, and tried to quell their fears by relaying what information it had received from Sir Gordon Hadow, Deputy Colonial Governor for the Gold Coast. According to Hadow, Consul-General Lamm had correctly reported on the letter of Botsio's intention, but had misinterpreted the spirit. Hadow did not regard Botsio's desire to invite the USSR to independence ceremonies as in any way "sinister." Rather he regarded it as more a matter of competition with the Liberians, who had invited

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<sup>39</sup>PRO, Colonial Office (hereafter referred to as CO), Record Group 554, Subseries 1397/62792, British Embassy WDC, to CO, 9 February 1956. At that time Libya hosted seventeen Russian citizens to provide previously arranged technical assistance, prompting the Libyans to request that the U.S. up the ante of aid it originally had offered. At the same time, the United States focused on the expansionist elements of Soviet philosophy that dictated an interest in developing nations such as the Gold Coast. This combination of factors heightened the already palpable US suspicion of communist activity in the region.

both East and West to its own recent celebrations. According to Hadow, the matter was predominantly one of friendly competition between West African neighbors. Hadow believed, moreover, that an invitation to the USSR would demonstrate Ghana's freedom of action whilst remaining in the commonwealth orbit, and would not result in diplomatic exchange with the USSR as long as Ghana felt free to exercise this type of freedom within the commonwealth.

While the State Department continued its attempts to resolve the matter with the British Foreign Office, it also urged US diplomats to initiate conversations on the nature of Soviet initiatives with Michael de N. Ensor, British Acting Secretary for Gold Coast External Affairs. Undersecretary Hoover instructed diplomats to acquaint the leaders of Ghana with the world-wide notoriety gained by the USSR as it "subverted the use of diplomatic missions to serve as centers for propaganda and espionage activity. . . . You may wish to express [that]. . . . such improper use of diplomatic missions might have disastrous consequences."<sup>40</sup>

### China or Taiwan?

The probable presence of Soviet officials at Ghana's independence ceremonies was not the sole cause for alarm among State Department officials. Beginning in December 1956, the United States also attempted to prevent representation by the People's Republic of China (PRC) at the Accra celebration. This time, US officials wasted no time in discussing the matter with British diplomats in Washington, and instead went directly to the Office for External

Affairs in Accra. In January 1957, Donald Lamm, armed with a powerful list of reasons for inviting Chinese Nationalists to independence celebrations, met with Gold Coast officials. Lamm first suggested that the failure to invite both the PRC and Taiwan would jeopardize Ghana's hopes of joining the United Nations, a known goal of Ghanaian leader, Kwame Nkrumah. An invitation only to the Chinese Communists, he argued, would reveal the biased nature of the Ghana government and lead other nations to oppose Ghana's U.N. membership. Attempting to bolster this argument, which was spurious at best, Lamm further informed Gold Coast officials that the United States would reconsider not only its intention to attend independence ceremonies, but also its plans for financial support of the new nation of Ghana. According to Lamm, the United States regarded the extension of an invitation to the Chinese Communists while ignoring the Chinese Nationalists a clear indication of the Gold Coast's communist sympathies. The United States simply could not be expected either to contribute financially to such a regime, or to applaud its creation by attending the independence ceremonies.

Working next through embassy channels, US officials pressed the British government to advise Gold Coast authorities either to withdraw the invitation to the Chinese Communists, or also to invite representatives from Taiwan, in the hopes that "the Communist Chinese would take offence and decide not to

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<sup>40</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. XVIII, p.364.

attend."<sup>41</sup> According to State Department officials, an opportunity for Chinese Communists to attend inaugural events would allow them to maneuver their way into Central Africa and would "dispose other countries of Africa more favorably toward Communist China."<sup>42</sup> An inaugural invitation therefore would increase the potential for subversive activities in Africa. The British Government disagreed. It considered the establishment of diplomatic relations and the attendance at inauguration festivities as separate issues. British officials believed that withdrawing an invitation to the PRC at the behest of the United States would not enhance its future prospects for stability. To the contrary, a decision to comply with U.S. wishes would suggest Ghana's future inability to make independent decisions, making Ghana "the stooge of imperialists."<sup>43</sup>

While the United States and Great Britain could agree to disagree over arguments shuttled between Washington and the Foreign Office, US overtures made directly to Gold Coast officials raised problems. The British resented interference in what was still a British colony. They considered the United States refusal to work through proper diplomatic channels an "impropriety, " an attempt to influence matters that were "really none of their business," and dismissed the

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<sup>41</sup> PRO, FO 371/125287/62975/J1015/95, British Embassy WDC to Far Eastern Department, FO, 7 February 1957.

<sup>42</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. XVIII, p. 367, "Memorandum of a Conversation Between the Counselor of the British Embassy (de la Mare) and the Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs (McConaughy), Department of State, Washington, February 6, 1957."

<sup>43</sup> PRO, FO 371/125287/62975/J1015/95, British Embassy WDC to Far Eastern Department, FO, 7 February 1957.

US argument that Ghana jeopardized its UN membership, as one that "does not hold water." <sup>44</sup> In discussions with the Office of Chinese Affairs in Washington, British diplomat, A.G. Bottomley, suggested that the U.S. request involved at least two risks. In the first scenario, both the Chinese Communists and Nationalists could show up for inaugural events in Ghana. This would locate an unprecedented and volatile international event on the doorstep of a fledgling nation, incapable of responding to the situation. In the second scenario, withdrawing an invitation to the PRC government would "destroy [Ghana's] chances of good relations with other powers even before her independence took effect." U.S. officials persisted in their view that the United States did not want to place Ghana in an awkward situation. According to British Ambassador Harold Caccia, the State Department, "begged me to believe" that their only real aim was to prevent Soviet penetration in Africa. Assuring Caccia that they did not wish to be at odds with the UK, and did not intend it as a threat, United States' officials nonetheless restated their position that Vice-President Nixon would not attend the independence celebrations if the Chinese Communists were invited.

Clearly dissatisfied with the lack of action by the British Foreign Office, and lesser officials in Ghana, the State Department moved to influence the future leader of Ghana directly. It instructed Lamm to take up the case of an invitation to the Chinese Nationalists with Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah. While Nkrumah

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<sup>44</sup>PRO, FO 371/125286/62929/J1015/38, "Minutes: The Ghana Celebrations," and attached handwritten comments, 1 February 1957.



appeared attentive to Lamm's overtures, he noted the still subservient position of the Gold Coast to British control.<sup>45</sup> Claiming that he was previously unaware of the serious complications that could come to bear on Ghana as a result of the slight of Taiwan, Nkrumah repeated that his hands were tied. At first glance, it seems incongruous that Nkrumah, about to become the leader of the independent Ghana, would so willingly admit that he was confined by the limits of colonialism. In fact, Nkrumah's response to the United States was exactly as the British had suggested.

Shaken, but as yet unmoved by US overtures to rework the invitation list for Gold Coast ceremonies, the British Foreign Office contacted the Office of External Affairs in the Gold Coast. Reminding External Affairs personnel that the Gold Coast remained a British colony until 6 March 1957, they advised that until that time, the Gold Coast should follow the guidance of Great Britain and resist US attempts to interfere. It is difficult to discern Britain's underlying motivation in this communication. Was it perpetuating a power struggle with the United States, or was it genuinely sheltering the Gold Coast, and helping it to avoid the waters of a larger conflict that it was not yet prepared to navigate? From the British perspective it was doing both. By reaffirming its colonial power, Britain refused to allow the United States to dictate protocol to the Gold Coast. In

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<sup>45</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. XVIII, p. 367, "Telegram from the Consulate General at Accra to the Department of State," 12 February 1957.

so doing, it shielded the Gold Coast from US demands that, if met, would have created a "made -to-order propaganda theme for the Communists."<sup>46</sup>

Once again, the United States found the response unsatisfactory. The State Department redoubled its attempts to sway British opinion, and this time was more forthcoming with the British. In discussions with the Foreign Office, U.S. Embassy staff in London admitted to U.K. officials that the United States feared public embarrassment if Nixon were to attend the same ceremonies as the Chinese Communists. State Department staffers hypothesized that Nixon would be unable to avoid the physical proximity and, therefore, the possibility of being photographed with the Communist Chinese. The result would be severely embarrassing to the Vice-President and the entire nation. British personnel responded unsympathetically that it would be equally embarrassing for Her Majesty's Government if the Nationalist Chinese were present, especially as the PRC had already been told that Taiwan would not receive an invitation. Even more undignified would be to withdraw an invitation to the Chinese Communists. Despite this, and in the spirit of cooperation and returning a forthright response, the British admitted that they did not really care if Gold Coast officials invited Chinese Nationalists. The issue for the British was to deny invitations to Egypt and Syria. Moreover they did not wish to damage the future of Ghana's relations with the United States by standing firm on an issue of lesser importance.

The Foreign and Colonial offices conferred, reviewing the original invitation guidelines presented to the Gold Coast. Original memos had advised

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p.368.

against invitations to all nations with which HMG did not enjoy positive relations. This list included Byelorussia, Syria, Egypt, Ukraine, Hungary, East Germany, and North Korea. Upon reconsideration, the Colonial and Foreign offices noted a difference between those countries with which the British had hostile relations and those with which the British had no relations. While countries such as Egypt and Syria had taken the unprecedented initiative to dissolve relations with the British, the British had never established relations with the Chinese government in Taiwan. Britain had no hostile relations with Taiwan. In fact, it had no relations at all. Despite protests from the consulting Far East Affairs Department, the Foreign and Colonial offices decided that this discrepancy could believably be argued as a qualitative difference, allowing them to recommend a change in posture on the invitation list. Britain could continue to exclude Syria and Egypt, while allowing for an invitation to the Chinese Nationalists. They brushed aside considerations of snubbing the PRC government. If Ghana were to start on the wrong foot with a nation, the Colonial and Foreign Offices preferred it be the Chinese, any Chinese, rather than the United States.

Based on these discussions, the Foreign Office contacted Governor Arden-Clarke in Accra and advised him of the change in policy. It would be left to Nkrumah to decide upon an invitation to the Chinese Nationalists. He was not to be informed of the risk of offending the United States, but only of the discrepancies in the previous British advice, since the Foreign and Colonial offices maintained their position that Ghana should not be seen as having bowed to US demands. In the end, repeated diplomatic overtures by the United States

fell on deaf ears. Chinese Nationalists did not receive an invitation.<sup>47</sup> The Chinese Communists and the USSR did, however, attend the celebration.

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<sup>47</sup>The PRC announced on 19 February 1957 that Marshal Nieh Jung-Chen, a Deputy Premier of the State Council had been designated as the representative to the independence ceremonies. *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. XVIII, p.374, "Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations (Hill) to the Vice President."

## Colonial Dilemmas and the Invitation List

What does the flap over the invitation list say about U.S.-U.K. relations at the beginning of the end of African colonialism? What does it say about their joint interest in Ghana? On the larger issue of colonialism the Americans and the British faced unique dilemmas. The United States wanted influence over decolonization in Africa. They wanted to befriend new nations and channel nascent nationalism away from the influence of communism. At the same time, they did not want to step on British colonial toes. Similarly, the United Kingdom wanted US involvement, but not US interference. It hoped for the United States to provide maximum financial assistance, with minimal direct contact to the continent. In Ghana, the invitation "crisis" marks the clash of these competing dilemmas. By insisting that an invitation be issued to the Chinese government in Taiwan, the United States displayed its desire to influence the direction of Ghana's new government. They preferred Ghana to establish relations with the Chinese Nationalists, allies of the United States, and not the Chinese Communists, allies of the USSR. According to the Americans, an invitation to the PRC government would open the door to communism in Ghana and thus, all of Africa. They had hoped for British cooperation on this point, and were disappointed not to receive it as willingly as they had expected. After the British did not respond in early 1956 to US initiatives to prevent an invitation to the USSR, the State Department did not waste time with British channels of diplomacy when it came to the Chinese Communists. As much as the Americans wished not to offend

their World War II allies, they intended to stave off communist penetration through a type of "no communists allowed" policy in Ghana.

By way of comparison, the British intended to prevent communist penetration by providing Ghana the necessary power and stability of an independent nation. The Foreign Office believed that it was not the invitation to the PRC, but bowing to US directives to invite Taiwan, that would cause the most harm. Why then did the British reconsider an invitation to the Chinese Nationalists? Records indicate that the fear of communism was in fact a motivating factor for Britain, albeit in a different way. The United States held the purse strings to a sizeable financial aid package for the tiny nation of Ghana. Teamed with British predictions of their own inability to provide Ghana economic assistance, the loss of U.S. capital could prove disastrous. Strapped for cash, would Ghana turn to the USSR? Which scenario was more likely to introduce a communist element to Ghana: prompting them to give in to US demands, appearing as a weak pawn that could easily be manipulated and infiltrated; or shunning US overtures, losing valuable investment capital, and having them turn eastward in desperation? In the end, Great Britain hoped to avoid both. By accentuating the difference between broken relations with a nation and non-existent relations, Britain was able to alter its advice to the Gold Coast, placating the Americans without admitting acquiescence to American demands that would compromise Ghana's independence in foreign policy.

The decolonization of Ghana yielded new challenges not only for the fledgling nation itself, but also for Great Britain and the United States. The

intense debates over delegates to the independence ceremonies in Accra demonstrated that Cold War sensibilities had indeed reached sub-Saharan Africa. Before independence was even a reality, Ghana had learned a valuable lesson: from here forward it would walk a tightrope between East and West. Great Britain strove to provide Ghana with enough stability to withstand the pressure of the Cold War. Throughout the discussion of the invitation list, British officials worked to moderate US demands on the new country. They succeeded in guiding Ghana down a middle path, satisfactory to US leaders and the Chinese Communists. This guidance hopefully would renew Ghana's trust in Britain, paving the way for positive post-colonial relations. For the United States, Ghana's independence ushered in a new era of relations with Africa. For the first time, US officials could enjoy direct relations with a sub-Saharan African nation rather than relying on the intercessions of a colonial power. Interactions between the United States and Ghana would thus serve as a blueprint for US policy across the continent.

## CHAPTER 2

### CHALLENGES IN FOREIGN RELATIONS, 1957-1958

In addition to the good wishes of countless nations, and the attention of the world, independence brought numerous challenges to Ghana. Hoping to secure its independence through financial stability, Ghana worked to attract the favorable financial interest of the West. In relations with Great Britain, Ghana wished to maintain its membership in the Commonwealth, while resisting any hint of subservience to the Crown. Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah hampered his relations with the United States in his attempts to lead other African nations to independence, a position Washington feared and opposed. Tensions also mounted between the American and British allies. Cognizant of the financial stability Washington could offer Ghana, British officials feared American leadership in the region would weaken British supremacy in its remaining African colonies. The possibility of Soviet penetration of Ghana further fueled these tensions. As Ghana considered the Soviet request for an Embassy in Accra, Great Britain and the United States debated how best dissuade Ghana from flirting with communism. Throughout the period, the pressures of the Cold War increased.

#### Independence Arrives

Independence Day arrived for Ghana on 6 March 1957 precisely as the clock struck midnight. Kwame Nkrumah stood at the podium surrounded by his friends and colleagues who had helped to secure freedom for the former Gold Coast. Wearing caps embroidered with "P.G." for "prison graduate," a tribute to



their determined incarceration during agitation for independence, Nkrumah, and cabinet ministers Kojo Botsio and Krobo Edusei addressed the chanting, jubilant crowds. The morning arrived with colorful parades, the opening of parliament by Princess Margaret, the Duchess of Kent -sent by Queen Elizabeth to represent the crown - and the ceremonial handing over of power to Prime Minister Nkrumah. Reveling continued into the evening. While ordinary Ghanaians crowded the streets to feast on roasted goat, jollof rice, and plenty of whiskey, Nkrumah opened the inaugural gala ball, accompanying the Duchess for the evening's first waltz. A lavish buffet and "unceasing flow of champagne" added to the festivities.<sup>1</sup> Nkrumah in multi-colored kente and sandals and Margaret in a white gown and tiara offered an irresistible image as the international press photographers snapped away.

Additional celebrations in honor of Ghana occurred across the world. African American communities in Pittsburgh, Chicago and New York organized parties and street festivals. African student groups throughout Europe, such as the Gold Coast Student's Organization in Stuttgart, Germany, feted the success of the small nation, and bombarded Nkrumah's office with congratulatory telegrams. In Meadville, Pennsylvania, the classmates of Ghanaian student Henry Ebenezer Abbiw threw a surprise birthday party for Ghana, complete with a special resolution by the student council and a cake decorated with the new Ghanaian

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<sup>1</sup> PRO, FO, Record Group 1109, Subseries 223/63332, Snelling to Pittam, 6 May 1957.

flag. Abbiw proudly reported the party to Nkrumah noting his classmates' steadfast belief in democracy in Ghana<sup>2</sup>

While the world celebrated, US concerns continued to mount. After much discussion, including Representative Francis Bolton's insistence to the State Department, the Vice- President, and the President himself that the ceremonies be given "exalted attention," President Eisenhower chose Vice-President Richard M. Nixon to head the official delegation.<sup>3</sup> Secretary of State Dulles, anxious to make a favorable impression on the first new nation of the "coming continent" urged Nixon to accept the position.<sup>4</sup> Nixon's trip consisted of a three-week African study tour that started with his attendance at Ghana's inaugural celebration and a meeting with President Kwame Nkrumah. In preparation, Nixon received a two-hour briefing from State Department officials delineating the nature of the Communist threat and emphasizing the heightened significance of the U.S. Delegation's presence. Nixon was informed that, despite the protests of the United States, representatives from the USSR, Rumania, Poland and

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<sup>2</sup> Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Accra, Ghana (hereafter referred to as PRAAD), Record Group (hereafter referred to as RG) 17/1/417, Awuma to Kyei, 6 December 1956; PRAAD, RG 17/1/406 Abbiw to Osagyefo, 11 March 1957. Record Group 17 at the PRAAD is a special collection, inaccessible for research. It encompasses a miscellaneous collection of documents assembled expressly for my research, and declassified during my stay in Ghana. The Chief Records Officer at the PRAAD has not yet decided whether or not to make them available for public research.

<sup>3</sup> DDEL, White House Central Files (hereafter WHCF), Official File, Box 929, Folder: OF 320 Ghana formerly Gold Coast, Bolton to Eisenhower, 15 January 1957.

Czechoslovakia would be attending the ceremonies. A briefing memo underscored the threat emanating from the People's Republic of China: "their Asian origin may be more effective purveyors of Communism in Africa than the Russian and other European Communists."<sup>5</sup> The State Department thoroughly advised Nixon that the presence of Communists in Africa, regardless of national origin, was contrary to the interests of the West.

Nixon arrived in Ghana on 3 March 1957 to great fanfare, and the Vice-President took advantage of his popularity with numerous speeches at luncheons and cocktail parties, and countless interviews with the international press. According the *New York Post*, "judging from ... Nixon's statements, one might guess that it is Nixon, not the British, who is handing Ghana over to Nkrumah, in the name of President Eisenhower."<sup>6</sup> Nixon met with Nkrumah on 4 March 1957, two days prior to the independence ceremonies. The Vice President sought to impress upon the Prime Minister the importance of U.S. interest in Ghana and to ascertain the nature of Ghana's foreign policy, without overtly discussing U.S. perceptions of the Communist threat. Despite a positive transition to independence, Ghana remained suspicious of the West and sought to avoid entanglement in the Cold War struggle. The United States' strong negative

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<sup>4</sup> DDEL, JFD, Telephone Call Series, Box 6, Folder: Telephone Conversation Memos, January-February, 1957 (5), Dulles to Nixon, 8 January 1957, 6:30 p.m.

<sup>5</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. XVIII, p. 374, "Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations (Hill) to the Vice-President," 18 February 1957.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in PRO, FO 371/125297/63013, British Embassy WDC to FO, 9 March 1957.

reaction to Communists' presence at the independence ceremonies had exacerbated Ghanaian fears. More forceful anti-Communist rhetoric by the Vice-President could push Nkrumah closer to the Communist bloc.

The meeting began with a pleasant discussion of the coming ceremonies. Nixon commented on Nkrumah's overwhelming popularity, and the Prime Minister reminisced of his college days at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. Capitalizing on this note of fondness for the United States, the Vice-President launched into a comparison between present-day Ghana and revolutionary America. The conversation centered on diversification of the economy as a means of providing stability, with Nixon noting the great contributions private enterprise could make toward the strength of developing nations. Nixon then solicited information on Ghana's attempts to encourage private enterprise, and was pleased to learn of Nkrumah's plans for tax relief to stimulate private foreign investment.

Following these attempts to highlight areas of U.S. interest, Nixon proceeded with a discussion of Ghanaian foreign policy. Suggesting the term "neutralist" to be insufficiently descriptive, Nixon queried the accuracy of the term "nationalist" in describing Ghana's political affiliation. Nkrumah agreed that "nationalist," as it described a country determined to "secure and defend" its independence, was a correct description of Ghana's foreign policy. Nkrumah added that Ghana would resist involvement in the East-West struggle, "jealously safeguard its independence and resist all efforts at domination." Although

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Nkrumah previously had used the guise of British control to maneuver Ghana successfully between East and West, he now spoke authoritatively of his plans for non-alignment. While professing a commitment to "parliamentary democracy and a democratic way of life," Nkrumah said Ghana would not avoid contact with the Soviet Union.<sup>7</sup>

Nixon pressed for even greater clarification, questioning Nkrumah on his support for "freedom of speech, press, religion and other democratic traditions." Speaking on behalf of the United States government Nixon commented, "We believe that the best assurance we can have of our own independence is the independence of others."<sup>8</sup> Prime Minister Nkrumah concurred emphatically. The Vice-President concluded the meeting apparently satisfied with the prospects for stability in Ghana. Ghana's proposed neutralism posed no immediate threat to the United States and did not signal a Communist drift. While Nixon agreed with the State Department that Nkrumah had erred in inviting the USSR and PRC to official independence ceremonies, he foresaw no damage at present. Nixon maintained that the people of the newly independent nation "cherish[ed] their independence . . . and were determined to protect it against any form of foreign domination."<sup>9</sup> Privately, Nixon was less certain of the auspicious beginnings for

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<sup>7</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Vol. XVIII, pp. 374-378, "Memorandum of a Conversation, Accra, March 4, 1957."

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 377-378.

<sup>9</sup> DDEL, AWF, Administration Series, Box 28, Folder: Nixon, Richard M. (1), "Report to the President on Trip To Africa, " (hereafter referred to as Nixon Report) 5 April 1957, pp. 9-10.

Ghana. According to Sir F. Crawford, a British diplomat in Uganda, Nixon confided in him only three days after Ghana's inaugural affair that "he was doubtful if Ghana was really ready for self-government."<sup>10</sup> Nixon apparently had been shocked by the primitive conditions that existed in Ghana outside its cities, and did not believe the new country modern enough for the challenges of democratic government.

Upon his return to the United States, the Vice-President reported to President Eisenhower on the findings of his Africa trip, focusing on "the wider significance of the emergence of . . . Ghana." Nixon declared the eyes of the world to be on Ghana and the U.S. reaction to Third World independence. People in Africa would watch to see if Ghana's orderly transition to independence could be maintained and applied as a model in other countries. Communist forces would watch for any rift "which would enable them to disrupt and destroy" Ghana's independence. According to Nixon, U.S. action toward Ghana had become "increasingly important in the battle for men's minds."<sup>11</sup> Calling for greater US attention, Nixon noted that "Communist domination. . . is not a present danger," but warned against complacency. The United States had to remain vigilant, as independence movements in Africa "could well prove to be the

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<sup>10</sup> PRO, FO 371/125335/63013, Crawford to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 10 March 1957.

<sup>11</sup>"The Emergence of Africa: Report to President Eisenhower by Vice-President Nixon," Department of State *Bulletin*, 22 April 1957, pp. 635-640.

decisive factor in the conflict between the forces of freedom and international Communism."<sup>12</sup>

### Increased US Interest

As the *New York Times* put it on 24 March 1957, the United States was becoming, "Africa Conscious."<sup>13</sup> Nixon's trip to Africa and his ensuing report did much to push forward an "Africa" agenda in Washington. Upon his return from the continent, the US Senate began discussion of a bill that would split the division of Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs, creating a new and independent division of African Affairs under the direction of a new Assistant Secretary of State. This would take effect on 1 July 1957. Justifications for the new department included the economic development of Africa and thus the possible new markets for American goods. More significant, however, was the consideration that Africa, while undergoing transformation from colonies to independent states, would be unstable and a target for communist infiltration. In addition the government made plans to open four new Embassies in Africa: Yaounde, French Cameroons; Abidjan, French Ivory Coast; Mogadiscio, in the UN mandated territory of Somalia; and Kampala, Uganda. This, of course, was in addition to the newly opened United States Embassy in Accra.

After lengthy debate and discussion, President Eisenhower named Wilson C. Flake as the first U.S. Ambassador to Ghana. Having served in the Department

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<sup>12</sup>Nixon Report, p.10.

<sup>13</sup> PRO, FO 371/125304, quoted in translated memo, German Embassy WDC to Foreign Ministry, Bonn, Germany, 3 May 1957.

of State for more than ten years, with a previous twenty years at the Department of Commerce, Flake was a career officer in the foreign service, but did he comply with Nixon's recommendation that US diplomatic posts be "staffed by our most highly qualified people"? Did he represent an assignment "made on the basis of merit, experience and stability"? <sup>14</sup> Indeed, Nixon urged that the United States assure "the strongest possible diplomatic and consular representation" in Ghana and other African nations in order to know better these leaders, help them to strengthen their new nations and consult with them on all matters affecting US interest. <sup>15</sup> Born in Virginia, and educated at Georgetown University, the fifty-one-year-old Flake joined the Department of Commerce in 1926. He held largely administrative positions in Commerce and in the Department of State until 1953 when he became Counselor of the US Embassy in Pretoria, followed by the same position in Rome in 1955. Britain for one, was unimpressed with Flake's lack of service in leadership roles, and did not think Flake fit the bill. Arthur Snelling, Britain's Assistant Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, who served at the same time as Flake in South Africa reported him to be, "sensible," "agreeable," "portly," and "not particularly brilliant." Snelling suggested that as a career officer Flake knew the government rules and regulations by heart (and "enjoys quoting them") but would be more interested in setting up the machinery

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<sup>14</sup> DDEL, WHCF, Official File, Box 929, Folder: OF 320 Ghana formerly Gold Coast, report attached to memo from Hollister to Vice-President, 20 August 1957, p.17.

<sup>15</sup> Nixon Report, p.5.



of the Embassy than the real issues at hand in Ghana.<sup>16</sup> Snelling was not alone in his disdain for Flake's appointment. Members of the Foreign Office expressed regret at the choice of Flake, a "rather undistinguished personality " who lacked "glamour," calling the choice, "disquieting."<sup>17</sup> Harold Caccia, British Ambassador to the United States, weighed the pros and cons. "He does not seem likely to make a superlative success of his time as the United States Ambassador to Ghana," Caccia remarked, " but on the other hand it seems improbable that he will cause difficulties either for his own government or for ourselves."<sup>18</sup>

It was more than Flack's penchant for detail over substance that troubled Britain. Caccia further reported on a story that ran in America's black press that Flake had been reluctant to accept placement in a "negro" country and had yielded only under duress. The State Department chose to ignore the story. The press also expressed dismay that the Flakes hailed from North Carolina, and believed it a mistake that the United States would send a southern white man to Ghana. Additional problems regarding Flake's appointment resulted from Mrs. Flake's rumored remarks to reporters of her dismay at her husband being assigned to the all-black and rather backward nation of Ghana. While some at the White House considered the remarks to be fictitious, the fact that the black reporters who repeated the comments to Nkrumah were friends from his days at Lincoln and therefore certain to be believed, was cause for concern. Some White House staff

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<sup>16</sup> PRO, FO 371/125346 /63106, Whitehead to MacGinnis, 9 May 1957.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

members suggested that regardless of Flake's skill as a diplomat, "he might be severely handicapped in his relations with the Ghana Government because of the alleged remarks made by his wife." State Department personnel discussed to what degree it would embarrass the department to back out on Flake's appointment, and whether this possible embarrassment should outweigh the abuse the Administration may have to face for an "unfortunate appointment."<sup>19</sup> In reporting Flake's appointment to the Commonwealth Relations Office, the Foreign Office concurred that Flake was a disappointment, and "hardly in line with Mr. Nixon's recommendations for the posting of better caliber officers" to posts in Africa.<sup>20</sup> London was somewhat consoled, however, with the appointment of Peter J. Rutter as Secretary of Embassy. Having served as Second Secretary and then First Secretary of the US Embassy in London since 1953, the forty-one year old Rutter was regarded by the British as "useful," "knowledgeable," and "cooperative." The British even suggested that Rutter and not Flake would provide the "political brains of the Embassy."<sup>21</sup>

### Race and the US Embassy

The allegations of racism surrounding Flake's appointment may have been hard for the United States to swallow, but certainly were expected. US officials

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<sup>18</sup> PRO, FO 371/125346 /63106, Caccia to Lloyd, 20 May 1957.

<sup>19</sup> DDEL, WHCF, Official File, Box 161 / OF 8-F Flake, Ambassadors and Ministers, Folder: Flake, Wilson C., Morrow to Gray, 11 April 1957.

<sup>20</sup> PRO, FO 371/125345/6106, MacGinnis to Whitehead, 15 April 1957.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.; and PRO, FO 371/125345/63106, Bottomley to Smith, 19 March 1957, and attached resumes of Flake and Rutter.

had long considered how to reconcile race problems on the homefront with prospective relations with African nations. In 1956, US Ambassador to the United Nations, Henry Cabot Lodge, suggested combating the US image problem by showing increased interest in Africa through short goodwill visits. Lodge wished to address head-on the attitude that the United States "is willing to work with the 'natives' but are [*sic*] not willing to play with them and treat them as social equals." Lodge suggested that above all, goodwill visits to Africa should be sociable and racially integrated on all levels. The "main point would be simply to be agreeable and to make them feel that *we* think *they* are attractive."<sup>22</sup> He offered an example of the simplicity of his strategy in a memo to President Eisenhower and Foster Dulles. While visiting Khartoum, Lodge's wife danced with the foreign minister "who was coal black." Word soon spread across town that the Americans know how to have fun and "be social with negroes." According to Lodge, this type of social inclusiveness could go a long way to "correct a bad impression" that the United States has with "natives."<sup>23</sup> Eisenhower believed the idea made good sense and asked Dulles for his reaction.<sup>24</sup> Dulles did not comment on the racial aspects of Lodge's plan, but he did write to Eisenhower that idea of goodwill visits had merit, "I believe that Africa is the area above all where

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<sup>22</sup> Krenn, p. 92.

<sup>23</sup> DDEL, AWF, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 6, Folder: March 1956, Lodge to Eisenhower, 28 March 1956.

<sup>24</sup> Krenn, p. 92.

visits...can bring results. It would be good if more Americans...of high stature visited this continent which is now in a state of rapid evolution."<sup>25</sup>

In 1957, George Allen, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and African Affairs, addressed the issue of race and African embassy staffing directly when he noted that he wanted to see "12 million colored Americans" as representatives for an American policy in Africa. New York Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. had been pressing the Eisenhower Administration to improve the Department of State's black hiring record for far longer. In letters to Eisenhower, Powell calculated only 50 blacks among the 6,000 State Department employees in 1953, and only 55 out of more than 8,000 employees in 1954. According to Powell, the American image abroad could be strengthened by having, "Negroes placed in Embassy Service in those countries where there is a large non-White population."<sup>26</sup> The State Department disagreed with Powell, leading the United States to adopt a more cautious approach. One argument against sending blacks to Africa claimed that, in fact, black Americans did not wish to go there. Black Americans wanted to be recognized as Americans first and foremost and did not want to be placed in Africa, to be seen as on par with Africans. Another argument frequently aired in State Department discussion of the issue suggested that black Americans were made to feel unwelcome in Africa, due to their inferior status in their home country. Along this line, Congresswoman Francis Bolton (R-OH),

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<sup>25</sup> DDEL, JFD, Chronological Series, Box 13, Folder: April 1956 (3), Dulles to Eisenhower, 12 April 1956.

<sup>26</sup> Krenn, p. 81.

who had traveled extensively in Africa, stated that newly independent African states, extremely proud of the newfound status, were particularly opposed to Washington sending them second class citizens as representatives. According to Bolton, "A black American Ambassador in Ghana would perhaps only do us harm. But if we sent a negro to the Court of St. James, then the whole of Africa would be ours."<sup>27</sup>

In 1957 the *Washington Post* reported that Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah had specifically requested Eisenhower *not* to send a black representative to Ghana, as it would imply that the United States regarded Ghana as second rate.<sup>28</sup> Several days later the *Post* printed a rejoinder from S.K. Anthony, Ghanaian Embassy Charge d'Affairs, denying the claim.<sup>29</sup> Which of the two stories is true? Did Nkrumah ask Eisenhower to send a white ambassador, or did prejudicial thinking in the State Department assume that Ghanaians would resent a black ambassador? Apparently, Nkrumah did make such a request. Ghana's former Minister of Agriculture, J.E. Jantuah, has confirmed that Kwame Nkrumah

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<sup>27</sup> PRO, FO 371/125304, quoted in translated memo, German Embassy WDC to Foreign Ministry, Bonn, Germany, 3 May 1957. Michael Krenn agrees that arguments such as Bolton's were commonplace when Washington debated the issue of black Embassy staff. He also argues that these arguments were entirely false. Krenn's research suggests that in fact, African leaders expressed disappointment that more black Americans were not assigned to diplomatic posts on the continent.

<sup>28</sup> PRO, FO 371/125346/63106 Caccia to Lloyd, 20 May 1957.

<sup>29</sup> PRO, FO 371/125346/63106S, Bottemley to African Department, 9 May 1957 including the attached K. Anthony letter to the *Washington Post*, 8 May 1957, copied in full.

and Cabinet members in Ghana were opposed to having a black US Ambassador to Ghana. According to Jantuah, "Nkrumah was not so bold... as to say directly that he did not want a black American in the post. He even denied this publicly. But he made it clear to the US that he would consider it a snub."<sup>30</sup>

The question of diplomatic staff for the US Embassy in Accra provided fuel for the black American press, and seems in retrospect to merit extensive exploration. Still, it would be difficult to argue that in 1957 the issue was more than a minor blip on the radar screens of the Department of State. Far more pressing was the shaping of US policy in Ghana, and the immediate concern of a Soviet Embassy in Accra.<sup>31</sup>

### Combating Soviet Penetration

Immediately following Ghana's ceremonies of independence, Great Britain and the United States began discussing a common plan for dissuading Ghana from accepting a Soviet diplomatic mission. I.A. Benedictov, Russian

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<sup>30</sup> Author's interview with JE Jantuah, Accra, Ghana, August 2001. This incident suggests that Krenn's work merits further research. The majority of Krenn's sources regarding the State Department's arguments and the rebuttals by various groups date from 1958 forward. Research in Ghanaian archives suggests that at least in this earlier case, Krenn may be off the mark. Krenn discusses a similar situation surrounding the appointment of a US Ambassador to Haiti in 1953. While the White House issued a statement that Haiti did not wish to receive a black ambassador, the Haitian Consulate in New York publicly denied the claim. What was being discussed privately? An investigation in the personal papers of Haitian diplomats could reveal that public pronouncements and private maneuvering did not always agree. Can it then be plainly argued that black nations would never have rejected a black diplomatic representative?

<sup>31</sup> For more on the issue of black Americans and the State department, see Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind*.

Minister of State Farms in the USSR and leader of the Russian delegation to Ghana's independence ceremonies, met privately with Prime Minister Nkrumah on 5 March and requested an exchange of diplomatic representatives. Not unlike the earlier attempts of American diplomats, Benedictov used Ghana's desire for UN membership as leverage. Claiming that Ghana's diplomatic relations with five nations --four western nations plus India -- could be seen as giving partiality towards the West, the Russian minister warned that Russia might be forced to block Ghana's application. Nkrumah agreed to the exchange, on the understanding that Ghana would send no mission to the Soviet Union until a time when it was more economically and logistically convenient.

The question remains whether Nkrumah felt threatened by Benedictov, as Ghana's External Affairs secretary would later claim, or if Nkrumah had been previously inclined to accept Soviet representation.<sup>32</sup> According to members of the UK High Commission in Ghana, Nkrumah and his staff were favorably impressed by the attention paid them by the Russian delegation during independence celebrations. The Russian entourage, for example, was the only delegation to host a large and glitzy reception for primarily African guests. The Russians apparently spared no expense, and more than five hundred Ghanaians were in attendance. Several other delegations hosted parties, such as the American celebration for Vice-President Nixon, but embassies and consulates

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<sup>32</sup> In 1958 A.L. Adu, Principal Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, claimed Ghana had been "bulldozed" by the Soviets into accepting diplomatic representation. See Nwaubani, p. 128.

primarily staged these affairs for their own constituencies and Ghanaians did not make up a substantial portion of the invitees.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps then push and pull factors, a combination of threats and courting, motivated Nkrumah.

Britain and the United States had long discussed whether or not Nkrumah was predisposed to accept communist influence in Ghana. Britain believed that the roots of communism in Ghana were shallow, and agreed with N.A. Welbeck, former propaganda secretary of the CPP that, "the commitment to power comes first, while the commitment to ideologies comes second."<sup>34</sup> In a series of reports to the Colonial Office inaugurated in 1954, Charles Arden-Clarke, Governor of the Gold Coast, offered a continuing assessment on the state of affairs in the colony. While he regularly reported his fears of an underdeveloped opposition, tribal disagreements, labor dilemmas, and even Nkrumah's "full measure" of pride and vanity, he never considered Nkrumah susceptible to communist influence.<sup>35</sup> US officials had reached similar conclusions during Nkrumah's unofficial visit to the United States in 1951. State Department correspondence agreed with the British observation that his intense African nationalism had been misrepresented as communism and that his alleged communist leanings were "never conclusively proven."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> PRO, FO 371/125291/62975, Cumming-Bruce to Snelling, 22 March 1957.

<sup>34</sup> Thompson, p.13.

<sup>35</sup> PRO, CO 554/1162/62792/WAF 97/120/01 Arden Clark to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 17 April 1957.

<sup>36</sup> National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland (hereafter referred to as NAI), RG 59, State Department Records, Lot Files, Master Location



Prime Minister Nkrumah was persuaded to reverse his decision on the Soviet Embassy only after a lengthy and sometimes heated debate with his cabinet. Leading the opposition to the Soviet mission in Accra were A.L. Adu, Principal Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, Daniel Chapman, Secretary to the Cabinet, Sir Robert Jackson, Special Commissioner in charge of the Volta River Preparatory Commission, and K.A. Gbedemah, Minister of Finance. Adu and Jackson received thorough coaching and materials from Britain on the matter, but Britain did not approach the more independent Gbedemah, fearing he would regard their intervention as an intrusive effort to direct internal policy in Ghana. While Adu protested in person that the Soviet mission could lead to Soviet subversion in Ghana, Jackson protested by letter that accepting a Soviet embassy could shake Western confidence in Ghana and jeopardize capital for the Volta River Project. Gbedemah, less concerned over the Soviet mission itself, was instead incensed at yet another example of Nkrumah's habit to make policy decisions without consulting the cabinet. Nkrumah recently had decided unilaterally that his image would appear on Ghana's new coins, a move Gbedemah regarded as an unnecessary provocation of the Opposition.<sup>37</sup> Gbedemah insisted the matter of the Soviet mission come before the Cabinet for debate, which it did with great acrimony and invective on 12 March. For

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Register (hereafter referred to as MLR) 3112, Bureau of African Affairs, Office of West African Affairs, Country Files, 1951-63, Box 1, Folder: 22.7, Nkrumah Visit to US (1951), Bourgerie to McGhee 6 June 1951.

<sup>37</sup> PRO, FO 371/125294 /63013, "Ghana Fortnightly Summary, Part I, 19-April - 2 May, 1957."

Gbedemah and Nkrumah, long-time friends, and the two men most responsible for Ghana's independence, this was the beginning of a rift that eventually would sever both their friendship and political alliance. Nkrumah finally rejected the Soviet proposal by stating that relations with the other five nations had been established before independence and Ghana had no wish to extend that network at the present time.<sup>38</sup> The Soviet Union was furious.

It is worth noting that China and Czechoslovakia also requested an exchange of diplomatic missions with Ghana and were immediately denied. This was a great relief to Britain. UK officials were particularly sensitive to the idea that the Chinese would seek to open an embassy in Accra, and believed that the United States would react even more strongly against a Chinese Embassy than a Soviet one. Staff at the Foreign Office recognized that the Americans held them at least partly responsible for the attendance of the Chinese at the independence ceremonies and almost certainly would hold the UK responsible if Ghana agreed to accept a Chinese embassy.<sup>39</sup>

### The British Leadership Role

For Great Britain, efforts to work with the Americans in preventing a Soviet Embassy in Ghana again highlighted their own colonial dilemma -- how to keep the United States involved, without letting it dictate policy. Knowing it

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<sup>38</sup> PRO, FO 371/125346/63106, Cumming-Bruce to CRO, reprinted as, "Ghana: Soviet Government's Request for Diplomatic Representation," Commonwealth Relations Office Print, 11 April 1957.

<sup>39</sup> PRO, FO 371/125345/63106, Barker to Watson, 1 April 1957.

would soon face challenges from other African colonies seeking independence, Britain needed to maintain the leadership role in western relations with Ghana. It could not allow the United States to push or cajole Ghana in any forceful manner, lest it be charged with replacing its own colonial rule with that of its ally. At the same time, Britain could not leave the Americans too far in the background, knowing that US finances could prove vital in preventing communist subversion in Ghana, a goal the two Cold War allies supported equally.

The British wished to impress upon US officials the need for extreme caution and only indirect pressure in any efforts to influence Ghana. British diplomatic personnel, especially Francis Cumming-Bruce, Deputy British Commissioner, believed that preaching the anti-Communist gospel would be disregarded by Ghanaian leaders, especially Nkrumah and Kojo Botsio, the influential Minister of Trade and Labor, as merely an attempt to maintain Western power in Africa. According to Cumming-Bruce, "They suspect that the Western powers use Communism as a bogey to keep African peoples out of mischief."<sup>40</sup> British officials further maintained that the Eastern Bloc had warned Nkrumah that US and UK personnel were so keen to influence him that they would pass him false information as to the activities of Eastern Bloc countries. In lieu of direct influence, Great Britain recommended discreet back-channel parleys with

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<sup>40</sup> PRO, FO 371/125347/63106, Cumming-Bruce to Allen, 16 July 1957.

Ghanaian officials, believing that Ghana "would regard any direct intervention... as an effort to keep them in the nursery."<sup>41</sup>

In its attempts to influence Ghana within this delicate balance, Britain particularly relied upon Adu and Chapman, whom they believed to be genuinely interested in information on Soviet designs and methods of infiltration, and who had greater access to Nkrumah than most other Ghanaian officials. Even with the sympathetic ear of these individuals, the British warned that they and the Americans take caution in the materials selected and in the manner of presenting such materials. Background information on Soviet activities was to be grouped with other materials so as to present a balanced overview of world affairs information, and not an anti-Soviet propaganda packet. The spoken word was to be as carefully monitored. Britain recommended that the US operatives rely on printed materials and avoid bringing up the issue of Soviet penetration in conversation. According to the British High Commission, the former US Consul-General, Donald Lamm, did not adhere to this policy and as a result built up deep resistance to his anti-Soviet ideas in official and unofficial circles. Peter Rutter, the new secretary of the Embassy, was warned that Ambassador Flake should take care not to do the same.<sup>42</sup>

There was additional fear that the United States would attempt to take the quick route into establishing goodwill with Ghana, by sending such

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<sup>41</sup> PRO, FO 371/125346/63106, Cumming-Bruce to CRO, reprinted as, "Ghana: Soviet Government's Request for Diplomatic Representation," Commonwealth Relations Office Print, 11 April 1957.

<sup>42</sup> PRO, FO 371/125347/63106, Cumming-Bruce to Allen, 16 July 1957.

representatives as members of Congress, old friends of Nkrumah, and even organized groups of African Americans on pilgrimage to Ghana. Britain feared that these visits would be accompanied by "loose anti-Soviet talk," and general comments that the United States planned to dissuade Ghana from interacting with all non-western nations. This could only have a negative effect.<sup>43</sup> In Britain's estimate, attempts of this kind to force the pace of good relations with Ghana would be counterproductive. The UK also declined US offers of assistance in matters of training Ghanaians in security and intelligence, fearing both the high-handed tone of the training, and the underlying assumption that Britain was not up to the task. George Whitehead of the Commonwealth Relations Office suggested instead that, "the American might perhaps be reassured that we have the matter well in hand."<sup>44</sup>

Britain seemed confident that US Secretary of Embassy, Peter Rutter, had taken this advice seriously, and looked forward to his close cooperation with the British. At London meetings in March 1957, Rutter agreed with British suppositions that the USSR could not be permanently denied an Embassy in Accra; they would succeed in establishing one sooner or later. The object was to deny one as long as possible, but to be realistic. Overzealous rhetoric that the USSR could never be permitted to open diplomatic relations with Ghana would do more harm than good. Rutter also delivered the State Department's opinion

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> PRO, FO 371/125347/63106, Whitehead to Smith, 15 July 1957, including attachments.

that while the United States had taken the lead in persuading Liberia not to accept a Russian Embassy, the UK should be the one to accept a major role in persuading Ghana to do the same.<sup>45</sup> Cumming- Bruce hoped that, "with any luck they [the Americans] will refrain from overplaying their hand and will leave it to us to play the leading role with the Ghana Government."<sup>46</sup>

Even with Great Britain in the lead role, the question of Ghana's acceptance of a Russian diplomatic mission would not easily be resolved. Indeed, the issue resurfaced in November 1957. This time it seemed certain Ghana would accept the mission, the only question being whether or not they could limit the mission in size. While US and UK officials did concur that a diplomatic exchange between Ghana and the USSR could not be avoided forever, British personnel continued to suggest to Ghanaian officials that the best way to avoid a Soviet mission of substantial size, was to avoid having any Soviet mission whatsoever. Britain did not believe that by limiting the size of such a mission, Ghana could hope to limit the scope of its subversive activities. "Of the three principle ways in which a Soviet Embassy can do harm - by internal espionage, by internal subversion and the support of domestic communism, or as the organ of Soviet official diplomacy - it is the third which in our eyes represents the main danger in Ghana. This is not a danger against which the limitations [of size]...

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<sup>45</sup> PRO, FO 371/125345/63106, Watson to Barker, 26 March 1957.

<sup>46</sup> PRO, FO 371/125347/63106, Cumming-Bruce to Allen, 16 July 1957.

are likely to have any effect."<sup>47</sup> Nkrumah disagreed and believed a small Russian mission could be easily controlled. He saw no way to achieve this, however, unless Ghana also limited the size of all other missions, a position clearly unacceptable to the Americans and the British, but championed by Ghanaian officials. In October 1957, Ian MacLennan in the Office of the High Commissioner reported to the Undersecretary of State for Commonwealth Relations that Ghanaian officials were, "perturbed at the rapid growth of the United States Embassy and...would be glad to be able to limit the number of Americans."<sup>48</sup> In the final discussions over the Soviet mission between the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations and Finance Minister Gbedemah, the latter suggested that Nkrumah and his Cabinet still had not firmly decided the matter, and claimed the mission could be postponed altogether. This would be much easier to accomplish, however, if the West could only be sympathetic to Ghana's need for aid and support on deserving economic endeavors.<sup>49</sup>

### Early Discussions of the VRP

What Komla Gbedemah alluded to was financial support for the Volta River Project (VRP), a multi-billion dollar hydroelectric dam and aluminum smelter development plan, upon which rested Ghana's hopes for economic

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<sup>47</sup> PRO, FO 371/125347/63106, Ross to Snelling, 18 November 1957.

<sup>48</sup> PRO, FO 371/125347 /63106, MacLennan Laithwaite, 22 October 1957.

<sup>49</sup> PRO, FO 371/125347/63106, "Record of Conversation between the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations and Mr. K.A. Gbedemah, Minister of Finance for Ghana," 26 November, 1957.

freedom. Originally explored by the British in the early twentieth-century as a means to mine rich bauxite deposits, generate electricity for additional industries, and reduce the country's dependence on its main export - cocoa, the project was eventually abandoned as too expensive. Nkrumah revived the idea during the campaign for independence from Britain, promising that the dam would not only provide power and boost industrialization, but also stand as a symbol of his country's deserved stature in the modern world. Keenly aware of the public support for this project, London firmly believed that the West's key to establishing good relations with Ghana, and deterring Ghana from establishing relations with Russia, was not the use of propaganda, but the outcome of the VRP. Ghana's main caveat to accepting a Soviet mission was the fear that in so doing it would lose favor with the West and hurt its chances of acquiring capital for the project. If the West dashed hopes for the Volta, Ghana would turn to the USSR, not only for money, but also in the hopes of playing the West against the East. Either way, this could create a dangerous precedent that Britain and the United States wished to avoid.

The story of the Volta River scheme marks perhaps the only episode in Ghana's recent history to be studied by western scholars. In fact, it is less the VRP, than the events of racial discrimination surrounding the project that brought it to the eyes of the public, and later the eyes of academics. In October 1957, Ghana's Finance Minister K.A. Gbedemah visited the United States to discuss the merits of the Volta River Project with private investors. In Dover, Delaware, a waitress at Howard Johnson's refused to serve a glass of orange juice to



Gbedemah and a member of his staff. It was the policy of the restaurant that blacks could order take-out, but could not dine on the premises. The management stood firm on the policy even after Gbedemah identified himself. Humiliated and angered, Gbedemah issued a press statement, and the incident received wide coverage in the American, European, and African presses. Sensitive to the international ramifications of the event, especially in the wake of the Little Rock confrontation, in August and September, which also had received considerable negative press in Africa, the Eisenhower Administration responded quickly. Eisenhower immediately invited Gbedemah to breakfast with him at the White House where the Finance Minister used the opportunity to lobby for American assistance on the Volta River Project.<sup>50</sup>

While this unfortunate event certainly opened a door for Ghana, it was Nkrumah's response to the incident that perhaps provided a more lasting impression in Washington. While the White House staff scrambled to invite Gbedemah to breakfast with the President, Kwame Nkrumah was busy expressing to Ambassador Wilson Flake his deep annoyance with Gbedemah for having made a fuss. Nkrumah told Flake that his personal experience had given him an understanding of discrimination, and he believed that eventually the dilemma of

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<sup>50</sup> Historians Thomas Noer and Ebere Nwaubani both suggest that the breakfast between Eisenhower and Gbedemah marked the first time Eisenhower had heard of the VRP, see Thomas J. Noer, "New Frontiers and Old Priorities in Africa." This most certainly is not the case. In his report to the President upon returning from Ghana in March 1957, Vice-President Nixon discussed the VRP, recommended keeping a close eye on its development and ascertaining whether or not the United States could offer limited funding. In addition, the State

race in the United States would work itself out. In the meantime he believed Africans should be patient. Hearing of Eisenhower's plans to send a personal note of apology to Gbedemah, Nkrumah argued strongly that it was unnecessary and should not materialize. Interestingly, Nkrumah believed that Gbedemah would not keep the letter private and could use it to embarrass the United States in the future. He believed the best solution was to keep the matter as quiet as possible, and in Flake's presence instructed the government-owned media in Ghana to kill the story. Nkrumah also urged Flake to assure President Eisenhower that "this incident will have not the slightest effect on the happy relations between our two countries."<sup>51</sup> Flake later reported that the Ghanaian press never covered a word of the incident.<sup>52</sup>

In no document does Eisenhower expressly mention Nkrumah's response to the orange juice incident. Given his own proclivity to take matters of race and desegregation slowly, and with great emphasis on patience, Eisenhower must

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Department had been in discussions with Great Britain over attempts to fund the project since 1951.

<sup>51</sup> DDEL, WHO, Office of the Staff Secretary Series (hereafter OSS), Subject Series, State Dept Subseries, Box 2, Folder: State Dept 1957, Aug-Oct (6), Howe to Goodpaster, 15 October 1957.

<sup>52</sup> Noer, "New Frontiers and Old Priorities in Africa," and Nwaubani, *The United States and Decolonization in West Africa*. There is some debate in Ghana as to the true nature of Nkrumah's response to Ambassador Flake. Based on personal interviews, both Gbedemah's widow and former Foreign Affairs Minister J.E. Jantuah believe that Nkrumah wished to keep the matter quiet out of jealousy that Gbedemah and not he was the first to be invited to the White House. If Nkrumah could ingratiate himself with President Eisenhower on the question of race in the process of quashing Gbedmah's pride and publicity, it was merely a happy coincidence.

have appreciated Nkrumah's expressions of understanding. Nkrumah continued this trend to proceed slowly when sending his first letter on the VRP to Eisenhower in October 1957. While his letter described the project in detail, emphasized the most positive aspects of the plan, and even included the complete report of the preparatory commission that declared the project to be economically sound, he did not ask for any US assistance.<sup>53</sup> Eisenhower responded with great cordiality, wishing Ghana, "success in its efforts to solve its problems and to realize its aspirations for a peaceful, stable and prosperous future."<sup>54</sup> It is fortunate that Nkrumah did not ask for assistance immediately. Eisenhower had been advised by the International Cooperation Administration (ICA) to approach the VRP with extreme caution as it involved, "serious political as well as economic problems." In 1957 the total project cost was estimated at one billion dollars, an amount which exceeded the total annual GNP of Ghana. According to the ICA, this would "be the equivalent of the U.S. launching a single development project costing the astronomical sum of 500 billion dollars."<sup>55</sup>

Kwame Nkrumah was well aware of the West's cautious attitude toward the Volta. He was also well aware that Britain, and to an extent, the United States, hoped to use the Volta River Project as a method of keeping Ghana within the western sphere of influence. To capitalize on this, Nkrumah instructed his

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<sup>53</sup> Nwaubani, p. 181.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> DDEL, WHO, SANSA, NSC Series, Hollister to Nixon, 20 August 1957, including attached ICA documents.

ministers to play upon this information, and stress in all discussions with UK representatives that the VRP was even more important to Ghana politically than in its economic and social aspects. In outlining a strategy for discussing the VRP with the British government, Nkrumah planned to constantly remind UK officials that the successful development of Ghana would have a profound impact on the development and direction of the rest of Africa. It would be to the political advantage of the British government and the whole of the Commonwealth that the VRP be successfully achieved. Knowing the close relationship between the United States and Britain, Nkrumah further directed that the UK and Ghana should do their best to convince the Americans of this truth.<sup>56</sup> Teamed with this persuasion, Nkrumah warned Ghanaian officials to do all they could to stay in the good graces of the West. He advised politicians to take great care not to antagonize unnecessarily the possible sources of capital, despite his anticipation that these possible sources would be at times "exasperating and difficult."<sup>57</sup>

### Ghana's Own Dilemma

In March 1957, Nkrumah described the VRP as "my baby and my ambition."<sup>58</sup> Indeed there was a great focus in the earliest days of Ghana's independence to get the VRP up and running, which necessitated a focus on how

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<sup>56</sup> PRAAD, Administrative Record Group (hereafter referred to as ADM) 13/2/37, "Memo by the PM, Subject: Volta River Project," attached to Cabinet Agenda for 2 April 1957.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Nwaubani, p.165.

to get the West involved. Still, it would be impossible to suggest that Nkrumah and his government focused solely on this issue. Investigation in the archives of Ghana, in fact, reveals the depth of Ghana's own colonial, or more properly, post-colonial dilemma. Just as the United States struggled to support both the colonizer and the colonized, and Great Britain struggled to invite the Americans into Ghana yet keep them at a distance, Ghana struggled simultaneously to maintain its new found independence, retain good relations with Britain, and build a relationship with the United States.

US and UK officials expressed frustration throughout 1957 that Nkrumah did not take seriously enough matters of paramount importance to these two world leaders. In a 1957 memo discussing joint attempts to dissuade Ghana from establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, Francis Cumming-Bruce spoke with disdain that Nkrumah could not properly focus on the issue because, "since independence he has been engrossed in domestic political affairs."<sup>59</sup> Yes and why would he not be? Despite the well-planned and systematic turnover of power from Great Britain and Ghana, and the structured training of an African civil service workforce, Ghana had much to learn as an independently functioning government, and was at times preoccupied with these mechanics. Seemingly small matters, matters of procedure and process, required time and attention. One early Cabinet memorandum dealt specifically with the standards for discussion at meetings of the Cabinet. The memo provided the guidelines that Ministers *must* discuss governmental matters with the entire Cabinet rather than making

unilateral decisions. Prior to this memo, individual Ministers had chosen independently, for example, to undertake contracts with foreign businesses, or foreign governments. Some Ministers initially regarded this new Cabinet framework as an attempt to undermine their authority and tie their hands. In fact this type of basic guidelines was simply necessary in all levels of the Administration to coordinate the efforts of the Ghanaian government.<sup>60</sup> There was also the need to reorganize the Ministries to serve Ghana better as an independent country and no longer as a British colony. Some Ministers stepped down, and accepted positions as Ghana's new ambassadors abroad. The government expanded or combined Ministries, shuffled personnel, reorganized chains of commands, and prioritized new budgets accordingly. All of this may have seemed commonplace or rudimentary to the United States and Britain, but for Ghana, it was a completely new and time-consuming experience.

In solidifying its independence, Ghana particularly worried what would define a Commonwealth relationship with the UK and the British Governor-general. Something as simple as an invitation to a cocktail party hosted by the Governor-general aroused fear that could be negatively perceived by the internal opposition. It could thus be portrayed to the international community that the UK possessed undue influence in the Cabinet's decision-making processes. This was hardly the image of independence Ghana hoped to project to the world. Tours of Ghana made by the Governor-general evoked similar fears. While the Governor-

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<sup>59</sup> PRO, FO 371/125347/63106, Cumming-Bruce to Allen, 16 July 1957.

<sup>60</sup> PRAAD, ADM 13/2/33, "Memorandum by the Prime Minister," undated.

general still wished to meet with chiefs through official durbars (traditional tribal greeting and welcome ceremonies) during his travels, the Cabinet had instead decided that such formalities should be discontinued as relics of a past colonial era. It is telling that the Governor-general asked that the Cabinet reconsider this decision, as he did not wish "to miss the pageantry and traditions which were displayed at such durbars." This suggests that he failed to understand that such ceremonies, far from being colorful diversions, in fact represented the recognition of authority on the part of local chiefs that the new government, as the now legitimate authority in Ghana, wished to reserve for itself.<sup>61</sup>

The falling price of cocoa, the liquidation of the Cocoa Purchasing Company Limited, tribal divisions, uniting the northern territories, improving infrastructure -- these and myriad other issues faced the new nation. Development and the need for technical assistance neared the top of Ghana's growing "to do " list. The General Agreement on Technical Cooperation was the first independently-negotiated business between Ghana and the United States. Finalized in May 1957, this arrangement provided American engineers and equipment for community development, and technical assistance for a plan of soil conservation through Ghana's Ministry of Agriculture. While initial plans for this assistance had reached an advanced stage with the help of the British government, the United States requested upon Ghana's attainment of independence that programs should be negotiated directly between the two governments with the

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<sup>61</sup> PRAAD, ADM 13/1/26, "Note of an Informal Meeting of the Cabinet," 29 November 1957.

government of the UK acting only as an envoy.<sup>62</sup> Although US officials eagerly supported this effort by Ghana to act on its own behalf, Washington was less than thrilled with Ghana's next foray into international relations.

Professor I.I. Potekhin, Deputy Director of the Academy of Sciences in Moscow, and Mr. I.A. Tutykhin, researcher, arrived in Ghana in October 1957 for a two-month visit. Reports from the British Foreign Office stated that the professor, an ethnographer, planned to write several books on the African peoples struggles against colonialism. The UK regarded this visit as part of Russia's larger project to send scholars of Africa out to their countries of study to gain firsthand experience, and viewed it as further confirmation of the growing Soviet interest in Africa, and its desire to exploit African affairs for its own ends.<sup>63</sup> Both Britain and the United States feared that in accepting the visit of the scientists, Ghana did not understand that it opened itself to infiltration and communist subversion. Despite these opinions, Ghana did not blindly grant entry visas to the Russians, and was quite aware that the proposed visit had an underlying political agenda. While Russia formally described the visit to Ghanaian officials as "purely academic," Ghana knew that Soviet policy did not normally allow just any citizen the privilege of foreign travel, unless that citizen had proven himself conversant in and able to propagate successfully the communist ideology. Still,

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<sup>62</sup> PRAAD, ADM 13/2/38, "Memorandum by the Prime Minister, Subject: General Agreement on Technical Cooperation Between the Governments of Ghana and the United States of America," attached to Cabinet Agenda, 21 May 1957.

<sup>63</sup> PRO, FO 371/125303/62975, Watson to Allen, 22 Oct 1957.



Ghana wished to pursue its positive neutralism by maintaining cordial relations with both East and West, and wished to welcome the scientists. Ghana's Minister of the Interior and Justice recommended that relations with the Iron Curtain countries should be kept cordial, and at the same time, "such relations should be carefully controlled."<sup>64</sup> The scientists would be allowed to visit Ghana, but would be hosted by a professor at the University of Ghana, and carefully monitored.

In many ways, 1957 revealed the auspicious beginning that Vice-President Richard Nixon had predicted for Ghana. Following its internationally celebrated independence in March, Ghana pursued its own policy goals, successfully navigating between East and West. While it pacified the British and the Americans in not establishing diplomatic relations with the USSR, it retained a cordial relationship with the Soviets by accepting the visit of two Russian scientists. Ghana continued its close ties to Great Britain despite several scraps over negative publicity in the British press, and the fact that by September it was clear that funding for the Volta River Project would not come from the former colonial leader.<sup>65</sup> Instead, Nkrumah made the best of a bad situation and opened

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<sup>64</sup> PRAAD, ADM 13/2/33, "Cabinet Memorandum by the Minister of the Interior and Justice, undated.

<sup>65</sup> Beginning in August 1957, Ghana and Great Britain butted heads on the issues of censorship and freedom of the press. While Ghana claimed that British reporters in Accra wrote unsubstantiated and slanderous reports for publication in the British press, the UK protested that British citizens in Ghana were denied the right of free speech. The climax occurred in October 1957 when Ghana deported 2 British correspondents, Ian Colvin and Christopher Shawcross. NAII, RG 59, Decimal Files, 745j.00/10-857, American Embassy, London to Department of State, Washington, 14 October 1957.

discussions on the VRP with the United States. This positive trend seemed likely to continue in 1958, as Ghana celebrated its first year of independence.

### The Conference of Independent African States

Early in 1958, Ghana worked to extend its independence into areas of foreign policy. First, Ghana settled the long-debated question of a Soviet Embassy in Ghana in January, when it announced an agreement on diplomatic relations with the Russians.<sup>66</sup> Washington and London, having worked to postpone Soviet representation in Ghana for over a year, turned their attention to Ghana's next worrisome plan: hosting a "pan-African conference" in Accra.<sup>67</sup> Nkrumah had begun to organize the conference in August 1957 during the Commonwealth Prime Minister's meeting. Upon his return from the conference, the UK High Commission in Accra defined Ghana's attitude towards the United States as "cool." Claiming that Nkrumah regarded himself as a socialist and the United States as the principal supporter of capitalism, Britain reported Nkrumah's view that US interest in Ghana was motivated by capitalism and the desire to secure supplies of raw materials. He was certain that an increased American involvement in Ghana would be coupled with increased American efforts to

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<sup>66</sup> Interestingly no Soviet ambassador arrived in Ghana until August 1959, and another year passed before Ghana named a representative for an Embassy in the USSR.

<sup>67</sup> While diplomatic message traffic referred to this as the "Pan-African Conference," it was in fact the Conference of Independent African States, held in Accra in April 1958.

exercise influence on Ghanaian policy.<sup>68</sup> Never before had the Prime Minister been so openly unflattering in his view of the West, fueling suspicion in the UK of Nkrumah's intentions in organizing a conference of African unity. Hostility towards the West, however, did not motivate Nkrumah. The Prime Minister and his advisors hoped not to organize a political or ideological block, but rather to foster the development of an "African personality," and to encourage African leaders to establish personal contacts.<sup>69</sup> The State Department and Foreign Office feared a more "thoroughly regrettable affair," supposing that conference representation would be at the Head of State level and include Egypt's Gamal Abdul Nasser. This would necessarily result in a heightened atmosphere of anti-colonialism, unpalatable to Britain, and warnings of neo-colonialism, distasteful to the United States.<sup>70</sup> At the opposite end of the spectrum, but no less problematic, would be a conference entirely made up of lower level, like-minded political party members, which Communists could easily infiltrate and radicalize. Knowing that Nkrumah had charged his External Affairs Advisor, the known West Indian communist, George Padmore, with organizing the conference only heightened western anxiety that the atmosphere would be more hostile than had been Cairo's Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference of 1957.

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<sup>68</sup> PRO, DO 35 / 9336 / 62892, MacLennan to Laithwaite, 9 August 1957.

<sup>69</sup> Thompson, p.32.

<sup>70</sup> PRO, FO 371/131238/63172 /J2231/3 Bottomley to Smith, 20 January 1958; and PRO, FO 371/13128/63172/J 2231/5, Smith to Bottomley, 18 February 1958.

Had Washington and London only been privy to Accra's difficulties in organizing the conference, the minds of officials would have been put well at ease. George Padmore and Cabinet minister Ako Adjei toured the seven states participating in the conference in an attempt to anticipate items for the agenda, and to assure participants that Ghana was not seeking the sole leadership role for Africa.<sup>71</sup> None of the participating countries was as eager as Ghana to create a coalition of African unity. Padmore and Adjei quickly realized the multitude of differences separating African nations, particularly divisions north and south of the Sahara. In the end, Nasser did not attend the conference. Ghana did claim certain responsibilities to the rest of Africa, as the first nation to have gained independence, but the conference did not produce the disastrous results the West had feared. According to the *Economist*, it, "just failed to be a big stir."<sup>72</sup> While this statement may have been true in the realm of international politics, it does not adequately describe the level of trepidation in Washington and London. The degree of interaction between the two allies over the conference belies the growing importance of Ghana and Africa in US and UK policies.

### Nkrumah Visits Washington

In March Ghana celebrated its first anniversary of independence. President Eisenhower marked the occasion with a congratulatory note to the

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<sup>71</sup> Ako Adjei served as Minister of Trade and Labor and as Minister of Justice at different points throughout 1957-58. The seven participating nations included Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, and Sudan.

<sup>72</sup> Quoted in Thompson, p. 39.

Prime Minister that included an official invitation to visit Washington. Nkrumah eagerly accepted the invitation and scheduled the visit for late July. Ghana, the United States, and Britain each hoped to gain favorable ground during Nkrumah's tour.

Nkrumah arrived in Washington on 23 July, accompanied by Trade and Labor Minister Kojo Botsio and his wife; Kofi Baako, the Minister of Information; and Sir Robert Jackson, Special Commissioner in Charge of the Volta River Preparatory Commission.<sup>73</sup> Washington rolled out the red carpet for the Ghanaian leader, who spent three days in the nation's capital, followed by visits to Pennsylvania, New York, and Chicago. Imagine the glittering spectacle in the grand ballroom of New York's Waldorf Astoria as top executives from Union Carbide, Mobil Oil, US Steel, and Chase Manhattan Bank joined David and Nelson Rockefeller, Averell Harriman, Ralph Bunche, and others for a "jungle drum sequence" that feted the champion of this new African democracy.<sup>74</sup> In each city the "messianic fervour" that welcomed the Prime Minister grew larger and more enthusiastic.<sup>75</sup> In Harlem security staff feared Nkrumah would be crushed by the mob of 10,000 well-wishers that crowded the national Guard Armory. In Philadelphia, a blanket of confetti covered his motorcade. An

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<sup>73</sup> While Finance Minister K.A. Gbedemah arrived along with the party for additional VRP meetings in Washington, he was not part of the official entourage.

<sup>74</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/1/472, Prattis to Padmore, 13 August 1958, and the attached report by R.F. Talbert, 29 July 1958.

<sup>75</sup> PRO, FO 371/132337/63172/AU1061/4, British Embassy WDC to Lloyd, 15 August 1958.

excited Chicago participant gushed, "I touched his robe!"<sup>76</sup> While all involved had anticipated a warm welcome for Nkrumah in these strongholds of the African American population, "the strength of feeling which was actually aroused was unexpected."<sup>77</sup> Nkrumah, while on occasion visibly moved by the show of support, maintained a dignity and composure throughout his tour that impressed American and British observers. According to P.L. Prattis, editor of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, "For ten days he was put through an ordeal of adulation that would have killed a weaker man."<sup>78</sup>

The Prime Minister delivered twenty-eight major speeches during his ten-day visit. In none did he convey any image other than that of a moderate and well-spoken leader committed to democracy. He deflected any possible criticism of his policy of non-alignment as he explained to the US Senate, "you will always find us aligned with the forces fighting for freedom and peace."<sup>79</sup> On the issue of racial discrimination in America he echoed his remarks to Ambassador Wilson Flake, claiming that only those who hoped to harm the reputation of the United States publicized inflated accounts of racial discrimination.<sup>80</sup> He denied the

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.; and Nwaubani, p. 133.

<sup>77</sup> PRO, FO 371/132337/63172/AU1061/4, British Embassy WDC to Lloyd, 15 August 1958.

<sup>78</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/1/472, Prattis to Padmore 13 August 1958.

<sup>79</sup> PRO, FO 371/132337/63172/AU1061/4, British Embassy WDC to Lloyd, 15 August 1958.

<sup>80</sup> Thompson, p. 43

presence of any communist element in Ghana, stating that institutions in Ghana did not "allow this ideology even to have any fruitful set-up in our country."<sup>81</sup> He agreed with Eisenhower that a solution to the Middle East crisis be found within the framework of the UN. Nkrumah even discussed Ghana's willingness to offer investment guarantees to encourage US private investment in Ghana.<sup>82</sup> In further discussions of commerce and his country's largest export at a National Press Club luncheon, the Prime Minister quipped, "you are not drinking enough cocoa in this country."<sup>83</sup> Nkrumah was captivating in every way. In any given moment he was triumphant yet humble. He was charming. None of this, however, was enough to procure a guarantee from Eisenhower on funding the VRP.

President Eisenhower met twice with Nkrumah during his visit. The first encounter was a brief personal chat before a stag luncheon. The second, an oval office meeting, gave Nkrumah the opportunity to discuss in detail his plans and goals for the Volta Dam, not that Eisenhower could have been in any doubt over the project. In addition to two lengthy messages from Nkrumah on the topic, Eisenhower also had met with Finance Minister Gbedemah in October 1957. He received additional briefings on the VRP from Richard Nixon, Clarence Randall of the Council on Foreign Economic policy, the National Security Council, and the International Cooperation Association (ICA), all of whom had in turn received

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<sup>81</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/1/472, "Questions and Answers Following Speech by Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah at the National Press Club Luncheon, 24 July 1958 (hereafter referred to as "Press Club Remarks").

<sup>82</sup> Nwaubani. pp. 133-134.

briefings and advice from the British. Just days before Nkrumah's arrival Secretary Dulles reconfirmed the Prime Minister's certain desire to discuss the VRP, and presented the President with a briefing paper for the meeting. Dulles noted that Ghana had received "flattering attention from many nations, particularly the Soviet Union."<sup>84</sup> The State Department considered Ghana to be still in a "formative state" where its "future character can be affected substantially by the attitudes and actions of the United States."<sup>85</sup> The primary US goal was "to demonstrate our recognition of the importance of Ghana's independence and acceptance of the nation as a full-fledged member of the community of nations," while taking care not to offer a commitment of more than mutual interest in the development scheme.<sup>86</sup>

Eisenhower's January 1958 reply to Nkrumah had laid the groundwork for the US position. The President's lengthy response addressed the Volta scheme cautiously. While congratulating Nkrumah for the "spirit of determination" that prompted him to raise the matter with Washington, the letter nonetheless

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<sup>83</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/1/472, "Press Club Remarks."

<sup>84</sup> DDEL, WHO, OSS, Subject Series, State Dept Subseries, Box 5, Folder: State Visits, 1958-59 (3), Dulles to President, "Subject: Official Visit by Prime Minister Nkrumah of Ghana," 19 July 1958 (hereafter, Ghana Briefing).

<sup>85</sup> DDEL, WHO, OSS, Subject Series, State Dept Subseries, Box 5, Folder: State Visits, 1958-59 (3), "Briefing Memorandum for the Official Visit of the Prime Minister of Ghana."

<sup>86</sup> DDEL, WHO, "Ghana Briefing."



emphasized "definite limitations" on US lending capabilities.<sup>87</sup> What the United States could and did offer through Ambassador Flake was to act as a "catalyst" in getting the project off the ground.<sup>88</sup> The ICA and Department of Commerce would explore whether or not American metal producers could be interested in the VRP. As was no doubt intended, the offer looked good on paper, but amounted to little. Undersecretary of State Christian Herter approved of the idea, stating the ICA "should do what it can...so that in Ghana...it will be felt that we have given every possible assistance, even though in the end the results prove to be negative."<sup>89</sup> The meeting between Eisenhower and Nkrumah in July largely reiterated the points each man had expressed in his letters. Nkrumah focused on the needs of Ghana that would be met by the VRP, while Eisenhower repeated that the United States was willing to "explore the possibilities of bringing the project to fruition."<sup>90</sup> There was one important difference. Unlike Nkrumah's second letter specifically asking for a loan, and unlike the belief of the State Department that Nkrumah would work to exact a promise of funding from Eisenhower, the Prime Minister made no such request. He stated his desire to raise the standard of living for Ghanaians. He noted Ghana's vulnerability from a

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<sup>87</sup> DDEL, AWF, International Series, Box 16, Folder: Ghana (6), Eisenhower to Nkrumah, 3 January 1958.

<sup>88</sup> DDEL, WHO, "Ghana Briefing."

<sup>89</sup> Quoted in Nwaubani, p. 183.

<sup>90</sup> DDEL, WHO, OSS, Subject Series, State Department Subseries, Box 5, Folder: State Visits 1958-59 (3), MemCon, 24 July 1958.

one-crop economy. He even hinted that "some way must be found to diversify."<sup>91</sup> But he never asked for financial assistance, and none was offered.

This turn of events surprised and pleased the United States. Joseph Palmer, the State Department's Assistant Secretary for African Affairs met with J.R.A. Bottomley of the British Embassy almost immediately upon Nkrumah's departure for the remainder of his American tour. The meeting amounted to a briefing on the state of VRP funding and its political ramifications. Palmer offered assurances that the American authorities, "had been at great pains to avoid raising any unjustified hopes in the Ghanaians' minds and to damp down any that they may already be cherishing."<sup>92</sup> He also expressed his gratification that Nkrumah never asked for aid, and never alluded that a failure to gain funding for the VRP could result in Ghana's turn to the East, let alone making an overt threat. Britain was similarly gratified. Bottomley left the meeting reassured that the US government had heeded British advice on the inevitable damage that would occur if Ghana's hopes were aroused and later dashed.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> PRO, FO 371/131189/63013/22610/21/58, Bottomley to Allen, 28 July 1958.

<sup>93</sup> What does this episode reveal regarding American and British opinion of Kwame Nkrumah and other African politicians? Available evidence does not support the expectation of both governments that Nkrumah planned to issue the threat of turning to the Soviets if he did not receive Western funding for the VRP. Even if one allows that the United States had interacted with Nkrumah for just over eighteen months, and thus underestimated his political savvy, what excuse for the British position? While it is beyond the scope of this study, Ghana provides an excellent case study on racial stereotypes, and their role in determining foreign policy. Diplomatic message traffic, particularly that of the Colonial Office, offers substantial evidence that numerous British diplomats

For his part, Kwame Nkrumah was satisfied with the results of his American trip. On a personal note he had captured the hearts and minds of countless Americans. He had returned to the United States a world leader, a far cry from the struggling Lincoln University student who once worked as a fish monger to make ends meet.<sup>94</sup> Politically, he received no guarantee on Volta funding, but appreciated the warm support of Eisenhower. The United States did facilitate a reassessment of the VRP under the guidance of Kaiser Industries Corporation, raising the possibility of private American companies funding the project.<sup>95</sup> Additionally, the ICA arranged Nkrumah's introduction to Kaiser President Edgar Kaiser, and Vice-President Chad Calhoun, both of whom would become Nkrumah's friends and confidantes. Progress on the VRP would not be immediate, but he had secured more interest in ten days than the project previously had elicited in more than a year.

Following the triumph of independence, Ghana endeavored to establish and maintain its newfound autonomy, sometimes choosing positions unpopular with the West. As Nkrumah described it, Ghana needed to be "given time to sort

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regarded Nkrumah and other Ghanaian politicians as childlike and backward. This could begin to explain how, after more than ten years of work with Kwame Nkrumah, officials could conceive that he would make such a direct and undiplomatic proposition in Washington.

<sup>94</sup> Nwaubani, p. 133.

<sup>95</sup> Prior to this study, which would be funded jointly by Ghana and the United States, the most recent assessment of the Volta Project had been completed by a joint Gold Coast - British Commission in 1955.

herself out."<sup>96</sup> Testing the waters of international relations, Ghana agreed to establish a Soviet embassy in Accra, planned to host a pan-African conference, and seized an opportunity to solicit US funding for the Volta River Dam Project. Great Britain and the United States, meanwhile, reworked their ties to the new West African nation. The possibility of a Soviet Embassy in Accra increased fears of communist penetration of the region. This in turn refueled debate between the allies on how best to combat the Soviet threat in sub-Saharan Africa. Despite these challenges, Ghana celebrated its first year of independence with optimism. By the end of Prime Minister Nkrumah's successful trip to the United States the three nations had established the firm basis for continued cordial relations.

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<sup>96</sup> Quoted in Thompson, p. 30.

## CHAPTER 3

### GHANA'S DOMESTIC POLITICS DRIVE US POLICY

#### ADJUSTMENT, 1957-1960

Kwame Nkrumah believed that Ghana's independence needed to be solidified on domestic and international fronts. His plans included the establishment of strong, centralized control within Ghana. The domestic measures that Nkrumah used to achieve this order included detention without trial and severe limits on the freedom of speech and the press. Only with firm direction and well-managed policies, he believed, would Ghana be able to claim its place as the leading country of Africa, an equal partner in the Commonwealth, and a solid contributor in world political debate. In the international arena, Ghana championed the policy of nonalignment, and lobbied for a leadership role in mediating the Congo crisis. Ghana's actions on both domestic and foreign issues prompted the United States to enact major policy changes toward Ghana, accepting authoritarianism, and later nonalignment as a means to promote non-communist stability in Africa.

#### Domestic Politics in Ghana, 1957

The commitment to democracy Kwame Nkrumah expressed during his July 1958 trip to Washington contrasted sharply with his actions in Accra, where the Prime Minister appeared willing to eliminate freedom step by step.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, while the United States interest in and relations with Ghana had steadily grown

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<sup>1</sup> Thompson, p.45.

since independence in March 1957, Ghana's allegiance to western ideals had not proceeded on a linear path. In the same month that Ghana achieved independence, Nkrumah took measures to silence opposition to his majority Convention People's Party (CPP). The United States and Great Britain were aware of these and other moves to limit the personal freedoms of Ghanaian citizens. Neither the United States nor Great Britain, however, allowed these practices to impact negatively their positive assessments of Ghana's relation to the West. Despite reports from the US embassy and the UK High Commission in Accra detailing growing repression, Washington and London almost seemed indifferent. Both governments tolerated the limitation of basic freedoms as long as the Ghanaian leader preserved stability and distanced himself from the communists.

Initial reports from the newly established US embassy in Accra were guarded yet positive in spring 1957. In the first comprehensive update of the situation in Ghana since independence, the counselor of Embassy, Peter Rutter, commented on the sound foundation of government provided by the former British colonists and the lack of divisive internal political factions. Echoing the report of Vice-President Nixon, Rutter noted an almost nonexistent communist presence. Rather than the threat of communism, a general feeling of euphoria lingered among the Ghanaian people since independence. In sum, Rutter stated,

"It would be difficult to cite in modern times a new state which has had a more auspicious start."<sup>2</sup>

Nkrumah's actions, however, signaled that he would seek constraints on personal freedoms and free speech. Focusing on the need for internal stability in order to draw foreign investors to Ghana, President Nkrumah's 29 March policy address warned against verbal attacks on the judiciary, police, civil service, and the Army. There did not yet exist in the country "a respect for the self-imposed rules of restraint," Nkrumah said. "It is necessary to impose by positive discipline what in older democracies is done subconsciously."<sup>3</sup> In July 1957 Nkrumah deported two Muslim leaders and one British journalist -- apparently for making public statements in opposition to the government. In August, Kofi Baako, Minister of Information and Broadcasting, outlined plans to censor any press commentary containing criticism of the government.

Reporting on Ghana's attempts to curtail freedoms was not limited to the US embassy. On 18 April the UK High Commission in Ghana reported to the Commonwealth Relations Office on the CPP threats to impose martial law supposedly in order to achieve free and fair local elections.<sup>4</sup> In August, the High Commission reported on the Ghana Nationality and Citizenship Act, a measure narrowly defining citizenship "to exclude a wide range of persons born in

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<sup>2</sup> NAII, 745j.00/7-2557, Rutter to Department of State, 25 July 1957.

<sup>3</sup> NAII, 745j.5/9-1157, Lang to Department of State, 11 September 1957.

<sup>4</sup> PRO, FO 371/125294/63013, "Ghana Fortnightly Summary, Part I, 5-8 April 1957," 18 April 1957.

Ghana."<sup>5</sup> Teamed for passage with the Citizenship Act, the proposed Preventative Detention Act facilitated the deportation of persons not citizens of Ghana whose presence may not be "conducive to the public good, no statement of reasons being required."<sup>6</sup> For those suspected of government subversion the proposal allowed for imprisonment without trial of up to five years. Nkrumah called for its rapid passage. Two weeks later the High Commission commented that although anti-government demonstrations never seemed large scale, public disorder of any size provided a pretext for taking strong measures against the Opposition. The CPP claimed that "imperialist interests' abroad" conspired with the opposition parties to create confusion in Ghana, bring the country into disrepute and thereby influence opinion against the early transfer of power elsewhere in Africa.<sup>7</sup>

Ghana's "get tough" policies not only merited invigorated reporting by British and American diplomats, but also engendered the criticism of the international press. Nkrumah berated critics abroad for failing to appreciate the complex web of pressures his new government faced. Much of the President's anger was reserved for Great Britain, suggesting that some newspaper reports "had been ignorant or malicious and . . . [were] clearly intended to embarrass the

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<sup>5</sup> PRO, FO 371/125294/63013, "Ghana Fortnightly Summary, 26 July-8 August 1957," 9 August 1957.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> PRO, Files of the Prime Minister (hereafter referred to as PREM) 11/1860/63332, "Ghana Fortnightly Summary, Part I, 9-22 August, 1957," 23 August 1957.



Ghana government and make its task still more difficult.”<sup>8</sup> US Ambassador Flake sympathized with Nkrumah's anger. Flake agreed that some press reports did overlook fundamental government problems. Nonetheless, Flake noted "room for concern." He alluded to the statements and actions of Kofi Baako, and to those of Krobo Edusei, Minister of Transport and Communications. Both men had threatened to deport the members of the minority Opposition Party.<sup>9</sup> On 24 August Flake cabled the Department of State to report on the passage of a special act which permitted deportation without lengthy court battles.<sup>10</sup> Flake seemed calm in his reports to the State Department, despite the intensity of Nkrumah's actions and the angry statements of his Cabinet members. His reports contained no commentary on the possible effects of these internal security measures, nor did he request State Department advice on how to proceed.

Kwame Nkrumah responded vigorously to the charges that his government was fast becoming dictatorial. In national radio broadcasts he emphasized the importance of maintaining internal security, and reminded his opponents that no members of his own party nor the Opposition had questioned the 1957 Deportation Act when Parliament debated the measure. He argued that, in fact, there was no reason for protest as the act, "simply renewed the powers

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<sup>8</sup>NAII, 745j.00/9-2557, Flake to Secretary of State, 25 September 1957.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>NAII, 745j.00/8-2457, Flake to Department of State, 8 August 1957.

previously possessed (and exercised) by the old Colonial Government."<sup>11</sup>

Nkrumah was not alone in his assertion that the international community did not truly understand events in Ghana. British diplomat, I.M.R MacLennan, in the Office of the High Commissioner, disagreed with the gloomy predictions of "uninformed" idealists that Ghana's honeymoon of independence was over. He argued that the public had naturally admired and respected the independence movement in Ghana. Unfortunately, the public had also assumed that all the policies of these nationalist patriots would be equally worthy of respect, and were disappointed to find them less than the ideal. He concluded that the actions of the Convention People's Party that had engendered such outrage and criticism abroad, "Affected the ordinary man and woman in Ghana not at all."<sup>12</sup> University of Chicago political scientist, David Apter agreed that seemingly repressive events in Ghana had to be placed in the perspective of Ghana's monumental achievements in foreign affairs, economics, education, and local voting practices. Of course, Apter suggested, "They do not inspire headlines the way deportations do." Apter argued persuasively that the western community did not understand, nor even recognize the difference in Ghanaian political culture. Discussing the "ebullient" characteristics of Ghanaian English and the lack of American or British connotations in their vocabulary, Apter offered, "The public statements of Ghanaian politicians are too often taken as if they were the solemn

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<sup>11</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/286, "Broadcast by the Prime Minister, 7 p.m. (Accra Time)," 24 September 1957.

pronouncements of their colleagues in Westminster. Ghana politics has its own flavor and its own characteristics."<sup>13</sup>

While Nkrumah's own protests over being branded a dictator continued, his party leaders did little to help the situation by continuing to provoke members of the opposition during public rallies and speeches. Speaking at a CPP rally at Axim, the CPP General Secretary stated that a "concentration camp was being built...for the confinement of all traitors in the country."<sup>14</sup> Presumably, "traitors" included any and all who dared criticize the ruling party. Aware of the controversy the sum of these actions ignited, Nkrumah approached passage of the Emergency Powers Bill with greater gentility. Prior to introducing the bill, which would allow the government to declare a state of emergency and enact necessary temporary regulations on a case-by case-basis, Nkrumah discussed it with friend and sometimes confidante, Adlai Stevenson. Commenting that Ghana was only trying to "put our house in order," Nkrumah nonetheless realized the importance of getting the press and the international community to appreciate the difference of conditions that existed in a fledgling democracy in Ghana and an established democracy such as the United States or United Kingdom.<sup>15</sup> He sought to patch

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<sup>12</sup> PRO, FO 371/131176/63172/GIN53/1, MacLennan to Earl of Home, 30 April 1958.

<sup>13</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/1/417, Apter to Nkrumah, 1 February 1958, and attached article for *Africa Special Report*.

<sup>14</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/1/299, "Report from the Commissioner of Ghana Police to Kwame Nkrumah," 23 September, 1957.

<sup>15</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/1/412, Nkrumah to Stevenson, 8 November 1957.

differences with the United Kingdom on the issue of censorship, and began a cordial correspondence with Eisenhower on the prospects of the Volta River Dam.

### US Policy Reviews, 1957-58

While trouble brewed in Ghana, top United States officials met to review National Security Council document 5719 (NSC 5719), U.S. Policy Toward Africa South of the Sahara. First drafted in July 1957, when initial Embassy reports were both slow to arrive and guardedly optimistic, NSC 5719 was the first National Security Council paper on sub-Saharan Africa. As a general statement of US interest in the region, the paper enunciated support for "mutually advantageous accommodation between the forces of nationalism and the metropolitan powers."<sup>16</sup> Major tenets of the document included a statement of the US primary strategic interest in denying Africa to Communist control, as well as support for stability in the region. If Africa south of the Sahara were to be denied to the West, the United States and its European allies would be adversely affected both economically and strategically. The United States, therefore, had, "a very real interest in orderly political evolution" in Africa.<sup>17</sup> Stability was at the forefront of U.S. goals, and communism, while always perceived as a threat, was not an immediate danger.

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<sup>16</sup>*FRUS*, 1955-57, Volume XVIII, p.78, enclosure to "National Security Council Report," 23 August 1957.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 82.

Vice-President Nixon, dubbed the father of Africa policy by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was dissatisfied with the tone of the NSC document.<sup>18</sup> According to the Vice-President, the United States "could not rely upon the number of card-bearing Communists as a measure of the Communist threat." Willing to take advantage of any extremist elements, communists were in a position to penetrate areas of Africa where uncontrolled nationalism thrived. Undersecretary of State Christian Herter agreed that the document underestimated the seriousness of the communist threat. Speaking on behalf of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, Herter denounced the NSC report's overly optimistic outlook toward Communism in Africa and suggested that the "potential Communist threat to Africa was greater than the actual threat at the present time."<sup>19</sup> He recommended the addition of language to indicate this belief.

The NSC-revised document stated that communism was not presently a major problem, "but its potential influence is a matter of growing concern." Ghana was singled out as a government "flattered by Soviet attempts to cultivate them," and policy guidelines directed U.S. officials to "provide constructive alternatives to Soviet blandishments." Major tenets of the revised-NSC 5719 also called for preventing African nations from establishing diplomatic relations with Sino-Soviet Bloc countries, and guiding trade unionism toward Western models.

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<sup>18</sup> That Nixon received this moniker solely on the basis of one trip to the continent, and his subsequent report on conditions there, demonstrates the lack of available information and resources on Africa at the time.

<sup>19</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, Volume XVIII, pp. 71-74, "Memorandum of Discussion at the 335th Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, August 22, 1957."

Overall, the policy sought to battle communism and foster stability by "supporting constructive non-Communist, nationalistic and reform movements."<sup>20</sup>

Increasing US interest in sub-Saharan Africa prompted numerous studies and observations that contributed to the revision of this policy in 1958. In November 1957 James H. Smith, Director of the ICA, and Joseph Satterthwaite, the newly appointed Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, toured and reported on Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Tunisia. The Center for International Studies of the Massachusetts Institute for Technology prepared a report on the future of African relations with the United States. Clarence Randall, of the Council on Foreign Economic Policy (CFEP) built upon both studies when he embarked on a three-week African study tour in March 1958.<sup>21</sup> It was Randall's presentation of his report to the NSC that fueled the 1958 policy discussions.

The CFEP report made recommendations both procedural and philosophical. On procedure, Randall advised that US policymakers could no longer hope to create a general policy for the whole of Africa. Recognizing the diverse situations that would influence action in any given area, he proposed policy be broken down into regions or dealt with on a country-by-country basis.

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 75-87, enclosure to "National Security Council Report," 23 August 1957.

<sup>21</sup> From 19 March to 2 April 1958, Randall visited Nairobi, Kenya; Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia; Brazzaville, French Equatorial Africa; Léopoldville, Belgian Congo; and Accra, Ghana. Of these five only Ghana was independent and maintained direct relations with the United States.

In retrospect the suggestion seems simple and derived of common sense, but it was a revelation to policymakers who at the time had little knowledge of Africa. The recommendation also presented a logistical nightmare for the NSC, as it would no longer be adequate to issue a single policy for the continent. Randall also perceived a philosophical challenge for United States' policy. Outlining the well-known dilemma of supporting metropolises vs. supporting colonies, Randall described the United States as being "caught on the horns of the dilemma of NATO on the one hand and of a free, non-Communist Africa on the other."<sup>22</sup> His surprising assertion that Washington would soon be forced to take a firm stand against colonialism engendered enthusiasm from an unlikely source.

The report resonated with President Dwight Eisenhower. Perhaps it was Randall's focus on uplift through education. Maybe his statement that rich bauxite deposits in Ghana were the result of "Divine Providence" struck a chord. Indeed, his description of the work of Christian missionaries so enthralled the President that he proposed to increase his charitable contributions. Whatever the touchstone, Eisenhower commended the work of the CFEP Director calling it the best report he had read "for a very long time."<sup>23</sup> More surprising to historians, however, is Eisenhower's agreement that the United States stand with the colonies. Eisenhower appreciated that a delicate balance must be struck. He agreed with the current policy that America needed to support the right of colonial

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<sup>22</sup> DDEL, AWF, NSC Series, Box 10, Folder: NSC 365, 8 May 1958, "Memorandum of Discussions at the 3654<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday 8 May 1958."

peoples to seek independence, but that too strong a display of support would create a crisis with US allies. Eisenhower nonetheless expressed frustration that European nations wished to slow, or even halt, the process of nationhood, and he wished the United States could "be on the side of the natives for once."<sup>24</sup>

The revised policy resulting from these discussions was not radically different from its predecessor NSC 5719, but did contain certain nuances that reflected Eisenhower's desire to support "the natives." While the United States would continue to walk the line between Africa and Europe, its efforts would be more proactive in "supporting and encouraging constructive nationalism and reform movements...when convinced they are likely to become powerful and grow in influence." The United States wanted to achieve balance by "publicly acknowledging steps taken by Western European powers toward indigenous self government" in such ways as public comments by senior US officials, and visits of prominent Americans to the country in question. The United States also planned to distance itself publicly from colonial policies it deemed "stagnant or repressive," while privately seeking the abandonment or modification of such policies. The document more strongly emphasized the belief that communism represented the major threat to Africa. Of the four enumerated "specific" interests of US policy, "economic," "strategic," "political," and "social and humanitarian,"

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> DDEL, AWF, NSC Series, Box 10, Folder: NSC 375, 7 August 1958, "Memorandum of Discussions at the 375<sup>th</sup> meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday 7 August, 1958."



the top three discussed US interest as related to Soviet interest.<sup>25</sup> Overall, the policy retained from NSC 5719 its anti-Communist framework, and desire for "orderly development...based on mutually advantageous accommodation between the forces of nationalism and the metropolitan powers," but also took steps of support toward colonized Africans.<sup>26</sup>

### Continuing Repression in Ghana, 1958

NSC 5719 and NSC 5818, represent the first efforts by the American government, with the advice and support of the British, to create policy for Africa South of the Sahara, including Ghana. During the years in which these policies were in place, American and British relations with Ghana continued to be positive. This was despite continuing debate over the character of the CPP government in Accra, where Kwame Nkrumah and his party took strong measures against any opposition to the government.

In early 1958 two leading members of Ghana's Opposition Party, Reginald R. Amponsah and Modesto K. Apaloo were arrested and tried on trumped up charges of an attempted coup d'état and assassination of the Prime Minister. Their arrests brought to forty the total number of persons detained under the

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. The fourth area of interest, "Social and Humanitarian" does not mention communism, nor much of anything. The section in its entirety reads, "The United States has a long record of humanitarian work in Africa through missionary and similar organizations. Much of the good reputation we enjoy results from this type of activity."

<sup>26</sup> DDEL, AWF, NSC Series, Box 13 Folder: Africa South of the Sahara (3), "NSC 5818, US Policy Toward Africa South of the Sahara Prior to Calendar Year 1960, 26 August 1958."

Preventative Detention Act. At roughly the same time the government secured passage of the Emergency Powers Bill and the Avoidance of Discrimination Bill, originally termed "The Political Parties Restriction Bill." These measures placed limits on the right to free association and the right to strike. They also sought to strike at the heart of tribalism by preventing the establishment of political parties based primarily on religion. Clause three of the Avoidance of Discrimination Act forbid the "hatred," "contempt," and "ridicule" of religious groups. Such vague wording, the Opposition complained, could be interpreted to suit any desires of the government. Archie Lang, Second Secretary of the US Embassy, agreed that the loosely worded legislation could be used to restrict the civil liberties of individuals. The act "could be especially dangerous here as civil liberties are neither spelled out in legislation nor enumerated in precedents." Lang continued, "At a time when the country seems singularly quiet, it is difficult to understand why it should seek more severe legislation than any to date."<sup>27</sup>

Severe legislation nonetheless continued. The government targeted its newest restrictions at Ghanaian laborers through its proposed Industrial Relations Bill. Orchestrated by J.K. Tettegah, General Secretary-Treasurer of the Ghana Trade Union Congress (GTUC), the bill sought to consolidate all independent trade unions under the centralized control of the GTUC, an instrument of the Convention People's Party. While the proposal engendered immediate opposition from independent union members across the country, organized opposition to the

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<sup>27</sup>NAII, 745j.00/12-1857, Lang to Department of State, 18 December 1957.

measure was slow to gel, no doubt a result of the recent government crackdown on those who chose publicly to vocalize their opposition.

After months of government threats, labor leaders finally spoke out against the Industrial Relations Bill. In May 1958, S. Larbi Odam, General Secretary of the United Africa Company (UAF) Employee's Union, the only vital labor body to disassociate from the GTUC, widely publicized his opposition to the measure. Criticizing the government and warning against the destruction of trade union freedom, Odam cited the generally voluntary nature of trade unionism. "Nowhere in the democratic world are people compelled to join trade unions." With this legislation, "the democratic spirit of the trade union movement is being destroyed."<sup>28</sup> Joining Odam in his protests was Daniel K. Foevie, National President of the Ghana Mines Employee's Union, the largest union in Ghana. Unlike Odam, Foevie possessed no taste for crusading tactics, but he worked to preserve the integrity of his union. Foevie protested the institution of a mandated check-off system, where employers would agree to deduct a portion of the employees' wages and deposit the funds to the GTUC central body. GTUC leader John Tettegah believed that unions would willingly forgo a degree of autonomy in favor of a guaranteed percentage of income. Foevie disagreed, suggesting instead that individual unions negotiate independent check-off schemes with employers through collective bargaining. Tettegah immediately denounced S. Larbi Odam. In an article in the CPP-controlled *Guinea Times*, Tettegah referred to Odam as "warped," and called his commentary on democratic

trade unionism "anti-TUC tripe and pro-capitalist [bunk]."<sup>29</sup> The government vilified Daniel Foevie and threatened to deport him. In July 1958 he resigned his post, "a beaten man."<sup>30</sup>

Seymour Chalfin, labor attaché at the U.S. embassy was quick to report on the significance of Foevie's check-off debate. "It can be strongly argued," Chalfin began, "that the CPP considers a legislatively enforced check-off as a device to firmly tie the labor movement to itself under the whip hand of Tettegah, who would control the movement's funds." Chalfin believed that the CPP would then liberally dip into GTUC funds for its own enrichment. Chalfin was highly critical of the government's moves to control labor. The system, he reported, would smother "the few really independent elements within the labor movement and [create] . . . a fully pliant, puppet labor organization. Perhaps this is what the government seeks."<sup>31</sup>

U.S. employers and labor leaders joined Chalfin in expressing their dissatisfaction with the latest events in Ghana. During Nkrumah's July 1958 trip to the United States, AFL-CIO President, George Meany, thoroughly questioned the Ghanaian Prime Minister on proposed GTUC reorganization plans, leaving no room for doubt that American labor took a particularly dim view of the

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<sup>28</sup>NAII, 845j.062/5-1658, Chalfin to Department of State, 16 May 1958.

<sup>29</sup>Quoted in Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>NAII, 845j.062/7-3158, Chalfin to Department of State, 31 July 1958.

<sup>31</sup>NAII, 845j.062/4-1058, Chalfin to Department of State, 16 May 1958.

centralized GTUC set-up.<sup>32</sup> Overseas employers also opposed reorganization plans. A strike by Texaco workers in Accra fueled Tettegah's suspicions that employers conspired to provoke labor unrest in order to discredit GTUC plans. According to Chalfin, opposition to the reorganization plan on the part of overseas employers was nearly unanimous. He further suggested that employers did perhaps indirectly encourage labor unrest, for example, by quickly agreeing to collective bargaining and the check-off system, eliminating the need for the legislated system Tettegah proposed.<sup>33</sup> Chalfin consistently voiced concern over the long-term implications of the GTUC reorganization. Despite policy objectives of NSC 5719 to guide trade unionism "toward Western models...by direct advice and assistance," the Department of State made no apparent response to Chalfin's repeated critical reports.<sup>34</sup>

According to Seymour Chalfin, the final Industrial Relations Bill, passed in December 1958, "[amounted] practically to the nullification of a major portion of Ghana's entire labor movement."<sup>35</sup> The act created twenty-four national unions with a centralized umbrella structure held tightly in check by the government. Public workers unions, which included all government workers, were the groups most adversely affected. Existing as trade unions in name only, these workers

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<sup>32</sup>NAII, 845j.062/7-3158, Herter to Accra, 31 July 1958.

<sup>33</sup>NAII, 845j.062/10-1058, Chalfin to Department of State, 10 October 1958.

<sup>34</sup>*FRUS*, 1955-57, Volume XVIII, p. 81, enclosure to "National Security Council Report," 23 August 1957.

<sup>35</sup>NAII, 845j.062/12-958, Chalfin to Department of State, 9 December 1958.

retained no right to bargain, strike or seek arbitration and were denied their own check-off system. Even Tom Mboya, friend and colleague of Kwame Nkrumah, and General Secretary of the Kenya Federation of Labor, echoed Chalfin's frustrations, stating that "the bill would be difficult to defend against those who warn that new African nations will be ruled undemocratically."<sup>36</sup>

In keeping with the anti-communist focus of the United States' Africa policy, Secretary of State Dulles virtually ignored Chalfin's reports on the deteriorating state of organized labor. Rather than respond to Chalfin's concerns, Dulles chased communist ghosts among the Opposition Party. In early 1958, the Secretary cabled the embassy with instructions to report on the annual conference of the GTUC. He directed embassy personnel to investigate "extreme leftists" who had in the past violently disagreed with the more moderate policies of Nkrumah. Dulles sought information on leftist forces who might "undermine foreign confidence and favor the emergence of anti-Western policies." Specifically, Dulles cited concern that labor organizer Victor Narh, "who has a long record of leftist views" had originated the parliamentary motion to oppose Tettegah's consolidation plans. Dulles feared an alliance between Narh and "bread and butter" unionists.<sup>37</sup> The secretary appeared willing to accept extreme government efforts to control labor, fearing that the movement already had been infiltrated from the left.

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<sup>36</sup>NAII, 845j.062/12-2758, Chalfin to Department of State, 27 December 1958.

<sup>37</sup>NAII, 845j.062/1-3158, John Foster Dulles to Accra, 31 January 1958.

Chalfin, unable to find any of Dulles' "extreme leftists" among Tettegah's opponents, responded to the Secretary's instructions in April 1958, stating that the "clearest threat of increased Communist influence within the Ghana labor movement lies in the possibility of trade union visitors to Red China and the USSR." In an attempt to reiterate the serious nature of the trade union crisis and shift the focus of U.S. policymakers away from communism, Chalfin stressed that even these visits had been pushed to the back burner, "by the intensity of the debate on structural reorganization."<sup>38</sup> Six months later Chalfin suggested that Tettegah himself, and not those opposed to him, could be responsible for the greatest threat to stability in the region. According to the labor attaché, Tettegah's efforts "to impose a high centralized structure on a largely unwilling movement... may well sap the vitality of the movement leaving it lifeless and, by virtue of its centralization, much more valuable to capture by sinister forces."<sup>39</sup> Chalfin recognized that internal repression and the shrinking of democratic political freedoms could, in the long run, prove to be disastrous to the U.S. search for stability in Africa by creating inroads for communism.

It is at first difficult to reconcile the Department of State's apparent lack of concern for repression in Ghana with its concurrent policy focus on stability. Recognizing, however, that the United States viewed communism as the primary catalyst of instability in Africa, State Department logic becomes evident. U.S.

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<sup>38</sup>NAII, 845j.062/4-2258, Chalfin to Department of State, 25 April 1958.

<sup>39</sup>NAII, 845j.062/10-2358, Chalfin to Department of State, 23 October 1958.

officials did not object to Nkrumah's aggressive policies because they believed strong governmental controls would repel the communist threat. The presence of a large population of dissatisfied Ghanaians, presumably politicized through their trade union association, would seem to constitute a serious threat to the stability of the State. State Department officials, however, relied upon the Preventative Detention Act, the Emergency Powers Act and the Avoidance of Discrimination Act to limit the freedoms of the general populace, thereby limiting the possibility of communist infiltration, and insuring the stability of the Nkrumah regime. In allowing the Ghanaian government forcibly to eliminate dissent, even dissent that arose through democratic channels, the United States pursued a policy where stability, regardless of the means used to achieve it, was the desired result.

### Accepting Authoritarianism as Policy, 1959-60

April 1959 saw the initiation of the French-American-British tripartite talks on Africa. During a discussion of recent events on the continent, the participants concurred not only that African societies embodied a "natural element of susceptibility to authoritarian regimes," but also that, "democracy cannot be created overnight."<sup>40</sup> What started as tacit acceptance of a degree of repression as a stepping stone to African democracy would become a tenet of US policy in sub-Saharan Africa by the end of 1960.

In June 1959 the National Security Council met to discuss a State Department paper on Afro-Asian military takeovers. The Department of State

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<sup>40</sup> PRO, FO 371/137966/63172/J1045/27, "Tripartite Talks on Africa: Summary Record of First Meeting at Ambassadorial Level, 27 April 1959."



and its counterparts in Britain had been discussing matters of authoritarianism and democracy in underdeveloped nations for the past year. Policymakers in attendance largely agreed that in "backward societies" such as those in Africa and Asia, "it was desirable to encourage the military to stabilize a conservative system." Participants even considered whether or not the United States should provide these military governments "minimal aid...in order to provide stability." The NSC recognized that encouraging military governments was not in accordance with current policy for Africa that called for "strong stable governments with pro-Western orientation," but allowed that this goal, while desirable, may also be unattainable. Other alternatives had to be considered.<sup>41</sup>

Clarence Randall, Director of the Council on Foreign Economic Policy dissented from this view, regarding it as entirely too complacent, and overly willing to abandon the democratic ideal and accept authoritarianism in Africa. Eisenhower countered that Arabs and Africans "simply cannot understand our ideas of freedom or human dignity. They have lived so long under dictatorships of one form or another, how can we expect them to run successfully a free government?"<sup>42</sup> Randall disagreed and shared his belief that there was a real opportunity for free government in Africa South of the Sahara if the United States

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<sup>41</sup> PRO, FO371/152113, "Steering Committee: Democracy in Backward Countries," undated; and PRO, FO 371/152115, "The Planning Section: Progress Report and Future Programme of Work," undated.

<sup>42</sup> DDEL, AWF, NSC Series, Box 11, Folder: 410, 18 June 1959, "Discussion at the 410<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday June 18, 1959."

would provide support and encouragement even when governments chose a socialist economic system. Randall firmly believed this kind of acceptance, and not the acceptance of authoritarian rulers, to be in the long-term interest of US national security.

Under Secretary of State Douglas Dillon did not engage Randall's idea of supporting socialist economies in Africa, instead agreeing that the real issue was indeed the long-term best interest of the United States. Dillon clarified that while the United States certainly did not endorse open-ended support for authoritarian regimes, neither did it believe that parliamentary democracy could immediately work for underdeveloped nations. According to Dillon, "authoritarianism is required to lead backwards societies through their socio-economic revolutions."<sup>43</sup> The "essential test" for deciding support for a particular regime should be based upon whether or not the regime "responsibly confronts the problems facing it...and, in so doing, successfully resists Communist techniques."<sup>44</sup> With that statement, Dillon captured the overarching theme of US policy in Africa -- stability first.

In 1960 US policy became even more open to the notion of authoritarian regimes. No longer referring solely to the development of military dictatorships, the State Department asserted that in sub-Saharan Africa, "one man, one-party

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>"Political Implications of Afro-Asian Military Takeovers," attached to Ibid.

rule" was predominant, but Communism still had not become a strong force.<sup>45</sup> Government in Ghana was a prime example of this phenomenon, and figured prominently in the State Department's reformulation of US policy.<sup>46</sup> The United States maintained that in Ghana, as in other African countries, Western parliamentary democracy simply had not yet "satisfactorily become adapted to African traditions and tribal structure."<sup>47</sup> Yes, Ghana did enact harsh policies, but it also retained a stable government unsullied by communism, and would eventually find its way to democracy. The new US "imperative" thus became to "identify itself with the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of Africa."<sup>48</sup> This would require a new acceptance of practices and policies not necessarily in keeping with a US commitment to the principles of freedom and democracy. The UK agreed that Western support for African authoritarian regimes could produce short and long-term advantages for stability, as long as a "modicum of human rights" remained intact.<sup>49</sup> It was clear to London and Washington officials that

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<sup>45</sup> DDEL, AWF, NSC Series, Box 13, "Memorandum for the National Security Council," and attached discussion paper, "National Implications of Future Developments Regarding Africa," 10 August 1960.

<sup>46</sup> DDEL, NSC, Special Staff, Box 1, Folder: Africa South of the Sahara (2), "Briefing Note for PB Meeting 2/16/60." 12 Feb, 1960.

<sup>47</sup> DDEL, WHO, SANSA, NSC Series, Policy Paper Subseries, Folder: 28, NSC 6005/1, "US Policy Toward West Africa," 9 April 1960.

<sup>48</sup> DDEL, AWF, NSC Series, Box 13, "Memorandum for the National Security Council," and attached discussion paper, "National Implications of Future Developments Regarding Africa," 10 August 1960.

<sup>49</sup> PRO, FO 371/152117/ZP15/40/G, "Minutes from Ramsbotham on Discussion with Policy Planning Staff re: 'Democracy in Backward Countries,'" 21 May 1960.

political stability in sub-Saharan Africa would face "severe trials."<sup>50</sup> They would respond to these trials with surprising departures from previous policies.

### Accepting Non-Alignment

If Western policymakers were increasingly comfortable with the idea of African "strong men" as the key to stability, they also accepted that these leaders would have to be granted a degree of latitude in foreign affairs. With the continent of Africa in a state of "extreme flux," policy required "maximum flexibility."

According to Under Secretary Dillon this meant "doing what needs to be done...rather than what accords with our basic ideas as to the ideal way of handling the situation."<sup>51</sup> One old standard the United States showed a willingness to abandon was its heretofore-stilted view of non-alignment.

In his 15 July 1958 foreign policy speech to parliament, Kwame Nkrumah clearly outlined his commitment to non-alignment as he had never before. Ghana, not being "committed ideologically or aligned with any particular power or political bloc," would act as "it sees best at any particular time" in keeping with its duty to the United Nations, and the conferences in Bandung and Accra. Making reference to Ghana's responsibilities not only to its own people, but to all the people of Africa, Nkrumah expressed his unequivocal support of liberation of all colonial peoples in Africa. He stated that Ghana would "do everything within its

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<sup>50</sup> DDEL, WHO, SANSA, NSC Series, Policy Paper Subseries, Folder: 28, NSC 6005/1, "US Policy Toward West Africa," 9 April 1960.

<sup>51</sup> DDEL, AWF, NSC Series, Box 13, Folder: 456, 25 August 1960, "Discussion at the 456<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday August 18, 1960."

power" to encourage national movements "in any part of Africa that are dedicated to the emancipation of colonial peoples and to the welfare and prosperity of their peoples."<sup>52</sup> This statement certainly did little to reassure Great Britain and the United States that Ghana supported the UK policy for calculated and staggered decolonization across the Commonwealth. Nonetheless, the speech and its implications were never mentioned during Nkrumah's visit to Washington less than two weeks later. US officials regarded Ghana as a "powerful example" with a "strong voice in African Affairs," but noted Nkrumah's statement with interest, if not concern. According the State Department, "The United States desires to encourage this key nation in its political development and economic growth and to support the preservation of its basically Western orientation."<sup>53</sup>

The Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) discussed non-alignment as a relatively benign tendency for African countries that sprouted from nationalism, and did not by definition imply a distaste for Western ideals. According to the OCB, non-alignment, "means that these countries do not want to take an advance over-all position but will judge each as it arises on its merits. For instance, Ghana supported the U.S. action in Lebanon but opposes us in the matter of UN seating of Communist China." The OCB further concluded that a policy of non-alignment would not necessarily result in a turn to the East. The situation in

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<sup>52</sup> PRAAD, RG 17/1/286, "Speech on Foreign Policy by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Prime Minister of Ghana, in the National Assembly, on 15 July 1958."

<sup>53</sup> DDEL, WHO, SANSA, NSC Series, Policy Paper Subseries, Folder: 28, NSC 6005/1, "US Policy Toward West Africa," 9 April 1960.

Ghana was a case in point. While Kwame Nkrumah desperately wished to settle financing for the Volta River Project, providing the Soviet Bloc with a clear entrée, Ghana had not "explored the general Soviet declarations of willingness to aid its economic development."<sup>54</sup> Ghana was "not believed likely" to turn to the USSR for aid until and unless "Western sources fail to assist in the Volta River project."<sup>55</sup>

By mid-1960, even an acceptance of Soviet-bloc aid would be tolerable to the United States. Stating that some African nations would turn to the Communist Bloc for aid, "as a means of emphasizing their neutrality," the US policymakers now understood this as a feature of non-alignment that could not be prevented. This was largely due to the influence of the UK that had been pressing since independence for the United States to accept Ghana's relations with the East. This newly prevailing attitude agreed that the West should continue to compete with the USSR, but not on every program in every country. The new aim would be to "encourage [African nations] to accept only a minimum of Bloc aid, to limit Bloc activity to less sensitive fields, and to place those activities under strict controls."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> DDEL, WHO, SANSA, NSC Series, Policy Paper Subseries, Folder: 25, NSC 5818, "Operations Coordinating Board Report on Africa South of the Sahara," 14 January 1959.

<sup>55</sup> DDEL, WHO, SANSA, NSC Series, Policy Paper Subseries, Folder: 28, NSC 6005/1, "US Policy Toward West Africa," 9 April 1960.

<sup>56</sup> DDEL, AWF, NSC Series, Box 13, "Memorandum for the National Security Council," and attached discussion paper, "National Implications of Future Developments Regarding Africa," 10 August 1960.

The United States would seek to deny the Soviets a major position in Africa, but simply would "have to adjust to some Soviet presence there."<sup>57</sup>

Policymakers also acknowledged their consideration for new economic systems in Africa. Under Secretary Dillon, who had once declined to comment on the idea that America support socialist economies in Africa, allowed that African governments would resort "in varying degrees to state planning and state trading.... Our officials...will need to respect these views"<sup>58</sup> US Ambassador Wilson Flake built upon this idea in a memo outlining Ghana's desire to expand its economy as rapidly as possible. Flake presented Ghana's steadfast belief that socialism offered the most efficient path, an idea certainly encouraged by the Kremlin. While he anticipated little chance that capitalism and free enterprise could be a viable alternative in Ghana, he emphasized that democratic socialism as practiced in Scandinavia could satisfy both Ghana and the United States. While the East wooed industrial, agricultural, and trade cooperatives in Ghana, the West ignored them. "There is much the United States could do directly to help make socialism work in Ghana, once we accept the fact that it is what the Ghana

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<sup>57</sup> DDEL, AWF, NSC Series, Box 13, Folder: 456, 25 August 1960, "Discussion at the 456<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday August 18, 1960."

<sup>58</sup> DDEL, AWF, NSC Series, Box 13, "Memorandum for the National Security Council," and attached discussion paper, "National Implications of Future Developments Regarding Africa," 10 August 1960.

Government wants," Flake recommended. "Above all, the US must decide whether it can identify itself with the manifest Ghanaian desire for socialism."<sup>59</sup>

### Flexible Policy in Practice

Kwame Nkrumah learned from 1957-1960 that he did not have to be a perfect African leader to preserve his ties to the West. Both East and West monitored his actions, still anxious to count him in their camp, As long as his decisions did nothing unduly to provoke the great powers, he felt a certain freedom in policymaking.<sup>60</sup> This, combined with a new US commitment to flexibility encouraged the United States to overlook incidents that may earlier have provoked the ire of the West.

In late December 1958 Ghana hosted three hundred delegates, representing many like-minded political parties from across the continent, for the weeklong All African People's Conference in Accra. The United States and Great Britain had exchanged fearful views about the nature of the conference, and the "inflammatory material" it was likely to produce, not to mention the attendance of representatives from Egypt and observers from the Soviet Union.<sup>61</sup> Conference resolutions condemned imperialism, colonialism, and endorsed Pan-Africanism,

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<sup>59</sup> DDEL, WHO, NSC, Counsel on Foreign Economic Policy Series, Folder: Africa (1), Flake to Department of State, 8 September 1960.

<sup>60</sup> The idea that Nkrumah enjoyed great latitude in policymaking in this period was first suggested in Thompson, p. 94.

<sup>61</sup> PRO, FO 371/131239/63172/J2231/65, Pirie-Gordon to Carter, 6 June 1958.



which the West viewed as potentially subversive and dangerous<sup>62</sup>. On the whole the conference was indeed more publicly critical of American and British positions than had been the earlier Conference of Independent African States (IAS). And unlike the IAS, which ended with no concrete plans for further discussion, the AAPC resulted in the All African People's Solidarity Committee, with a permanent Secretariat in Cairo. The Operations Coordinating Board commented that the Secretariat staff included "radicals as well as moderates," while the British Foreign Office referred to it as the "African Cominform."<sup>63</sup> Other than these brief comments, British and American diplomats did not discuss the conference developments at length, and the OCB concluded its report on the conference with the suggestion that Nkrumah generally had "exercised a moderating influence on extremists."<sup>64</sup>

Neither did the harsh criticism of the American voting record at the UN by Ghana's foreign minister, Ako Adjei, provoke a US response. Adjei met with Fred Hadsel of the US mission at the UN and argued forcefully that, on matters

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<sup>62</sup> PRO, FO 371/131238/63172/J2231/3, Bottomley to Smith, 20 January 1958; and PRO, FO 371/13128/63172/J2231/5, Smith to Bottomley, 18 February 1958.

<sup>63</sup> PRO, FO 371/137966/63172/J1045/27, "Tripartite Talks on Africa: Summary Record of First Meeting at Ambassadorial Level, 27 April 1959; and DDEL, WHO, SANSA, NSC Series, Policy Paper Subseries, Folder: 25, NSC 5818, "Operations Coordinating Board Report on Africa South of the Sahara," 14 January 1959.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

relating to Africa, the United States was in habit of supporting the colonizers.<sup>65</sup> In an immediate reaction, the Department of State drafted a contentious protest memo for Accra, pointing out that in seventy-nine votes during the course of 1958, Ghana had voted eight times with the US, forty-eight times with the USSR and had registered twenty-three abstentions. Cooler heads prevailed and the department instead asked Wilson Flake to discuss the matter with Adjei upon the latter's return to Accra. Flake reported that after "digging almost to the point of gouging" he could not elicit a hostile response from Adjei. While Flake recognized that Adjei may have been more reserved with him than he had been with Hadsel in New York, he still recommended that US officials pursue the matter no further. In the end, the United States and Ghana agreed to disagree on some issues, but "remain close and trusting friends."<sup>66</sup>

Ghana further exercised its policy of non-alignment through a growing friendship with China that included a Ghanaian trade mission to Peking; the presence of eighteen Polish engineers for the purpose of planning an iron mine; and the decision to host a trade mission from East Germany. None of these events triggered a negative response from Great Britain or the United States. As 1959 drew to a close, a US embassy report noted, "Our trade relations with

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<sup>65</sup> Interestingly, the United States also received criticism from Europe that it was siding with Africa in the UN, Nwabuani, p.141.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., pp. 142-43.

Ghana, including access to raw materials produced in Ghana, are good. Our political relations with Ghana are friendly and fruitful."<sup>67</sup>

### Public Disagreement: The Congo and the United Nations

The issue producing the greatest threat to the relationship between Ghana and the West was the rapid independence and ensuing chaos in the Congo. Both Ghana and the United States were deeply involved in the Congo, though for vastly different reasons. Not surprisingly, Nkrumah supported the ambitions of Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba to maintain his country's newfound independence and oppose any Belgian influence. Since Lumumba's attendance at the All-African People's Conference in Accra in 1958, Nkrumah hoped to act as a mentor for Lumumba, and hoped that Lumumba would emulate Nkrumah's championing of a free Africa. US interest stemmed largely from a desire to deny the Soviets a large-scale presence on the continent.<sup>68</sup> Belgium created mass chaos in the Congo when it rushed the colony into independence on 30 June 1960.

While Belgian and Congolese officials participated in ceremonies of independence, Congolese troops remained under the harsh and segregated control of Belgian officers. Within days the troops rebelled, attacking their former military leaders as well as ordinary European citizens. Belgium responded by

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>68</sup> An extensive amount of literature examines the Congo crises. To begin, see David N. Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention* and Madeleine G. Kalb, *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa-- from Eisenhower to Kennedy* (New York: Macmillan, 1982). For Nkrumah's account, see Kwame Nkrumah, *Challenge of the Congo* (New York: International Publishers, 1967).

sending paratroopers, who retaliated with violence against Congolese citizens. Conditions worsened on 11 July when Moïse Tshombe declared the secession of Katanga, Congo's richest province, and Belgium supported the Katanga rebels with additional troops and weapons. The next day Ghana sent diplomats to the Congo with the offer of two battalions and more than one hundred tons of supplies. As Ghana arranged the transport of its troops and stores, Prime Minister Lumumba and President Joseph Kasavubu appealed to the United States for additional military support. The Eisenhower Administration suggested instead that the Congolese officials contact the United Nations. The UN adopted a resolution on 15 July, calling for Belgium to remove its troops from the Congo, but providing no direct military assistance. By 19 July, merely a week after Ghana first offered assistance, and before any other nation, unilaterally or through the UN, offered assistance 1,193 Ghanaian troops arrived in Léopoldville.<sup>69</sup> UN troops did not arrive for another month.

The United States observed Nkrumah's support of Lumumba, and hoped to use the relationship to its advantage. Prior to the Congo's rapid separation from Belgium, Washington had noted an alarming level of communist penetration in the region. US officials hoped Nkrumah would encourage Lumumba to keep Belgian civil servants as a means of stemming the tide of subversive outside influence. In April 1960, Nkrumah assured Ambassador Flake that he would

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<sup>69</sup> Thompson, p. 124.

indeed work to prevent any Soviet plots.<sup>70</sup> As the crisis in the Congo persisted, Nkrumah regularly discussed the situation with British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, President Eisenhower, and British and American diplomatic personnel in Ghana. Nkrumah remarked on his satisfaction at being kept informed by London and Washington, believed that Eisenhower fully supported the efforts of the UN in the Congo, and again echoed Eisenhower's fear of Russian intervention in the region.<sup>71</sup> The two leaders shared an uneventful meeting in New York on 22 September, discussing both the situation in Congo and coming negotiations on the Volta project.<sup>72</sup> The following day, President Nkrumah addressed the UN General Assembly. In a speech that simultaneously criticized the policy of the West in the Congo and applauded the efforts of UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld, Nkrumah fully voiced his non-aligned policy and thoroughly aggravated officials in Washington.<sup>73</sup> Although the speech can be viewed in retrospect as having "reflected a remarkable consistency," many of Nkrumah's positions more closely

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<sup>70</sup> Nwaubani, pp. 151-52.

<sup>71</sup> PRO, FO 371/146802/JC10345/2, "Inward Telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office," 6 August 1960; and PRO, FO 371/146802/JC10345/2, 2A, 2B, Accra to CRO, 6 August 1960.

<sup>72</sup> DDEL, AWF, International Series, Box 16, Folder: 2, "Memo of Conversation, 22 September 1960."

<sup>73</sup> In July 1960 following an election and referendum, Ghana adopted a new constitution and became the Republic of Ghana with Nkrumah as its first President. Voter turn out was extremely low and the change did little to affect Ghana's foreign relations. For a discussion of the domestic impact in Ghana see Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, pp. 363-421.

resembled Krushchev's than Eisenhower's. To make matter worse, Krushchev rose to shake Nkrumah's hand at the end of the speech."<sup>74</sup>

Within hours, Secretary of State Christian Herter, having neither heard nor read the speech in its entirety, commented to the *New York Times* that Nkrumah had revealed himself as "very definitely leaning toward the Soviet Bloc."<sup>75</sup> Nkrumah was "incensed with Americans as a result of Herter's remark," and commented that Herter was "the last person from whom he would have expected the comment."<sup>76</sup> Back in Accra, diplomatic staff at the UK High Commission reported on their efforts to calm and quiet the angry US Ambassador who agreed fully with Herter's assessment of the speech. British officials believed that numerous misunderstandings between the United States and Ghana on the Congo situation had provoked the invective, indicating a distaste that America was "harking back to [a] Dulles line" of those who aren't with us are against us.<sup>77</sup>

Another public but less acrimonious disagreement between Ghana and the West occurred eleven weeks later, when the UN considered the "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples." The resolution

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<sup>74</sup> Nwaubani, pp. 155-156.

<sup>75</sup> *New York Times*, 24 September 1960.

<sup>76</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 26 September 1960; and PRO, FO 371/146802/JC10345/4 Accra to CRO, 19 October 1960, with attached comments by Moreton.

<sup>77</sup> PRO, FO 371/146802/JC10345/4 Accra to CRO, 19 October 1960 with attached comments by Moreton.

maintained that colonialism, by its very nature of subjecting people to foreign domination, violated human rights and thus the UN Charter. The United States abstained at Eisenhower's direction.<sup>78</sup> The President was no doubt influenced by a telegram from Harold Macmillan expressing his shock that Eisenhower would consider supporting such a "nauseating document." Macmillan asserted, "We are making a tremendous effort to get peaceful development in Africa and to keep communism out. This vote on behalf of the American people...will have a most discouraging effect.... Do let us stand together, at least on a decision to abstain, and thus disassociate ourselves from a resolution which has no connection with reality."<sup>79</sup> Eisenhower's decision for abstention disregarded advice from the US embassies in Paris and London, the United States' own delegation to the UN, and even Secretary of State Christian Herter, to support the resolution.

Public disagreement between the United States and Ghana on the Congo again reached fever pitch on 13 February 1961, when the announcement of Lumumba's death sparked a demonstration at the US Embassy in Accra. It had become clear following the September debacle at the UN that the United States and Ghana would be unable to craft a united response to the Congo crisis. Nkrumah faulted Belgium for the violent escalation of the situation, and condemned the West for failing to support fully the UN decision that Belgian

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<sup>78</sup> DDEL, AWF, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 13, Folder: Herter, December 1960 (2), Herter to Goodpaster 8 December 1960.

<sup>79</sup> DDEL, AWF, International Series, Box 25, Folder: Macmillan, Harold 8-1-60 to 1-20-61 (3), Macmillan to Eisenhower, 9 December 1960.

troops withdraw. In August 1960 after Belgium had ignored two UN resolutions to remove all troops from the Congo, and the United States had twice declined Lumumba's request to send troops to the Congo, Lumumba accepted a standing offer from the Soviet Union for military support. That Lumumba had requested and received the assistance of the Soviet Union proved only that he intended to defend the Congo through any means available. Nkrumah regarded Lumumba as a fervent nationalist working to maintain the sovereignty and territorial integrity of his country. Washington, by contrast, considered Lumumba as the main obstacle to stability, and as perhaps more dangerous than even Fidel Castro. That Lumumba requested and received the assistance of the Soviets proved to the United States that he encouraged and facilitated the communist penetration of Africa. Eisenhower found it difficult to hide his dislike for the Congolese leader, wishing at one point that he "fall into a river of crocodiles."<sup>80</sup> While Nkrumah championed Lumumba's legitimacy as Prime Minister, Washington notified the CIA office in Léopoldville to give Lumumba's enemies every conceivable support in excluding him from any possibility of leadership.<sup>81</sup>

Patrice Lumumba, placed under house arrest by President Kasavubu, and confined by UN and Congolese troops since September 1960, managed to escape in late November, only to be captured in early December by forces loyal to

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<sup>80</sup> Quoted in Nwaubani, p. 148.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 158.



Colonel Joseph Mobutu.<sup>82</sup> He was murdered on 17 January 1961, and his death announced to the world on 13 February. On 15 February, three hundred Ghanaians, including students, women's organizations, labor leaders, and representatives of the majority Convention People's Party, staged a protest at the American Embassy in Accra. Carrying signs that read, "American Murderers of Lumumba," "Down with US Imperialism in Africa," and "Americans You Are Inhuman," the crowd wore black armbands and rang tribal bells. One protestor fired blank cartridges from a rifle. Although no one was injured, and damage to the Embassy was minimal, the level of anger, and the complete lack of support from police or foreign ministry shocked Embassy personnel.<sup>83</sup> The news of Lumumba's death devastated Kwame Nkrumah. In a radio broadcast, Nkrumah accused the US and other Western powers of having collaborated in a brutal colonial war, "Alas, the architects of this murder are many."<sup>84</sup> Later that month Nkrumah clarified his suspicions of Western support of the Katanga regime to specify, in a letter to President John F. Kennedy, the complicity of American

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<sup>82</sup> Mobutu, a colonel in the Congolese Army and a former colleague of Patrice Lumumba, had, by this point become the choice of the United States to assume power in Congo. He enjoyed the full assistance of the CIA in Lumumba's capture.

<sup>83</sup> John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, Massachusetts (hereafter referred to as JFKL), Presidential Office Files (hereafter referred to as POF), Box 117B, Folder: Ghana Security 2/1/61-2/18/61, Accra to State, 15 February 1961.

<sup>84</sup> Quoted in Mahoney, p. 165.

"Intelligence services" in arming the breakaway province.<sup>85</sup> Kennedy did not address Nkrumah's accusation in his reply, nor did the Department of State ever respond to Embassy reports of the anti-American protest. It seemed that again, the new flexibility which the United States applied to relations with Ghana would allow Nkrumah great latitude in expressing opinions previously unacceptable to the United States.

This flexibility was indicative of major shift in US policy that responded in part to Kwame Nkrumah's ability to maintain a stable Ghana. Nkrumah believed that Ghana required strong internal control to achieve domestic stability. This in turn would allow Ghana to claim a position of respect and legitimacy in Africa and the international political community. He achieved this firm grip through censorship, legislation silencing political opposition, unprecedented control over organized labor and other domestic measures that suggested a dictatorial concentration of executive power. Nkrumah's actions, while seemingly at odds with the United States' commitment to basic democratic freedoms, garnered the support of US policymakers, who viewed Nkrumah's tight control as a means to prevent the communist infiltration of Ghana. This embrace of stability at all costs drove the United States to reshape drastically its foreign policy to accommodate authoritarianism not only in Ghana, but across Africa. Acceptance of authoritarian rule led to acceptance of non-alignment. The United States previously had viewed non-alignment as a precursor to accepting Soviet aid, and

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<sup>85</sup> JFKL, POF, Box 117B, Folder: Ghana Security 2/19/61-2/28/61, Accra to State, 23 February 1961.

therefore, communism. An authoritarian domestic policy would, however, prevent communism from taking root in Ghana, even if Nkrumah's foreign policy included public vehement disagreement with the West, or even direct interaction with the Eastern Bloc. Although Ghana pursued policies and voiced opinions previously unpalatable to the United States, Cold War considerations made these actions not merely acceptable, but central to the revision of US policy in sub-Saharan Africa.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE VOLTA RIVER PROJECT AND THE BOUNDARIES OF THE NEW FRONTIER, 1960-1962<sup>1</sup>

Kwame Nkrumah's statute in front of Ghana's Parliament was engraved with the words, 'Seek ye first the political kingdom,' a biblical paraphrase Nkrumah repeated often during Ghana's push for independence. While Nkrumah worked to solidify his power at home and the position of Ghana abroad, he also recognized that Ghana's newly won political independence required economic independence. The 'political kingdom' had to be reinforced by a healthy Ghanaian economy. To achieve this, he relied on the prospects of the Volta River to bring industrialization to Ghana, and he relied on the United States to support the project. The Eisenhower Administration approved US funding for the Volta proposal; the British government staunchly supported it; and the new President, John F. Kennedy, appropriated the money. Having pledged to uphold Eisenhower's commitment to fund the Volta plan in meetings with Ghana's Ministry of Finance, the Administration simultaneously reconsidered the decision because of Nkrumah's warmer public relations with the East. While Kennedy's campaign rhetoric professed a vigorous support of Africa and a cogent understanding of neutralism, his response to the Volta River Project revealed an

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<sup>1</sup> While Kennedy spoke of the "New Frontier" throughout his campaign, the phrase is perhaps best remembered from his speech formally accepting the Democratic nomination for President in Los Angeles, 15 July 1960. See Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), pp. 59-60.

inflexible policy that attached obvious ideological strings to American aid. Dangling before Ghana the promise of Volta aid in return for its unilateral commitment to Western democratic ideals, officials in the Kennedy Administration lacked a nuanced approach to nonalignment, relying instead on the traditional Cold War idea that those who were not with them, were against them.

### Continuing VRP Negotiations, 1958-1960

Cooperation between the United States and Ghana on the Volta River Project continued throughout 1960 regardless of disagreements the nations faced in other areas of foreign relations. Discussion between the United States and Ghana on the Volta River Project, in fact, had progressed steadily since Nkrumah's July 1958 visit to Washington, D.C., albeit more cautiously than Ghana would have preferred.<sup>2</sup> In August 1958 Ghana signed an agreement with Kaiser Industries to update engineering reports on the VRP, and within a month, company President Edgar Kaiser and Vice-President Chad Calhoun journeyed to Ghana to meet with Nkrumah and view the proposed construction site. Kaiser engineers reported favorably on the proposed dam and smelter in a January 1959 report, prompting Kwame Nkrumah again to contact the United States to discuss financial assistance for the project. The Department of State largely maintained the position on financial support that President Eisenhower had outlined in

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<sup>2</sup>DDEL, AWF, International Series, Box 3, Herter to Eisenhower, 5 Aug 1960. For a more intricate financial discussion of the Volta River Project negotiations see Nwaubani, pp. 163-204.

January 1958, when Nkrumah first requested funding. Certainly the US government possessed a "desire to help...within the limitation of our resources and other heavy commitments throughout the world."<sup>3</sup> At the same time The United States required not only an assurance of the project's viability, but also the firm commitment of the aluminum industry to bring the project to completion.<sup>4</sup> Only after Ghana acquired this firm commitment would the United States consider the possibility of financing a portion of the project. Ghana pursued the participation of aluminum companies under the guidance of Edgar Kaiser, who in November 1959 established Valco, the Volta Aluminum Company, a consortium to construct and operate the aluminum smelter.<sup>5</sup> In January 1960, buoyed by the successful creation of Valco, Nkrumah invited the World Bank to undertake a feasibility study of the VRP.

The Ghanaian leader had maintained his optimism during the nearly two years of negotiation with the United States. He had long hoped the VRP would jump start his country's economy and meet the "rising expectations" created by independence. According to Nkrumah, he and other African leaders were expected to "work miracles" following decolonization. Certainly after three

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Nwaubani, p. 182.

<sup>4</sup>The project called for Ghana to obtain financial support for the construction of the hydroelectric dam and power station. Aluminum companies would then finance the construction of the smelter and purchase power from Ghana to operate the smelter.

years, "the new government cannot sit and do nothing.... There must be something to show for independence."<sup>6</sup> At the May 1960 Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference Nkrumah, perhaps revealing some of this anxiety on the slow pace of negotiation, echoed this sentiment when commenting on the frenzy of African leaders to achieve rapid economic development. He regarded it as natural that a country, lacking personnel with diversified skills or managerial experience; thwarted by remnants of the colonial system; reliant on subsistence agriculture; "whose leaders had promised ...a higher standard of living," would seek immediate and substantial aid.<sup>7</sup>

Britain was equally anxious that negotiations reach critical mass, as the UK still firmly believed that Western funding of the Volta project was "by far and away the biggest single potential factor in preventing Ghana from moving further towards the communist bloc." The Commonwealth Relations Office encouraged its diplomats in Washington to reassure the Department of State of "Ghana's determination to proceed with Volta and to comply with the final conditions laid down by the bank, but you should emphasize the danger of delay."<sup>8</sup> In addition to its desire to keep Ghana in the Western sphere of influence,

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<sup>5</sup> VALCO consisted of Aluminum of Canada (ALCAN), Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA), Olin Mathieson, Reynolds Metals, and of course, Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical Corporation, a division of Kaiser Industries.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Nwaubani, p. 165.

<sup>7</sup> PRO, DO 35/9306/62892, "Extracts from the Minutes of a Meeting of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers held on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> May, 1960."

<sup>8</sup> PRO, DO195/22/62929/WA/10/109/1, Moreton to Stanley, 12 January 1960.

the UK was equally desirous of protecting its own interests. British officials feared that in the event of lost Volta funding, Nkrumah would respond as Egypt's Gamal Abdul Nasser had in 1956 when John Foster Dulles withdrew the US aid offer for the Aswan Dam. This had led Nasser to seize the Suez Canal, in which the British, not the Americans, had the biggest interest. "A wrong decision by Kaiser and his friends could lead to Nkrumah seizing assets...virtually none of which are American but which are mostly British - including one of the richest gold mines in the world." Some went as far as to suggest that in this event Britain should offer Ghana direct funding for the dam and the power plant, leaving the aluminum smelter to be constructed at a later date.<sup>9</sup>

There is every indication, in the spring of 1960, that the United States recognized the similarities, agreed with Britain on the ramifications of funding, and indeed intended to support the VRP. Policymakers believed the success of the project would "greatly reinforce Western and US interests in Ghana," and predicted that Ghana would be able to invite international tenders for the construction of the dam by September 1960.<sup>10</sup> The month before that predicted time, the National Security Council discussed the World Bank appraisal of the project, the consortium of aluminum companies, and the US proposal to provide substantial funding. The question remained how to divide the power resources produced by the dam, and how best to complete the financing. There was,

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<sup>9</sup> PRO, DO 195/22/62929/GH/8/2/1, Snelling to Clutterbeck 29 October 1960.

<sup>10</sup> DDEL, WHO, SANSA, NSC Series, Policy Paper Subseries, Folder: 28, NSC 6005/1, "US Policy Toward West Africa," 9 April 1960.



however, no question that the US would find a way to bring the project to fruition, to "keep this great resource for the Free World;" and keep Ghana in the Western camp.<sup>11</sup>

While the UN debated its second resolution on the Congo and Ghanaian troops arrived in Léopoldville, Ghanaian Finance Minister K.A. Gbedemah arrived in Washington, DC to continue VRP negotiations. Gbedemah met with representatives from the World Bank, the Department of Treasury, the Department of State, the Export-Import Bank and the Development Loan Fund (DLF). With the final cost of the hydroelectric component put at \$168 million, Ghana agreed to provide one-half the amount, and received tentative assurances that World Bank, United States and Britain would contribute the remaining funds. A \$40 million loan from the World Bank; \$30 million from the Export-Import Bank and DLF combined; and \$14 million from Britain would be guaranteed once Ghana reached a "satisfactory agreement" with Valco.<sup>12</sup>

The day before Nkrumah's ill-received address to the UN General Assembly on 23 September, he sent a letter to President Eisenhower detailing his desire to expand the Volta project, extending the power grid to a port East of Accra and to the mines in the country's northern region. Nkrumah requested the

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<sup>11</sup> DDEL, AWF, NSC Series, Box 13, Folder: 456, 25 August 1960, "Discussion at the 456<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday August 18, 1960."

<sup>12</sup> JFKL, POF, Box 117B, Folder: Ghana, State Department Briefing on Kwame Nkrumah 3/61, "Briefing Paper," attached to "Memorandum for the President," 7 March 1961.

additional financing, estimated between \$22-25 million, from US sources, with half coming from the DLF and half in the form of a grant. Eisenhower, while expressing confidence that financing could be found for this expansion in the future, were it shown to be justified economically, stressed that in the interim, Ghana should in no way delay the construction of the dam and power plant.<sup>13</sup> Even after Nkrumah's speech and the resulting frost between Nkrumah and Department of State, the VRP progressed. On 16 November, Ghana and Valco continued negotiations, resulting in "definitive agreements" on the construction of the smelter, power rates, and tax incentives.<sup>14</sup>

Ghana's commitment to work with the West on the Volta Dam project despite disagreement in other areas of foreign relations is further highlighted by its response to an unsolicited and substantial foreign aid package the USSR offered in August 1960. When Tawia Adamafio, General Secretary of the Convention People's Party, and John Tettegah, leader of the Ghana Trade Union Council, visited the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev proposed that he build the Volta River Project if the West continued to delay. The USSR offered a long-term credit in the amount of £14.7 million (Ghanaian). After more than two years of negotiation with the West, Ghana had suddenly received a generous offer of financial assistance for the one major project it had sought to fund since before independence. The Soviet offer had to be tempting. Past experience with

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<sup>13</sup> JFKL, POF, Box 117B, Folder: Ghana, State Department Briefing on Kwame Nkrumah 3/61, "Briefing Paper," attached to "Memorandum for the President," 7 March 1961Ibid.

Moscow suggested the financing could be quickly and easily arranged. The offer seemed to have no strings attached. Ghana's ambassador to Moscow even pleaded with Accra to accept the funds, as the failure to do so immediately had begun to embarrass him.<sup>15</sup> Ghana, nonetheless, continued to work with the West. Even after the death of Patrice Lumumba in February 1961 and the anger toward the US expressed by the demonstration at the US Embassy in Accra, Ghana did not approve the Soviet credit. K.A. Gbedemah, in fact, arrived in the United States for VRP meetings less than two weeks after the Embassy demonstration. During his visit, Ghana reached an agreement the State Department and World Bank on financing of the power grid extension Nkrumah and Eisenhower had discussed in September 1960. It appeared that no amount of dissonance between the West and Ghana could derail plans to proceed with the VRP or convince the Ghanaian government to turn to the Soviets for support.

Having based the economic future of his country and his own political future on the success of the Volta River Project, Kwame Nkrumah's determination to pursue the project with the support of the West is not surprising. Nkrumah firmly believed in industrialization as the key to creating a stable economy in Ghana. Ghana depended on cocoa exports for 60 to 75 percent of its national revenue, leaving the country's economic health susceptible to the fluctuation in price of that commodity. While the price of cocoa in 1954 of £467 per ton had

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> The idea that Ghana's handling of the Soviet aid package reflects its commitment to the West was first suggested by Thompson, pp. 164-66.

encouraged forecasts of Ghana's economic prosperity, the price in 1960 had dropped more than 50 percent to £226 per ton.<sup>16</sup> These fluctuations contributed to widespread poverty, and negatively affected the government's ability to respond through long term planning. The Volta River Project would cut Ghana's reliance on cocoa by promoting a diversified economy. The dam would provide power to a smelter, converting rich bauxite deposits to aluminum. This would establish aluminum as a new commodity for export while also reinvigorating Ghana's mining sector. The lake created by the dam would foster a fishing industry, and allow for the irrigation of the Accra plains, providing for increased agriculture. The project seemed to respond to all of Ghana's needs, and Nkrumah had latched on to the VRP as his country's salvation.

That Great Britain also believed in the promise of the VRP and had originally intended to pursue the project no doubt encouraged Kwame Nkrumah to look to the West for financial aid.<sup>17</sup> In 1957, Sir Robert Jackson, who headed the 1955 British preparatory commission in evaluating the VRP, alerted Nkrumah that Britain was no longer financially capable of pursuing the project and advised the Prime Minister to seek the support of the United States.<sup>18</sup> Jackson and his wife Barbara Ward became close friends with Nkrumah while the former served as

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<sup>16</sup> Bob Fitch and Mary Oppenheimer, *Ghana: End of an Illusion* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1966), p. 84-85.

<sup>17</sup> For Britain's review of the project see, DDE, AWF, International Series, Box 16, Folder: Ghana, "The Volta River Project: Report of the Preparatory Committee (London: Published for the UK and GC governments, HMSO, 1956).

<sup>18</sup> Thompson, p. 31.

Nkrumah's advisor on the VRP. Having worked with the British treasury, served as an assistant secretary-general of the UN, and acted as an advisor in India and Pakistan, Jackson enjoyed excellent relations with Nkrumah. His influence undoubtedly motivated Nkrumah to maintain ties with the West.<sup>19</sup> Nkrumah was also a pragmatic leader with political goals. His citizens in Ghana clamored for an increase in the standard of living, and expected action. While the Soviet Union made a generous grant available in August 1960, and suggested that they step in to build the dam, no concrete offer existed that could match that outlined by the West. Nkrumah had invested two years with the United States, and it was through US influence that Britain and the World Bank became involved. The Ghanaian leader did not wish to risk the funding, nor the prestige associated with the world's largest hydroelectric dam, no small matter for a man of Nkrumah's renowned ambition and arrogance. The people of Ghana referred to their Prime Minister as "Osagyefo," the Savior.<sup>20</sup> Certainly the success of the VRP would assure him even greater reverence at home. Across Africa, where, Nkrumah argued, independence had raised expectations for all new leaders, he would be the one leader who far exceeded these hopes. Internationally, he would be recognized for

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.21.

<sup>20</sup> This can also be interpreted as "redeemer," or "victorious leader." Nkrumah received the title from the Ashanti tribal chief, as a traditional recognition of his achievements for the people of Ghana. Parliament later approved the title. For more on the religious and tribal significance of the title see Ebenezer Obiri Addo, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Case Study of Religion and Politics in Ghana* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1997), pp. 113-114.

his solid relationship with the great powers of the world, making him the obvious voice for Africa. Since Nkrumah had long been convinced of both his vital role as Africa's political leader, and Ghana's leading role in the world community he had no intention of putting the VRP at risk.

Cold War objectives remained the primary factor motivating continued US involvement with the Volta project.<sup>21</sup> By 1960, the United States recognized West Africa as perhaps the fastest changing area in the world. In that year alone, seventeen new African nations gained independence.<sup>22</sup> Unsure of the relationships many of these new nations would pursue with the West, and determined to deny the region to communist domination, the United States was eager to strengthen ties to African nations it believed maintained a basically Western orientation. Ghana fell squarely into this category. US Ambassador Wilson Flake reassured the State Department of Ghana's pro-Western resolve in August 1960, as policymakers debated the level of aid for the Volta River Project. According to

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<sup>21</sup> In Thomas Noer's, "The New Frontier and African Neutralism," Noer suggests that Eisenhower's decision to fund the VRP was in part to respond to criticism from the Democratic party during the 1960 election. While the Administration was certainly aware of the Democratic critique of the Republican party on US policy toward Africa, no evidence suggests that it was a consideration for allotting funds for the VRP.

<sup>22</sup> The new nations of Africa, in the order in which they gained independence, included: The Republic of Cameroun, The Republic of Togo, The Malagasy Republic (Madagascar), The Republic of Congo (Léopoldville, later Zaire), The Somali Republic, The Republic of Dahomey (Benin), The Republic of Niger, The Republic of Upper Volta (Burkina Faso), The Republic of Ivory Coast, The Republic of Chad, The Central African Republic, The Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), The Republic of Gabon, The Federation of Nigeria, The Republic of Mali, The Republic of Senegal, and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. Remarkably, eight countries achieved independence in one month (August).

the Ambassador, "Ghana is not communist and I detect no desire here that it become so." Flake also commented that Soviet interest in the Volta project did not attract Nkrumah, "so long as he has faith in effective support from the U.S. as he now has."<sup>23</sup> This possible caveat resonated with Secretary of State Herter, who later reported to Eisenhower, "We are, of course, concerned that should current negotiations with Valco break down Ghana may turn to the USSR for assistance."<sup>24</sup> While the United States had earlier accepted that some interaction between USSR and Ghana would occur and aid eventually would be accepted, policymakers did not believe it should be accepted on this project. The United States, like Nkrumah, did not want to sacrifice the prestige associated with the VRP. In 1956, the US offer and eventual withdrawal of aid to Nasser on the Aswan Dam greatly damaged the US image in the region, creating the belief that the United States continued to support the colonial powers, and offered aid only with political strings attached. US officials also agreed that the aborted dam project and Nasser's resulting decision to nationalize the Suez Canal artificially inflated Arab radicalism and Nasser's political influence. The situation could not be allowed to repeat itself in Ghana. The United States had to maintain a positive

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<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Nwaubani, pp. 144-45.

<sup>24</sup> DDEL, AWF, International Series, Box 16, Folder 2, Herter to President, 14 November 1960.

Western orientation and prevent any instability that could lead to a Soviet stronghold in West Africa.<sup>25</sup>

### A New Administration Arrives, 1961

Under the Eisenhower Administration, the US declared its official verbal agreement, in internal policy meetings, and in meetings with Ghanaian officials, to commit \$30 million to the Volta River Project in Ghana. The international attention focused on the massive development project; America's perception of the communist threat; and Great Britain's desire to maintain Ghana's membership in the Commonwealth, had combined to guarantee this outcome. Far from 'inheriting the dilemma' of the VRP from the Eisenhower Administration, President John F. Kennedy had only to continue the plans arranged by his predecessor.<sup>26</sup> In January 1961, however, the question remained whether Kennedy would honor these agreements and maintain the relationship the United States had brokered with Ghana since its independence, or forge a new path. Due to unfinished negotiations between the US government and the Kaiser Corporation over guarantees for Kaiser's investment, the United States had not signed formal loan agreements with Ghana before Kennedy's inauguration, leaving open the possibility that the new Administration change course in relations with Ghana. It

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<sup>25</sup> For a detailed analysis of the events of the Aswan dam and Suez crisis see Keith Kyle, *Suez* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).

<sup>26</sup> This paraphrases Noer's argument in, "The New Frontier and African Neutralism," that the Eisenhower Administration had not fully decided to support the VRP. Similarly, Richard Mahoney argues that Kennedy planned to "win back" Nkrumah for the West by participating in the VRP, Mahoney, p. 157. Archival evidence does not support these arguments.



was obvious that Nkrumah looked forward to meeting and working with Kennedy. In a January 1961 letter to the newly inaugurated President, Nkrumah stated that he anticipated "complete kinship" with the President, and that the new Administration gave "hope and confidence for the promotion of better relations between Africa and the Western powers."<sup>27</sup> Nkrumah was certainly aware of Kennedy's publicly stated goals for US-Africa relations. In September 1960 Nkrumah had met and dined with W. Averell Harriman, two-time US Ambassador to the Soviet Union and former New York Governor, whom Kennedy had sent on an African fact finding tour during the presidential campaign. Reports from British diplomats who met Harriman in Accra suggest that he was not only quite well versed on Kennedy's ideas, but also genuinely knowledgeable on the challenges facing Africa, which must have impressed Nkrumah.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps more impressive was Kennedy's own discussion of Africa during his presidential campaign.

John Kennedy's distaste for colonialism, and understanding of nationalist aspirations became a part of his public persona in 1951, following a trip to New Delhi where he first encountered Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and members of his nonaligned government. Reflecting that in Asia, "colonialism is not a topic for tea-talk discussion; it is the daily fare of millions of men," Kennedy came to understand nationalism as a burgeoning issue for US foreign

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<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Mahoney, p. 33; and quoted in Thompson, p. 169.

<sup>28</sup> PRO, FO 371/146493, "Note by Sir Arthur Snelling of his discussion with Mr. Averell Harriman at Accra on September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1960."

policy.<sup>29</sup> He refined these ideas in 1956 while campaigning for Adlai Stevenson. Arguing that nationalism had nothing to do with communism, Kennedy stated that the failure of both political parties "to comprehend the nature of this revolution, and its potentialities for good and evil" placed the United States in a precarious world position.<sup>30</sup> The Middle East crisis, he surmised, had nothing to do with communism and everything to do with the misunderstanding of a national movement. In July 1957, on the heels of Ghana's independence, now Senator Kennedy strongly criticized the lack of US support for an independent Algeria.<sup>31</sup> In May 1959, Kennedy became head of Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Africa, further advancing his reputation as friend of the Third World.

It is not surprising then that Kennedy chose to make Africa a central factor in his 1960 presidential campaign, telling his aide, Harris Wofford, that he planned to pursue a "new relationship" with the continent.<sup>32</sup> The young senator delivered thirteen prepared speeches on Africa during his campaign. Frequently

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<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Mahoney, p. 14.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>31</sup> Kennedy's admonition that France face facts on the necessity of Algerian independence drew widespread commentary in such prominent publications as *Time*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and in France, *Le Figaro*, and *Le Monde*. Kennedy later softened his opinion, telling aides he was "wary of being known as the Senator from Algeria," quoted in Thomas Borstelmann, "'Hedging Our Bets and Buying Time': John Kennedy and Racial Revolutions in the American South and Southern Africa," *Diplomatic History* 24 (2000): 438 fn8.

<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, *All you Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 90

critical of the Eisenhower Administration's policy, he specifically took aim against Nixon's well received "Report to President," delivered after the Vice-President's trip to Africa, particularly the idea of the United States "winning the battle for men's minds." Kennedy argued that certainly Africans were less interested in doctrine and more interested in decent standards of living.<sup>33</sup> This delineation of the ideology versus reality in Africa again portrayed Kennedy as understanding the dream of nationalism *and* the practical obstacles to growth and independence. Referencing Africa no less than 479 times in other speeches, Kennedy's election on 9 November 1960 certainly raised expectations of a new direction for US relations with the continent.<sup>34</sup> Kennedy met these expectations almost immediately with his decision to name former Michigan governor, G. Mennen "Soapy" Williams, as Secretary of State for African Affairs, the first cabinet position he filled publicly, before that of Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, or even Attorney General. In a press release on 1 December 1960, Kennedy called the post of Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, "a position of responsibility second to none," giving Ghana and the rest of Africa every indication to hope for improved relations with the United States.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Mahoney, pp. 29-30.

<sup>34</sup> Schlesinger, pp. 554-55. Mahoney, p. 30, calls Kennedy's repeated references to Africa a, "minor classic in political exploitation of foreign policy," arguing that rather than a true commitment to Africa, Kennedy used Africa to gain the support of liberal and black voters, without alienating Southern voters, as support for civil rights would do.

<sup>35</sup> Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan (hereafter BHL) G. Mennen William's Non-Gubernatorial Papers, Undersecretary

When the Kennedy Administration took office in January 1961, disagreement on the Congo still colored US relations with Ghana. Correspondence from Kennedy's new ambassador in Accra, Francis H. Russell, suggests, however, that the view of Ghana from Washington was now substantially more negative than it had been under the Eisenhower Administration. When presenting his credentials to Nkrumah in January, Russell's first extended conversation with the President focused on Ghana's negative press coverage of the United States. The Ambassador went so far as to suggest that the negative press could become an obstacle to Ghana's goals, an obvious reference to the VRP.<sup>36</sup> A month later, Russell's report again complained of negative press reports, calling the coverage, "unfounded and persistent virulent attacks." It appears that Russell and his new colleagues in Accra were taken aback by what had become commonplace attacks on the US throughout the Congo crisis. Ghanaian press coverage during the early months of 1961 was no more critical of US actions than it had been since the crisis began in July 1960.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, it seems that Russell had no understanding of Ghana's position on the Congo. The Ambassador suggested in February that if Ghana blamed the crisis on Belgium and demanded the restoration of Lumumba as Prime Minister, "it will be clear

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of State for African Affairs Files (hereafter GMW), Box 7, Folder: Entrance on Duty, "Statement by Senator John F. Kennedy, 1 December 1960."

<sup>36</sup> JFKL, POF, Box 117B, Folder: Ghana Security 1/1/61 - 1/31/61, Accra to Secretary of State, 26 January 1961.

<sup>37</sup> See issues of *Daily Graphic*, 1960-1961, PRAAD.

Nkrumah is committed or nearly committed to the Bloc."<sup>38</sup> In fact, Ghana had never detoured from this position since Lumumba's detention five months earlier. More than a week after the announcement of Lumumba's death and Nkrumah's accusations that the West had contributed to his murder, relations between the US and Ghana reached a new low. Ghanaian officials ceased to attend US functions, and the Ambassador's meetings with Ghana's Foreign Minister or President had deteriorated merely to "handing letters and aide mémoires" back and forth. Nkrumah avoided meeting with prominent Americans visiting Accra, such as Democratic Senators Frank Church (ID), Gale McGhee (WY), and Frank Moss (UT). Ambassador Russell regarded this attitude as an attempt to weaken the influence of Americans in Ghana, modeled on a Soviet example.<sup>39</sup> Russell's reports and the criticism of Ghana by the snubbed senators increased pressure in Washington for a "less indulgent" attitude toward Ghana than had been evident under Eisenhower, leading Kennedy's advisors to reconsider earlier relations.<sup>40</sup>

### Renewed Volta Negotiations: January-June, 1961

The renewed focus on negative press in Ghana highlighted new challenges for the Volta River Project. While Cold War considerations had motivated the Eisenhower Administration to support VRP despite continuing disagreements with Ghana, some Valco members were less content with Ghana's negative

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<sup>38</sup> NAII, 845j.2614/2-461 Accra to Secretary of State, 4 February 1961.

<sup>39</sup> NAII, 745j.11/2-26-61 Accra to Secretary of State 26 February 1961.

<sup>40</sup> Thompson, p. 169.

comments, and had requested that the United States intervene. Leaders of Valco feared that Ghana's opposition to the US policy in the Congo would be regarded as anti-American, thereby increasing the political risks of their operation. The consortium sought US government guarantees of their investment in Ghana, a level of security greater than the United States previously envisioned providing. To bolster Valco's position, Kaiser Vice-President Chad Calhoun argued that the aluminum companies had become involved in the project only after much urging on the part of the State Department, and, "on the assumption that the project would go forward only if the U.S. Government took effective steps to cover the political risks."<sup>41</sup> Negotiations on the issue continued into late February with Under Secretary of State George W. Ball indicating favorably that no possibilities would be "excluded at this stage."<sup>42</sup> Britain continued in its attempts to nudge the United States toward the VRP, while reassuring US officials of Ghana's commitment to the West. Sharing the results of a UK Joint Intelligence Committee report on political trends in Ghana, British diplomats affirmed their belief that any increase in anti-Western comments in Accra were merely the result of events in Congo and Nkrumah's desire to appeal to African leaders as a pan-Africanist. They reinforced the British position that, particularly at this time of reinvigorated Bloc activity, the VRP "should be speedily and successfully concluded, especially since this could be the chief factor in preventing further

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<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Noer, p. 67.

<sup>42</sup> NAII, 845j.394/2-2461, MemCon, Subject: VALCO Aluminum Consortium, 24 Feb 1961.

Bloc inroads in Ghana." In return, US officials agreed that they still attached the "highest importance" to the VRP and believed that they would be successful in negotiating Valco guarantee details.<sup>43</sup> The issue appeared to be resolved during meetings with Ghanaian Finance Minister Gbedemah in late February and early March. Having met with Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Under Secretary George Ball and members of the Bureau of African Affairs, Gbedemah was thrilled to find no change in US policy despite the change of Administration. With the formal US commitment of loan monies, the Finance Minister foretold "smooth sailing" ahead.<sup>44</sup> Secretary Rusk commented that the meetings had been successful and "created an aura of good feeling."<sup>45</sup>

In an attempt to carryover these feelings of goodwill into other areas of US-Ghana relations, President Kennedy agreed to meet with Kwame Nkrumah on 7 March, following the latter's address to the UN General Assembly. Nkrumah had requested the meeting shortly after anti-American demonstrations at the US Embassy in Accra, hoping to iron out remaining differences between the two nations on the Congo issue. Following the advice of his longtime friend Barbara Ward Jackson, whose husband, Sir Robert Jackson, served as Nkrumah's chief advisor on the VRP, Kennedy sought to create an immediately favorable

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<sup>43</sup> NAI, 845j.2624/2-961, MemCon, Subject: Volta River Project, Feb 9 1961.

<sup>44</sup> NAI, 845j.2614/2-2861, MemCon, Subject: The Volta Project, 28 Feb 1961; 845j.2614/3-161 MemCon, Subject: Volta River Project, 1 March 1961; and 845j.2614/3-361, MemCon, Subject: Volta River Project, 3 March 1961.

<sup>45</sup> JFKL, POF, Box 117B, Folder: Ghana, State Department Briefing on Nkrumah 3/61, Memorandum for the President, 7 March 1961.

impression on Nkrumah, by affording him courtesies unnecessary by protocol. Although it was not a state visit, the President welcomed Nkrumah at the airport, and later introduced Nkrumah to his wife Jacqueline and daughter Caroline in the private residence. Nkrumah, who had anticipated a hostile reception in Washington, later always remembered and often recalled the personal warmth of the meeting.<sup>46</sup> Nkrumah left Washington with the impression that the VRP financing was secure, and that he and Kennedy had reinvigorated relations between their nations. From Washington's point of view the meeting was a disaster. Nkrumah provided Kennedy with "a monologue" on the subject of the Congo, and waived off the President's attempts to discuss the VRP.<sup>47</sup> While the meeting had been cordial, the two leaders reached no agreements on either the Congo or the VRP.

Nor did the Administration's policymakers reach agreement. If anything, the results of the Kennedy-Nkrumah meeting cemented the division between those officials who supported the VRP as a means to improve relations with Ghana, and those who believed that supporting the VRP would only reward Nkrumah for his anti-American behavior. This debate reveals two larger considerations of Kennedy's foreign policy. First, 'Africanists,' such as Assistant Secretary G. Mennen Williams and Under Secretary of State Chester Bowles, and 'Europeanists,' like Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and Under Secretary of State

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<sup>46</sup> NAI, 745j.11/4-461, New York (Stevenson) to Secretary of State 4 April 1961.

<sup>47</sup> *FRUS*, 1961-63, Volume XXI, pp. 345-347, Memorandum of Conversation, 8 March 1961.



for Economic Affairs George Ball, disagreed on the importance of Africa in the overall picture of US foreign relations. 'Africanists' argued for a definitive break with Europe on African issues, in order to maintain credible leadership on issues of decolonization and self-determination. 'Europeanists' countered that ties with Europe far outweighed the value of courting new states in Africa. Second, Kennedy remembered the accusations made against Democrats in the 1940s and 1950s over Yalta, China, and Korea, and greatly feared being labeled soft on communism. In an atmosphere where any misstep in waging the Cold War would be dissected and publicized, losing the continent of Africa to the communists would be a major political liability. Unconvinced of the direction of Nkrumah's government and uncertain of the message conveyed by a large loan, Kennedy and his advisors continued to debate the merits of VRP participation.

Events in April further exacerbated debate in Washington. General H.T. Alexander, a British national and Chief of Defense in Ghana alerted the US Ambassador on 14 April that Ghana received a shipment of Soviet arms destined for Congo. Although Nkrumah had assured Alexander that he would not send the weapons to Congo as long as the UN forces were present, Alexander believed this claim merited little faith, as the Soviets had obviously convinced Nkrumah to receive the arms in the first place. When Ambassador Russell attempted to discuss the matter with Nkrumah, he received a terse aide mémoire stating that Ghana regarded the shipments to be the internal affairs of Ghana and not subject

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to discussion with an outside power.<sup>48</sup> US officials immediately contacted Britain, suggesting that the United Kingdom's close relationship to Ghana could positively influence the situation. UK officials declined, offering instead that public knowledge of the shipment would be enough to keep Ghana in check without irritating him unnecessarily.<sup>49</sup> Disappointed by the low key response of British diplomats in Washington, the United States instructed Fred Hadsell, Commonwealth Relations officer at the US Embassy in London, to seek a direct assessment of the situation from the Commonwealth Relations Office. Assistant Under Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations G.W. St. J. Chadwick assured Hadsell that the trend in Ghana had been a return to center and not a move further to the left. Reporting on the meeting to his colleagues, Chadwick commented that this, "would be the worst moment to get cold feet about Volta. If we hesitate or the Americans withdraw support, this would certainly precipitate the very thing the Americans now [seem] to fear."<sup>50</sup>

In May, the issue of authoritarianism in Ghana threatened the VRP. In an unusual telegram, Secretary Rusk noted US press reports of Ghana's increasing use of dictatorial powers and requested the Embassy's immediate evaluation of the VRP in light of these new circumstances. Rusk's request was unusual in the State

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<sup>48</sup> NAI, 845J.0061/4-1461, Accra to Secretary of State, and Rusk to Accra, 14 April 1961; 845J.0061/4-1761, Accra to Secretary of State, 17 April 1961.

<sup>49</sup> PRO, DO 195/23/62929, Moreton to R.W. H de Bouley, Esq., British Embassy, WDC.

<sup>50</sup> PRO DO 195/23/62929, "Extract from Minute by Mr. Chadwick dated 12<sup>th</sup> May, 1961."

Department's sudden decision to investigate claims of authoritarian rule in Ghana. It is arguable that Nkrumah exercised no more restrictive powers at this time than at any other time since Ghana's independence. Certainly, no acts of detention nor restrictive legislation had merited reporting by diplomatic staff, as had been the case in 1957-1959. Russell could only reply that regular reports in Ghana's state-run newspaper noted Ghana's goal to become a socialist nation. Given that Nkrumah had directly stated this fact at a US press conference when asked to define his government, the information is hardly shocking news.<sup>51</sup> Rusk's request was also unusual given the policy review and subsequent recommendations made by Kennedy's Task Force on Africa. Compiled by fifteen nongovernmental Africa experts and twenty-two consultants, the Task Force report agreed with earlier NSC appraisals that Africa would be increasingly characterized by one party states. It recommended that the Kennedy Administration not only accept one-party rule, but also "should not panic at the tendency of African leaders...to move far to the left politically."<sup>52</sup> Rusk's telegram suggests that the State Department was still not reconciled to support the VRP. When the fear of Soviet alignment failed to derail the project in April, Rusk turned in May to concerns over authoritarian rule.

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<sup>51</sup> JFKL, POF, Box 117b, Folder: Nkrumah Visit 3/61, "News Briefing with President Nkrumah of Ghana," 8 March 1961.

<sup>52</sup> JFKL, James C. Thompson Papers, 1960-1966, Task Force Reports, Box 1, Folder: Africa 12/31/60, parts I and II "Report to the Honorable John F. Kennedy by the Task Force on Africa," December 31, 1960 (hereafter Task Force on Africa Report); and BHL, GMW, Box 15, Folder: African Task Force, December 1960, "Summary of Appendix B: A Policy for Subsaharan Africa."

Although Ambassador Russell could not provide new evidence of a dictatorial trend, he did provide other justification to stall funding approval, by noting Nkrumah's plans to visit the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in early July. Russell feared Nkrumah would make anti-Western statements from behind the Iron Curtain. If the United States agreed to Nkrumah's request to sign formal Volta agreements in June, negative statements could appear only days later, leading to unavoidable political embarrassment for the United States. The Ambassador recommended delaying the signature of official documents until after Nkrumah's July trip. He suggested in the interim that representatives of the World Bank, United States, United Kingdom, and Valco meet with Nkrumah for a "frank" discussion that would imply an end to the Volta "if Ghana should abandon or appear to abandon the present policy of nonalignment," during his travels.<sup>53</sup> To give teeth to the threat, Russell advised that Kaiser award the dam contract and begin construction, allowing for "covert procrastination by [the] bank." This strategy would give Nkrumah enough confidence in the future of the Volta to dissuade him from accepting Soviet aid. At the same time, the lack of signatures would inhibit anti-US rhetoric, thereby curbing his "famed impulsiveness." during his Moscow visit.<sup>54</sup> Under Secretary of State Chester Bowles, a supporter of the VRP, declared Russell's plan too risky, believing the delay would create

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<sup>53</sup> NAII, 845j.2614/5-361, State to Accra 3 May; and 845j.2614/5-461, Accra to Secretary of State, 4 May 1961.

<sup>54</sup> NAII, 845j.2614/5-561, Accra to Secretary of State, 5 May 1961.

friction, and make Nkrumah even more susceptible to Soviet influence.<sup>55</sup> Britain agreed that any plan to send Nkrumah to the USSR without knowledge that the VRP was "in the bag" presented "grave danger of him succumbing to Soviet wiles." Britain additionally opposed the plan on the grounds that "it would look like an attempt to attach political strings to economic aid."<sup>56</sup>

Kwame Nkrumah by this time had tired of delays by the United States, and begun investigating alternative financing for the dam. In May Nkrumah announced a \$45 million offer by the Italian firm Impresit, associated with Fiat, to construct the dam. He informed the United States in June of his plan to accept the offer if the United States did not soon formally commit to the project.<sup>57</sup> Kennedy responded on 29 June in a personal letter that pledged to uphold the earlier verbal agreements to fund the VRP. "I am delighted to be able to advise you," Kennedy wrote, "that all major issues involved in negotiations for the United States' Governments' share of the financing of the dam and smelter have been resolved." The US President went on to note his satisfaction that the United States could assist in making the project possible, and considered it a "good omen" that this major step occurred during the first year of Ghana's Republic, and his own first year in office.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> NAIL, 745j.11/5-1361, State to Accra, 19 May 1961.

<sup>56</sup> PRO, DO 195/23/62929, Accra to CRO, 6 June 1961.

<sup>57</sup> Noer, p. 70.

<sup>58</sup> *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol. XXI, p. 349, Letter From President Kennedy to President Nkrumah, 29 June 1961.



## Rethinking Commitments: July - December, 1961

Just when it appeared that the new Administration finally had agreed to support the Volta River Project, Nkrumah's nine-week tour of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China jeopardized the decision.<sup>59</sup> According to Ghanaian civil servants and Nkrumah himself, the trip was intended to balance better Ghana's nonaligned stance.<sup>60</sup> The Ghanaian President had spent considerable years in the United States and United Kingdom as a student, but had never traveled in the East. Upon his 10 July arrival in Moscow, the Russians treated Nkrumah to a 10,000-mile tour, commemorated in a one hundred-page souvenir booklet. Showcasing symbols of power and efficiency, the tour also provided Nkrumah, who had been troubled by labor unrest at home, the opportunity to meet contented workers, too happy in their jobs to consider striking. As the trip progressed, Nkrumah's comments grew increasingly favorable of the USSR. Particularly biting to the United States was his comment, "but for the Soviet Union, the colonial liberation movements in Africa would have suffered a most cruel and brutal oppression."<sup>61</sup> On 28 July Budapest kicked off Nkrumah's visit, described by one observer as a "love feast," with a twenty-one gun salute.

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<sup>59</sup> Nkrumah arrived in the Soviet Union on 10 July 1961. His trip included stops in Poland, East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, and China. He returned to Ghana on 16 September.

<sup>60</sup> Thompson, p. 173; and NAIJ, 745J.11/9-561, MemCon, Subject: Mr. Calhoun's Meetings with President Nkrumah of Ghana in Belgrade and Vienna, 5 September 1961.

<sup>61</sup> Quoted in Thompson, p. 175

Nkrumah's remarks included his contention that Ghana's independence would remain incomplete until all of Africa was freed from its oppressors. British diplomats considered the speech so vehemently anti-Western they walked out.<sup>62</sup> A crowd of 500,000 greeted the Ghanaian leader in Peking during a 14 August welcome celebration that included traditional dancing and firecrackers at Tienanmen Square. While in China Nkrumah signed a symbolic "Treaty of Friendship," and argued for China's restoration in the United Nations.<sup>63</sup>

Although the United States had suspected and feared exactly this type of behavior from Nkrumah, officials seemed nonetheless surprised. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs G. Mennen Williams commented in September that Nkrumah's statements in the USSR ran counter to his earlier support of the West at the spring Commonwealth Leadership conference.<sup>64</sup> Certainly Nkrumah's comments in the East were calculated to impress his hosts, just as his comments in the US sought to stress areas of agreement and mutual success. It is true that officials in the Kennedy Administration would have heard less of Nkrumah's conciliatory rhetoric than had Eisenhower officials. US-Ghana relations had been marred by disagreement over the Congo since the beginning of Kennedy's term. In contrast, Nkrumah's early relations with Eisenhower reflected the glow of recent independence and the hopes of Volta financing, and his first

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<sup>62</sup> NAI, 745j.11/8-261, American Delegation, Budapest, to State, 3 August, 1961.

<sup>63</sup> Thompson, p. 177; JFKL, National Security Files (hereafter NSF), Box 99 Folder: Ghana General / VRP 1961, GMW to Ball, 12 September 1961.



trip to the United States as a national leader stood out as a honeymoon with Washington. During that 1958 visit, nothing about American society could prompt negative comments from Nkrumah. In a similar fashion, his first visit to USSR, complete zealously positive remarks represents a honeymoon with Moscow. Nkrumah undoubtedly harbored a degree of fascination with the Soviet Union, having been insulated from it for so long during British rule, and certainly hoped to impress his hosts favorably. Washington focused, however, on the current sentiment rather than the well-known malleability of Nkrumah's rhetoric. Members of Congress echoed the ire of White House and State Department officials, and the American press vitiated Nkrumah for abandoning neutralism.<sup>65</sup> Even the President's father demanded of his son, "What in the hell are you doing with that Communist Nkrumah?"<sup>66</sup> This widespread anger, combined with Nkrumah's plans for the training of four hundred Ghanaian officer cadets in the USSR, prompted the United States to take concrete steps to deter Nkrumah from further pro-Soviet action. On 18 September President Kennedy issued the following National Security Action Memorandum, "I want to hold up any final decision and announcement of the Volta project for Ghana."<sup>67</sup>

Kennedy's next move hinged on legal issues. Had his letter of 29 June unquestionably committed the United States to participate in the VRP? While the

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<sup>64</sup> JFKL, NSF, Box 99 Folder: Ghana General / VRP 1961, GMW to Ball, 12 September 1961.

<sup>65</sup> Noer, p. 72.

<sup>66</sup> Schlesinger, p. 573.

State Department's Legal Affairs Division concluded that the United States was in no way legally obligated, the letter had clearly indicated that the US determined to go ahead with the project. According to legal advisors the United States had raised the hopes of Ghanaians and Africans, and, "to back out at this time would be a breach of faith... a most serious affront to these justifiable expectations."<sup>68</sup> The National Security Council agreed that Kennedy's letter constituted a "moral agreement."<sup>69</sup> Certainly Kwame Nkrumah believed the letter to be binding. Responding to Kennedy's decision to reassess the project he stated, "In view of your personal letter to me...I had assumed your government would definitely participate in this project."<sup>70</sup>

In a quandary, the Administration sought the advice of Great Britain. On 22 September, four days after Kennedy's decision to reassess the VRP, Kwame Nkrumah dismissed General H.T. Alexander, British commander of Ghana's military, and relieved all British officers of their command positions in Ghana's armed forces. While the British government claimed to be "disturbed rather than appalled" by this deterioration in UK-Ghana relations, the impending visit of the Queen to Ghana motivated the Commonwealth Relations Office to arrange for Duncan Sandys, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, to travel to

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<sup>67</sup> *FRUS*, 1961-63, Vol. XXI, p. 351, "Editorial Note."

<sup>68</sup> JFKL, NSF, Box 99, Folder: Ghana, General 9/61, "Belman to Dumont," 26 September 1961.

<sup>69</sup> Quoted in Noer, p. 72.

<sup>70</sup> JFKL, NSF, Box 99, Folder: Ghana, General, VRP 1961, Nkrumah to Kennedy, 29 September 1961.

Ghana to discuss matters.<sup>71</sup> Sandys reported favorably to US diplomatic personnel in Accra following his 29 September meeting with Nkrumah. While it was evident that Nkrumah had been awed by the level of industrialization in the USSR, Sandys believed him to have been more interested in "smokestacks than ideology." Noting Nkrumah's positive attitude toward the Commonwealth, Sandys expressed great confidence that Nkrumah "did not want to throw in his lot with the Russians." Sandys also warned that the "whole picture would change" if the West abandoned the VRP.<sup>72</sup>

British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan sympathized with Kennedy that relations with Ghana had indeed been difficult, vacillating between scolding Nkrumah and giving him undue attention. Arguing that it came down to a question of the purpose of aid, Macmillan queried if Western assistance were meant only for allies, or also intended to "make friends and influence people." Ghanaians and other Africans would certainly, "interpret the withdrawal of your support for this project as an attempt by the United States to use her financial powers to dictate the lines of national policy of independent African leaders."<sup>73</sup> African leaders confirmed Macmillan's assertion when the Secretary Rusk polled US embassies in Africa on the possible repercussions of a decision to deny Volta

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<sup>71</sup> NAIL, RG 84, Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, United Kingdom; London; London Embassy; Classified General Records (1956-61), Box 6, American Embassy London to Accra, 29 September 1961.

<sup>72</sup> PRO, Records of the Prime Minister's Office (hereafter PREM), Record Group 11, Subseries 4822/63332, "Note for Record," 9 October 1961.

<sup>73</sup> PRO, PREM 11/4824/63332, FO to Washington, 16 November 1961.

funding. The US Embassy in Nigeria, Ethiopia, Togo, Morocco, Malagasy, Tanganyika, and Guinea each predicted an adverse reaction.<sup>74</sup> Embassy personnel in Morocco reported that a failure to participate would be seen as a repeat of the Aswan "debacle," with the "US attempting control [the] foreign policy of free African nations."<sup>75</sup> In Togo, "a failure [to] carry through would appear as [a] breach [of] international faith," and "would substantially damage US image and prestige."<sup>76</sup> Prime Minister Macmillan reiterated his country's position in a telephone conversation with Kennedy. While Macmillan argued that the West could not risk losing the Volta to Khrushchev, Kennedy retorted that VRP funding was a great deal of money to risk in such an unstable country. Referring to the British decision to proceed with the Queen's visit to Ghana despite recent difficulties, Macmillan replied, "I have risked my Queen; you must risk your money."<sup>77</sup>

The Administration received similar encouragement to pursue the project from Kaiser representatives, Edgar Kaiser and Chad Calhoun. Calhoun had traveled to Belgrade and Vienna for meetings during Nkrumah's tour of the East.

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<sup>74</sup> JFKL, NSF, Box 99a Folder: Ghana General 10/61, Fredericks to Williams, 10/10/61; NAII, 845j.2614/10-761, Tanarive to Secretary of State, 7 October 1961; 845j.2614/10-1061 Dar-es-Salaam to Secretary of State, 10 October 1961; 845j.2614/10-1461, Conakry to Secretary of State, 14 October 1961; 845j.2614/10-661, Rabat to Secretary of State, 6 October 1961; 845j.2614/10-661, Lome to Secretary of State 6 October 1961.

<sup>75</sup> NAII, 845j.2614/10-661, Rabat to Secretary of State, 6 October 1961.

<sup>76</sup> NAII, 845j.2614/10-661, Lome to Secretary of State 6 October 1961.

<sup>77</sup> PRO, PREM 11/4824/63332, "Record Of Conversation between the Prime Minister and President Kennedy, 4.12.61."

Both men then met with Nkrumah in Accra upon his return. Having given Nkrumah their blunt description of his reputation in the United States, Nkrumah appeared visibly shocked by the notion that he leaned more toward the Soviet Bloc than a position of true neutrality. When informed this stance caused Kennedy to be particularly disappointed in him, "Nkrumah was visibly disturbed and hurt." He returned to the issue of Kennedy's disappointment several times as the conversation continued, in the end asking Kaiser to help him draft a letter to the President to begin mending fences. Kaiser and Calhoun returned to Washington, Nkrumah's letter in hand, convinced that the Ghanaian leader was not a communist.<sup>78</sup>

All sources employed by Washington to gauge Nkrumah's true political stance agreed that the Ghanaian leader was vain, outspoken, and overconfident, but that the Volta delay had sobered him and, in the end, he was not a communist. Based on earlier evaluations of Nkrumah's personality, however, US officials were skeptical. A March State Department briefing described the Ghanaian leader as, "highly volatile," and demonstrating "a degree of flexibility bordering on the erratic." The report also noted that Nkrumah, "is frequently inclined to reflect the views of the last man who spoke to him," which, for a man increasingly surrounded by radical advisors, did not bode well for a sustained commitment to

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<sup>78</sup> NAIL, 745J.11/9-561, MemCon, Subject: Mr. Calhoun's Meetings with President Nkrumah of Ghana in Belgrade and Vienna, 5 September 1961; JFKL, NSF, Box 99a Folder: Ghana General 10/61, "Notes of Meetings at Accra, Ghana." 4-5 October, and attached appendices.

the United States.<sup>79</sup> The Central Intelligence Agency agreed that Nkrumah valued publicity over politics, harshly judging that, "When you cut away all the trappings and the fanfare you are left with a 49-year-old showboy, and a vain opportunist.... a politician to whom the roar of the crowd and the praise of the sycophant are as necessary as the air he breathes."<sup>80</sup>

Unconvinced that it could trust Nkrumah's currently penitent attitude, the United States sought a more concrete commitment to Western democratic ideals.<sup>81</sup> To achieve this, Kennedy sent another delegation to Accra, this one headed by the conservative Clarence Randall, formerly of the Council on Foreign Economic Policy. Having studied the VRP extensively during his service in the Eisenhower Administration, Randall believed himself well equipped to produce a fair and knowledgeable assessment of the situation in Ghana. In meetings with the British High Commissioner, Canadian High Commissioner, and members of the British and American business communities, Randall measured the level of optimism for international investment in Ghana. During a highly charged meeting with Nkrumah, wherein the President, "proceeded to pour out his heart to me for forty minutes without stopping," Randall worked to impress upon Nkrumah the full range of Washington's concerns. He commenced by reassuring Nkrumah of the

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<sup>79</sup> JFKL, POF, Box 117B, Folder: Ghana, State Department Briefing on Nkrumah, 3/61, Memorandum for the President from Secretary of State Dean Rusk, 7 March 1961.

<sup>80</sup> JFKL, POF, Box 117B, Folder: CIA Briefing Material 2/61.

<sup>81</sup> The following five pages of my narrative closely parallel the narrative account presented by Noer, pp. 73-78.

President's personal fondness for him. Randall then moved quickly to present the increasingly negative image of Nkrumah in the American press and public opinion, stressing that President Kennedy could not afford to ignore this negative perception. Focusing next on Ghana's delicate financial situation, Randall questioned Nkrumah's decision to provide loans to Guinea and Mali while simultaneously requesting massive aid from the US, and noted the fifty percent drop in Ghana's foreign reserves. Randall questioned Ghana's new trade with the Soviet Union, suggesting that Nkrumah did not fully appreciate the dangers of the trading relationship. Nkrumah replied with a candid overview of his discussions with Khrushchev, arguing that he had not and would not make any commitments that would compromise Ghana's neutrality. "If the West will just give me a chance," Nkrumah implored, "I will demonstrate Ghana's complete neutrality."<sup>82</sup>

Overall, Randall and Ambassador Russell believed the interview to have been cordial and productive. Randall's final report recommended, however, against proceeding with the VRP. In his overall assessment of the Volta Project Randall cited the precarious state of Ghana's economy and persistent internal political instability, describing his decision as "reluctant but resolute."<sup>83</sup> Abram Chayes of the State Department's Legal Affairs Division, and Harry Shooshan of the Development Loan Fund, who accompanied Randall to Accra, focused more

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<sup>82</sup>JFKL, NSF, Box 99a, Folder: Ghana General 10/61, Accra to Secretary of State, 27 October 1961.

broadly on political and legal issues and the possible outcomes of Kennedy's decision. Both men dissented from Randall's view and recommended that the project proceed.

President Kennedy met with the National Security Council on 5 December to weigh the newly compiled evidence and decide the fate of the project. The participants reviewed a State Department paper chronicling US involvement in the project since 1958, and outlining the pros and cons involved in the decision. Rationale to support the project referenced "the Administration's oft-stated policy of aid without political strings"; a desire to fulfill America's moral obligation; and the need to maintain a Western foothold on the continent. In addition, the failure to support the project would create adverse reactions across Africa and likely discredit the Peace Corps, the United States Information Agency, and countless other small but essential technical assistance programs. Opposition to the project included a disinclination to reward Nkrumah's bad behavior, fearing it would create a precedent of favoring US enemies over friends. The risk that Nkrumah could nationalize the aluminum smelter, that Ghana could default on its financial obligation, and that US support for the project was unlikely to motivate a long-term change in Nkrumah's willingness to criticize US policy also served as mitigating factors. The report concluded that on balance the United States should proceed, arguing that, "Despite the growing pro-bloc tendencies of Nkrumah it would be premature at this time to assume that Ghana has been lost to the

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<sup>83</sup> JFKL, NSF, William H. Brubeck Series (hereafter Brubeck), Box 388, Folder: Volta River Project General, Summary of Volta Project Documents, 1961,



communists."<sup>84</sup> Secretary Rusk, CIA Director John McCone, Assistant Secretary Williams, and Defense Secretary Robert McNamara each voiced his opinion that the United States must proceed.<sup>85</sup>

The president then read the entire text of his 29 June letter to Nkrumah. Commenting dryly that the letter seemed "fairly warm," Kennedy questioned who had drafted it, and was "gently reminded by Mr. Ball that it had been made warmer at the President's own direction."<sup>86</sup> Seeking to clarify the position of those present, Kennedy asserted that, so far, Secretary of Treasury Douglas Dillon had expressed his opposition. While Attorney General Robert Kennedy had not yet offered comment, the President noted that he could, "feel the hot breath of his opinion."<sup>87</sup> Robert Kennedy then offered his analysis that the money would be better spent in smaller amounts across Africa, but if the US decided to proceed, "we ought to get something in return."<sup>88</sup> The meeting ended without achieving consensus.

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Randall to President, 31 October 1961.

<sup>84</sup> NAII, RG 59, Lot Files, MLR 1569, Records of the Policy Planning Staff (hereafter, PPS), 1957-61, Box 140, George C. McGhee, to Secretary of State, 17 November 1961.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol. XXI, p. 369, "Notes for the Record," 5 December 1961.

<sup>87</sup> JFKL, NSF, Box Brubeck, Folder: Volta River Project General, Summary of Volta Project Documents, 1961, "Notes For the Record: NSC Meeting on Volta Dam, December 5, 1961," 13 December 1961.

<sup>88</sup> JFKL, NSF, Brubeck, Box 388, Folder: Volta River Project General, Summary of Volta Project Documents, 1961, "Notes For Record: NSC Meeting on Volta Dam, December 5, 1961," 13 December 1961.

In agreement with his brother that the United States should receive certain assurances from Nkrumah, President Kennedy again enlisted the assistance of Clarence Randall. He asked that Randall return to Accra, and gave him a letter for Nkrumah noting the "serious concern which the American people and Government have regarding certain political and economic policies of your government."<sup>89</sup> Kennedy shared with Randall his decision, "with some reluctance and misgiving," to authorize US financial assistance for the project. He further emphasized that his decision was, "in no sense an endorsement of President Nkrumah or his policies, and it is of utmost importance to [the] US Government that no one, either in Ghana, [the] US or elsewhere in Africa, regard it as such." With this introduction, Kennedy instructed Randall to extract Nkrumah's promise to take concrete steps in addressing US concerns.<sup>90</sup> During his meeting with the Ghanaian President, Randall asked that Nkrumah "help President Kennedy," and publicly "reassure the American people," of his position on key issues. These included Nkrumah's commitment to personal freedoms, a free press, and, ironically, the sovereignty of independent nations. Randall also requested that Ghana accept a permanent representative of the World Bank, with whom Nkrumah would consult on all financial matters. While Randall noted Nkrumah's intention to pursue socialism, and allowed that Ghana and the United States could agree to disagree on the point, "at the same time, you are asking for private

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<sup>89</sup> PRAAD, 17/1/37, President Kennedy to President Nkrumah, 14 December 1961.

<sup>90</sup> NAIL, 845J.2614/12-1461, State to Accra, 14 December 1961.

foreign investment to be made here." Before the United States could support the private investment of American companies, President Kennedy, "would like you to say that you will never never nationalise the smelter." Nkrumah appeared jolted by the request, but agreed that "he wanted every legal precaution taken that anybody could think of to make this impossible." Nkrumah suggested he make a Christmas Eve radio address to the Ghanaian people, publicly clarifying his position on each point raised by Randall. He further offered to forward the United States an advance copy of the address for Kennedy's approval. The meeting ended with Randall convinced of Nkrumah's sincere desire to "restore himself in the good graces of the President and of the American people."<sup>91</sup>

Immediately following the meeting, Nkrumah sent a personal message to Kennedy, noting his plans for the Christmas Eve speech, and asking in return that Kennedy approve plans for the formal signing of agreements in Accra.<sup>92</sup> Well aware of the political significance of the proposed ceremony in Accra, and disinclined to plump up Nkrumah's prestige, Kennedy declined to endorse the proposal until Nkrumah had delivered his public speech. Ambassador Russell judged the first draft of Nkrumah's radio address unsatisfactory, falling short of his promises to Randall, and overall a "gesture of ingratitude."<sup>93</sup> Desperate to host

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<sup>91</sup> NAII, RG 84, MLR 2597A, Ghana; Accra; Classified General Records (1956-1963), Box 10, "Memorandum of Conference of Mr. Clarence B. Randall with President Nkrumah at Accra on October 26, 1961," and "Memorandum to George Ball," 16 December 1961.

<sup>92</sup> NAII, 611.45J4/12-2161, Accra to Secretary of State, 21 December 1961.

<sup>93</sup> NAII, 745J.11/2-2061, Accra to Secretary of State 21 December 1961.

the signing ceremony in Accra, Nkrumah revised the text to Russell's specifications. Secretary Rusk, noting "improvements in tone and substance," finally agreed to the signing of loan agreements in Accra in January 1962.<sup>94</sup>

One month later, just two days before the scheduled signing of Volta agreements in Accra, a final debate ensued when US intelligence reported a proposed parliamentary speech by Nkrumah suggesting that Ghana receive a percentage of ownership in the Valco aluminum smelter. This contradicted not only the agreements to be signed in Accra, but also the promises Nkrumah had made to Kennedy, through Clarence Randall, never to nationalize the smelter.<sup>95</sup> When Rusk threatened that the United States could use any mention of ownership "as an escape route," from the agreement, Nkrumah capitulated, revising his address to reiterate his pledge never to expropriate the Valco property.<sup>96</sup> Finally, with the formal signing of the Volta Master Agreement on 22 January 1962, it appeared that the United States had settled all debates and successfully concluded negotiations on the Volta River Project.

### A New Frontier for Africa?

When John F. Kennedy assumed the presidency in January 1961 all was in place for the United States' support of the Volta River Project, save the signing of

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<sup>94</sup> Quoted in Noer, p. 77.

<sup>95</sup> According to the terms of the Master Agreement for the Volta project, Ghana would own the dam and power plant, while the Valco consortium would build and own the smelter, agreeing to purchase power from Ghana for operation of the facility.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

official documents. The new Administration, of course, could continue the plans of the Eisenhower Administration, or it could change the direction of US policy toward Ghana. Kennedy's campaign rhetoric, reaching toward a new frontier in US foreign relations, certainly suggested a change in attitude and action. Charging that under Eisenhower's leadership, America had "lost ground in Africa," and "neglected and ignored the needs and aspirations of the African people," Kennedy called for a "new relationship" with Africa.<sup>97</sup> Yet the earliest policy reviews of the Kennedy Administration echoed the Africa policy developed by Eisenhower's advisors. The December 1960 Report of the Task Force on Africa was the Administration's first document to explore the outlines of an Africa policy. With discussions of tribal identity, the creation of "artificial" nations by colonialism, and the nature of anti-colonialism as a psychological cement bonding a non-cohesive population, the first thirteen pages of the report are more prescient in their understanding of African history-- more aware of Africa as a real place with real people-- than any policy statement of the Eisenhower administration. Following its thoughtful introduction to the topic, the report nonetheless espouses goals and recommends tactics virtually identical to those of its Eisenhower-era predecessors. Stating that Africa would be increasingly characterized by one party states and arguing that these authoritarian systems did not represent the far reaching arm of Moscow, the report maintained, as had NSC policy reviews in 1957, 1958, and 1960, that communism had not

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<sup>97</sup> Schlesinger, p. 554; Hoffman, p. 90.

taken firm hold in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>98</sup> Regarding nonalignment, the report noted that US policy toward neutrals since at least 1958 had been one of respect and sympathy. Quoting Eisenhower's Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Joseph Satterthwaite, it agreed that "We do not seek outright political commitment to our side; rather we hope to reinforce an existing commitment to the free way of life."<sup>99</sup>

To argue that Kennedy's Africa *policy* continued that of the Eisenhower Administration is not to say, however, that his *actions* mirrored those of the previous Administration. Quite to the contrary, Kennedy's response to the Volta River Project followed neither the path laid out by Eisenhower, nor that recommended by his own advisors. Whereas Eisenhower declined to commit to the VRP until his Administration had decided definitively to participate, Kennedy's top advisors assured Ghanaian officials of US participation, while simultaneously back-pedaling during internal meetings. Both Administrations endured Ghana's public berating of US policy in the Congo, and Nkrumah's increasing interaction with the East. In contrast to Eisenhower, and despite a policy review calling for patience, "even when neutralist behavior is almost intolerably anti-Western," Kennedy allowed Nkrumah's well-known penchant for

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<sup>98</sup> BHL, GMW, Box 15, Folder: African Task Force, December 1960, "Summary of Appendix B: A Policy for sub-Saharan Africa."

<sup>99</sup> JFKL, Task Force on Africa Report.

fiery rhetoric and anticipated contacts with the East to drive a reassessment of US participation in the VRP.<sup>100</sup>

Kwame Nkrumah relied on the successful negotiation of funding for the Volta River Project to bring industrialization and, therefore, economic stability to Ghana. While the British government acknowledged the feasibility of the project, it was not financially able to offer substantial assistance, recommending instead that Ghana seek the support of the United States. Britain additionally lobbied the United States to consider the project, arguing its merits as the key to overcoming Soviet influence in Ghana. The Eisenhower Administration, while initially reticent to undertake the sizeable financial commitment, agreed with Britain's appraisal, and agreed to provide monies, although the formal signatures and disbursements fell to the new Administration of John F. Kennedy. In his decision to reassess the VRP, based on Nkrumah's relationship to the East, Kennedy diverged not only from the policy of his predecessor, but also from the recommendations of his own advisors. Far from a progressive approach to neutralism that recommended "never judging them adversely for not 'taking sides,'" Kennedy held ransom his approval of VRP agreements until Nkrumah publicly agreed to uphold Western democratic ideals.<sup>101</sup> This carrot and stick approach would come to define US relations with Ghana throughout Kennedy's

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<sup>100</sup> JFKL, White House Central Files, White House Central Subject File, Box 304, Folder: Policy Planning Council, "Neutralism: Suggested United States Policy Toward Uncommitted Nations," 29 May 1961."

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

term in office, and would guide the decisions of his successor, Lyndon B. Johnson.



## CHAPTER 5:

### FEARS, ACCUSATIONS, CYCLES, AND DISENGAGEMENT, 1962-66

US officials hoped that their difficult, and ultimately affirmative, decision to sign formally the loan agreements and guarantee US support for the Volta River Project would garner the unqualified cooperation of Kwame Nkrumah. The Ghanaian leader had, after all, promised John F. Kennedy that he would lead Ghana in a manner that supported the Western democratic ideals of the United States. This conciliatory attitude lasted until midway through 1962, at which point Ghana and the United States entered into a nearly four-year cycle of acrimony and reconciliation, occasioned by Nkrumah's fear of subversion and his accusations of CIA covert action in Ghana. Throughout this period, US officials relied on US funding of the Volta dam to coax or cajole Ghana back into line with US goals and objectives, at least in its public posture. With the final disbursements of Volta funding in January 1965, and the loss of this vital bargaining chip, the United States essentially disengaged from relations with Ghana, relying on promise of Nkrumah's impending downfall to restore relations in the future.

#### From Cooperation to Tension: Battles with the Ghana Press, 1962

The United States hoped that its final decision to sign the Volta agreements, thereby cementing US participation in the VRP, would secure the cooperation and friendly support of the government of Ghana. This proved to be

the case throughout the spring and summer of 1962. Relations between the two nations remained uneventful, prompting analysts in Washington to describe the relationship as "considerably improved" since 1961. While the State Department argued that it was "unquestionably" the decision to give assistance on the Volta that facilitated this shift from "acrimony" to "guarded cordiality," officials did not believe that these smooth relations denoted any fundamental shift in Nkrumah's domestic or foreign policies.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, Nkrumah had become arguably more authoritarian since Kennedy had reopened debate on the Volta funding in September 1961, roughly doubling the number of persons detained under the Preventative Detention Act, and ousting Ministers he believed could challenge him for power.<sup>2</sup> Economically, foreign reserves continued to drop, largely due to Nkrumah's imprudent spending, and austerity measures enacted in August 1961 had failed as yet to prove helpful. Nkrumah's simultaneous support for foreign investment and rhetoric of devoted socialism did little to encourage investment in Ghana, making the economic future of the country more uncertain. Still, US officials remained confident that a continued association through the VRP would

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<sup>1</sup> JFKL, NSF, Brubeck Series, Ghana Subjects, Dungan File, Box 385, Folder: 6/62-8/62 "Ghana: Assessment Since Volta," 13 June 1962.

<sup>2</sup> PRO, FO 371/161361/63332 Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, Canada from Office of the High Commissioner for Canada, Accra, 16 February 1962; Since September 1961, Nkrumah had ousted Minister of the Interior Krobo Edusei, and Minister of Trade and Labor Kojo Botsio. Finance Minister K.A. Gbedemah, well respected by Washington diplomats as a pro-Western force in Ghana, had been demoted to Minister of Health in May 1961. Nkrumah then released him from service in October 1961. Each of these men was a well-known member of Ghana's "Old Guard," activists for Gold Coast

keep Ghana friendly to the West. Washington hoped for continued improvement in relations with the arrival in June 1962 of the new US Ambassador to Ghana, William P. Mahoney, Jr. A close friend of Kennedy, who had spearheaded his presidential campaign in Arizona, Mahoney arrived in Accra with Kennedy's personal letter of recommendation in hand. As officials in the Department of State had hoped, Kennedy's personal endorsement of Mahoney, and handwritten salutation to Nkrumah, impressed the Ghanaian President. He concluded his first meeting with the new Ambassador hoping that they would meet frequently and that he could verbally pass along messages for the American president.<sup>3</sup>

"Nothing in Ghana remains firm or fixed for long," a British diplomat once reminded his American counterpart, and such was the case in 1962.<sup>4</sup> No sooner had the United States become guardedly comfortable in its relations with Ghana than an assassination attempt against Kwame Nkrumah inflamed old charges of imperialism, and neocolonialism, followed by a barrage of anti-US rhetoric. On 1 August 1962, as Nkrumah returned from diplomatic negotiations in neighboring Upper Volta, he narrowly escaped the grenade of an assassin while passing through the village of Kulungugu. Killing the young girl presenting flowers to the President, the blast left Nkrumah with relatively minor wounds to

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independence during British colonial rule. These Cabinet reshuffles opened the door for increased activism by the Left.

<sup>3</sup> NAII, RG 84, MLR 2597A, Ghana; Accra; Classified General Records (1956-1961), Box 14, "Ambassador Mahoney Presents Credentials to President Nkrumah," 27 June 1962.

<sup>4</sup> PRO, Dominions Office (hereafter DO), Record Group 195, Subseries 23/62929 "Extract from Minute by Mr. Chadwick dated 12<sup>th</sup> May, 1961."

the lower legs.<sup>5</sup> The Government of Ghana responded quickly to the bombing, immediately closing all borders. Suspecting local terrorists and possibly a tribal uprising, government security forces burned Kulungugu to the ground and detained 260 members of local Mamprui tribe.<sup>6</sup> Government officials next arrested two of their own, Minister of Information Tawia Adamafio and Foreign Minister Ako Adjei, as having been complicit in the attack.<sup>7</sup> On 9 September another bomb blast, resulting in one death and six injuries, occurred 50 yards from the entrance to Flagstaff House, in midst of 300 people celebrating Nkrumah's escape from harm in Kulungugu.<sup>8</sup> Eleven days later, two bombs rocked Accra's downtown district. Rigid security measures ensued. Declaring a state of emergency, the government issued a 4 p.m. curfew that included shutting

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<sup>5</sup> JFKL, NSF, Box 100, Ghana General, 9/62 Folder: Chad Calhoun Report on Ghana Visit, 26 September 1962.

<sup>6</sup> NAII, 645j.00/9-1162 Accra to State, 11 September 1962

<sup>7</sup> Documents related to the assassination occur in two large segments, on and around 3 August and 30 August. Many documents in this time frame have either been "sanitized," leaving paragraphs or pages of information unclassified, or documents have been removed from the files all together. See NAII, RG 84, MLR 2597A, Ghana; Accra; Classified General Records (1956-1961), Box 15, Folder: Ghana Only, 1962. Communications from Edmondson in Accra are a case in point, as are CIA reports and message traffic between Accra and the Department of State in the period 9/18-9/30. Portions of these documents that are available discuss the likelihood that attempts to assassinate Nkrumah came from Togo, where the United States was in active contact with Ghanaian exiles. This suggests the possibility of US involvement in, or at the least, prior knowledge of the assassination attempt.

<sup>8</sup> At this time Flagstaff House was Nkrumah's residence and the seat of government activity in Accra. NAII, 745J.00/9-962, Accra to Secretary of State, 9 September 1962.

down all public transportation, and issuing limited "curfew passes" to diplomatic personnel. Police cordoned off segments of the city and began systematic door to door searches of residences and vehicles. Officers searched the homes and cars of numerous diplomats and even attempted to enter and search the West German Embassy.<sup>9</sup> The government also imposed censorship on the foreign press and travel restrictions preventing any Ghanaian citizen from leaving the country without the express permission of the government.

Finding no evidence, and unable to assign concrete responsibility for the actions, the government proceeded to assess blame far and wide, with the West as its primary target. Lashing out against the "frenzied rivalry between the two blocs for domination of non-aligned countries," the Ghanaian press blamed the West for bringing the Cold War to Africa.<sup>10</sup> Radio and print media referred to the violence as "imperialist bombs," and suggested that an international neocolonial conspiracy threatened Ghana, with Western governments engineering the assassination attempt on Nkrumah.<sup>11</sup> During meetings with UK High Commissioner Geoffrey de Freitas and US Ambassador Mahoney, Nkrumah characterized the press reports as "silly," claiming as always, that he looked at the papers only

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<sup>9</sup> NAII, 745J.00/9-2262, Accra to Secretary of State, 22 September 1962

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in NAII, 511.45J/9-1762, Accra to Secretary of State, 17 September 1962.

<sup>11</sup> NAII, 745J.00/9-1862. Accra to Department of State, 18 September 1962.

sporadically.<sup>12</sup> Unsatisfied with the President's claim that he would do "something," Mahoney presented the demand of Secretary of State Rusk that an "immediate and unequivocal" retraction be printed in the local press, and prepared one for Nkrumah's approval. Nkrumah agreed to do so, and the negative press campaign ended abruptly.<sup>13</sup> This détente lasted for only two months. By the end of November, attacks against the United States again filled the Ghanaian press with an editorial in the *Evening News* alleging CIA involvement in the Kulungugu assassination attempt.<sup>14</sup> According to Nkrumah's advisor, Geoffrey Bing, investigators planned to use evidence of money transfers from Western banks into the account of accused Minister Ako Adjei to argue that Adjei, working as a CIA operative, engineered the attack against Nkrumah.<sup>15</sup>

Editorials additionally maligned US Peace Corps volunteers (PCVs) in Ghana, charging them of collusion with the Central Intelligence Agency in actions

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<sup>12</sup> NAII, 611.45J/9-1362, MemCon, attached to Accra to State, 12 September 1962.

<sup>13</sup> NAII, 745J.ii/9-2562, Accra to State, 25 September 1962

<sup>14</sup> Kwame Nkrumah founded the *Evening News* in 1947 as the official paper of the Convention People's Party, of which Nkrumah was the Secretary-General and lifetime Chairman. For more on the development of the press in Ghana, see K.A.B Jones-Quartey, *A Summary History of the Ghana Press, 1822-1960*. (Accra, Ghana: Government Information Services Department, 1974).

<sup>15</sup> British and American diplomats regarded Bing, a former Labour Party MP, as one of Nkrumah's most radical advisors. NAII, 745j.00/12-3162, Accra to Secretary of State 31 December 1962. Bing's accusations appear in several cables from the Embassy in Accra to the Department of State. Reference cables have been withdrawn or heavily sanitized, suggesting that the United States may have possessed additional information on Bing's claims.

against the Ghanaian government. Characterizing volunteers as "subversive forces in our midst" and "cowboy imperialist agents," reports claimed that they not only taught English, math and history, but also proselytized the American political ideology, inculcating students in the methods of imperialism.<sup>16</sup> Up to this point, PCVs had been a welcome presence in Ghana, providing necessary support for Nkrumah's educational goals.

In the spring of 1961, Sargent Shriver, appointed by his brother-in-law, President John Kennedy, to run the agency, chose Ghana to receive the first Peace Corps volunteers. During his eight-country tour of Africa in April 1961, Shriver had met and liked Nkrumah, who became the first leader to request Peace Corps volunteers. Shriver chose Ghana, more importantly, for its symbolic significance as the first African colony to gain independence in sub-Saharan Africa and the leadership of Nkrumah in the anti-imperial movement on the continent. Shriver viewed Nkrumah's endorsement of the Peace Corps a crucial step in gaining acceptance throughout the third world. Nkrumah, educated as a teacher, and serious about the educational needs of his country, regarded the Peace Corps as a providential solution to Ghana's shortage of available instructors. At a time when Ghanaian-US relations had become strained over the Volta Dam funding, the Peace Corps marked a happy convergence of goals and strategies.

Peace Corps volunteers arrived Accra in August 1961 to a warm welcome that included a party thrown by Nkrumah, where the Ghanaian President even

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<sup>16</sup>Quoted in NAII, 611.45j/11-2162. Accra to Department of State, 21 November 1962.

instructed the newcomers in popular local dance steps. Noting later that he had invited the volunteers to assist in Ghana's development, and that they "deserve our cooperation and support in all they do for the good of the nation," Nkrumah also made it clear that he would not tolerate political action by volunteers.<sup>17</sup> While relations between Ghana and the United States fluctuated throughout 1962, the attempt on Nkrumah's life in August of that year led first to accusations of CIA participation in the bombing, and later to charges that PCVs were, in fact, CIA agents. As Nkrumah's paranoia of Peace Corps activities increased, he directed that volunteers be removed from English and history classrooms, where propaganda could be easily incorporated, and limited to instruction in math and sciences.<sup>18</sup>

Throughout the CIA controversy, American and British officials offered insight on Nkrumah's state of mind following the bombings as a way to explore his motives in allowing the press attacks. The Ghanaian leader was obviously shaken by the series of bombings that left six dead and more than one hundred wounded. Nkrumah described the events as, "sheer terrorism.... So unlike Ghana -- so unlike Ghanaians -- I can't understand it." <sup>19</sup> His mental anguish was

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<sup>17</sup> Hoffman, p. 161.

<sup>18</sup> Despite Shriver's efforts to insulate the Peace Corps from the CIA, including the specific assurance of the President and Secretary of State that its involvement would be strictly prohibited, leaders often assumed a connection between the two agencies. For a detailed discussion of the Peace Corps in Ghana see Hoffman, pp.148-182.

<sup>19</sup> JFKL, NSF, Box 100, Ghana-General; 9/62 Folder: Chad Calhoun Report on Ghana Visit, 26 September 1962.



arguably worse than his physical wounds. For two months after the Kulungugu blast, Nkrumah retreated to his newly secured residence and office did not appear in public. When, in October, he finally did resume attendance at official functions, it was in a bulletproof vehicle surrounded by more than seventy security personnel.<sup>20</sup> Nkrumah's greatest wound, however, was perhaps to his pride, recognizing in the assassination attempt that the self-styled Osagyefo could no longer claim the universal admiration and respect of all Ghanaians. This left Nkrumah isolated and irrational. Ambassador William Mahoney, who in only a few short months had established a warm rapport with the President, suggested that it was Nkrumah's inability to accept this loss of unquestioned support by his people that contributed to press attacks against imperialist ghosts. While Mahoney observed that Nkrumah seemed increasingly unbalanced after the bombings, he still detected no "mental derangement," leading him to argue that fear was not the sole factor in the press attacks. According to the Ambassador, pressure from left wing advisors and staff also motivated Nkrumah to allow the negative media. While Nkrumah remained in firm control of politics in Ghana the influence of the Left prompted him to bait the West with vitriolic propaganda, hoping to flush out "true" Western opposition to Ghana.<sup>21</sup> British diplomats agreed that Nkrumah was unduly influenced by more radical elements in his government, largely because he had detained as possible conspirators those who normally

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<sup>20</sup> NAII, 745j.00/ 9-3062 Accra to Secretary of State, 30 September 1962.

<sup>21</sup> NAII, 611.45J/9-1962 Accra to Secretary of State 19 September 1962.

exercised a more moderate influence. Claiming that the effects of the bombing had left Nkrumah "more and more under 'juju' influence," officials in the UK High Commission believed that Nkrumah was no longer able or willing to restrain his subordinates who then proceeded to "run wild."<sup>22</sup>

In late October, President Kennedy requested a review of US relations with Ghana, raising the question of how the United States might appropriately object to recent actions. While conceding that it would be useful at this time to "make an example of one of the left-leaning neutralists," Kennedy's foreign policy staff believed harsh criticism of Ghana to be inadvisable. Kennedy's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, Carl Kaysen, noted in a memorandum to the President numerous encouraging developments in Ghana, despite the recent negative publicity. Progress on the Volta dam was ahead of schedule and under budget. Nkrumah's Administration was considering a general law to regulate and facilitate foreign capital investment, and establishing an investment bank to support private enterprise. Overall, Nkrumah's actions showed his movement away "from neutralism against us and to neutralism for

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<sup>22</sup> NAII, 611.45J/9-2162, London to Secretary of State, 21 September 1962. NAII, 611.70/12-1762, London to Secretary of State, 17 December 1962. "Juju" refers to indigenous cultural and religious beliefs and practices in Ghana, often involving consultation with tribal priests or healers. Nkrumah apparently sought traditional methods to respond to the mental and physical effects of the assassination attempt. British diplomats argued that this left him somehow less able to meet the needs of his office. British officials often voiced skepticism over the melding of traditional beliefs and modern realities in Ghana. For a discussion of traditional religion and culture, and its impact on Nkrumah see Addo, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Case Study of Religion and Politics in Ghana*.

us," even if his words suggested otherwise.<sup>23</sup> Members of the Kennedy Administration in Washington and Accra agreed that the attitude of the press in Ghana, however, distasteful, was not cause for alarm.<sup>24</sup> After consultation with their counterparts in the United Kingdom, the State Department agreed that the current anti-US rhetoric was merely a "move of desperation to reduce American influence." In publicly bullying Nkrumah to silence the negative press, the United States would be falling into his trap, creating sympathy for Ghana as being pressured by the West.<sup>25</sup> Mahoney recommended instead that US policy toward Ghana be guided by "courteous aloofness" and "watchful waiting" until a time as when Ghana "launches a real offensive against us." The Ambassador and his staff in Accra asserted that US programs in Ghana continued to contribute to US objectives in Ghana. Neither Nkrumah nor CPP officials had yet echoed the press attacks in speeches or public comments, and the United States should withhold strong approbation until such a time when Nkrumah's propaganda translated into government action.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *FRUS*, 1961-63, Volume XXI, p. 379-383, "Memorandum From the President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kaysen) to President Kennedy," 29 October 1962.

<sup>24</sup> NAII, 611.45J/12-262, Accra to Secretary of State 2 December 1962.

<sup>25</sup> JFKL, NSF, Brubeck, Box 384, Folder: Ghana General 9/62-11/62, State to Accra, London, Lome, Lagos, 21 November 1962. NAII, 611.70/12-1762, London to Secretary of State.

<sup>26</sup> NAII, 611.45J/12-362 Accra to Secretary of State, 3 December 1962. NAII, 611.45J/12-262, Accra to Secretary of State 2 December 1962.

## Keeping Nkrumah in Check: The Diplomacy of Edgar Kaiser, February 1963

Although the United State government agreed to maintain a 'business as usual' attitude through official diplomatic channels, President Kennedy enlisted the aid of Edgar Kaiser and Chad Calhoun, top executives of the Valco consortium, to extract Nkrumah's unofficial guarantee of allegiance to the West. Kennedy's use of Kaiser and Calhoun to assess Nkrumah's attitude and remind him of the gratitude he owed the West for proceeding with the Volta proved successful and thus became an assignment Kennedy and later, Lyndon Baines Johnson, repeated. The Department of State prepared a six-page 'confidential' briefing memorandum in advance of Kaiser and Calhoun's December meeting with President Kennedy. The memorandum presented recent assessments of the situation in Ghana and included appendices with copies of articles from the Ghanaian press.<sup>27</sup> Upon their arrival in Accra, Kaiser and Calhoun also conferenced with Ambassador William Mahoney, who reinforced the position of the United States, and identified key points to stress with Nkrumah. In the month since the men met with President Kennedy allegations had appeared in the Ghana press that the CIA was involved not only in the Kulungugu episode, but also in the 1961 assassination of Congolese leader Patrice Lumumba.<sup>28</sup> Nkrumah recently had been "pathologically obsessed" with a newly published expose by

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<sup>27</sup> NAII, 745J.00/12-1362, "Briefing Paper on Ghana," 13 December 1962.

<sup>28</sup> JFKL, POF, Box 117b, Folder 3, Ghana-General 1962-63, Accra to Secretary of State 12 January 1963.

American journalist Andrew Tully entitled, *CIA: The Inside Story*, and was quick to believe in an extensive CIA network across Africa.<sup>29</sup>

In addition, the government of Ghana had alleged that two members of the US Embassy staff, Dr. Carl C. Nydell, Regional Medical Officer of the Department of State, and William B. Davis, Cultural Affairs Officer, worked as intelligence agents. On 11 January Ghana requested the voluntary recall of Nydell and Davis. When questioned, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Defense replied that he had been instructed not to discuss any reason for the request, as such disclosure would prove embarrassing for both countries. Ambassador Mahoney informed Nkrumah that the United States would not consider such a request, but respected the right of Ghana to declare diplomatic personnel *persona non grata*. Mahoney also stressed that such a course of action could indeed have a serious and negative effect on relations between the two countries. On 18 January the Ministry of Foreign Affairs outlined the charges against Nydell and declared him *persona non grata*. Ghana stated that Ghanaian refugee and Kulungugu bombing suspect Joseph Yaw Manu had implicated Nydell in a conspiracy against Ghana.<sup>30</sup> The United States declared George H. Arthur, Second

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<sup>29</sup> NAII, 611.45J/1-863, Accra to Secretary of State, 8 January 1963.

<sup>30</sup> NAII, 611.45J/1-1863, "Memorandum for Mr. McGeorge Bundy, the White House, 18 January 1963. While there is no transcript of the meeting between Mahoney, and Kaiser and Calhoun, Mahoney does note that he reviewed the details of Kaiser's "mission." Communications with the department of State just prior to this briefing concentrated heavily on Nkrumah's fascination with the CIA and the details of the Nydell-Davis case. See NAII, 945j.11/1-863 Accra to Department of State, 8 January 1963, and 611.45j/1-863, Accra to Secretary of State, 8 January 1963.

Secretary of the Ghanaian Embassy in Washington, DC, to be *persona non grata* in response.<sup>31</sup> Thus updated on the tense and increasingly difficult situation in Accra, Kaiser and Calhoun met with Kwame Nkrumah.

No sooner had Nkrumah greeted Kaiser and Calhoun than Kaiser presented the Ghanaian President with two messages from President Kennedy. The first message, addressing the recent torrent of accusations in the Ghanaian media, offered Kennedy's solid assurance that neither the United States government nor the Central Intelligence Agency was attempting to upset Nkrumah. The second message conveyed Kennedy's frustration with the media in Ghana, along with the clear indication that Kennedy could no longer tolerate the vitriol and invective directed at his Administration. Kaiser reiterated Kennedy's message with the explanation that the President, the US Congress, and the American people all had read the accusations printed in the Ghanaian press. In this climate, President Kennedy faced nearly overwhelming objection to his foreign aid bill. According to Kaiser, Kennedy could not garner support to aid a country that was "hitting us in [the] face." Kaiser continued to describe his own difficulty in this vein, stating that his own Board of Directors was ill-prepared to approve his support of a country that persisted to accuse and combat the United States. Noting that it would soon be time to purchase equipment for next phase of construction on the Volta River Project, Kaiser first tempted Nkrumah with

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<sup>31</sup> NAI, 611.45J/1-1763 State to Accra and London, 17 January 1963; and 611.45J/1-1863, "Memorandum for Mr. McGeorge Bundy, The White House from Brubeck, Executive Secretary, 18 January 1963.

discussion of the many small scale industries that could be built to enhance local production and industrialization in Ghana. After seeing Nkrumah's eyes "light up" at the prospect of such advances, Kaiser retrenched, suggesting the current situation in Ghana perhaps indicated he scale back such plans. Kaiser also discussed how he *had* hoped to organize a private trip for Nkrumah and his colleagues in the Cabinet to visit his company's aluminum smelter in West Virginia. He suggested that pictures of Nkrumah at the site, and discussion of the similar progress that would soon be made in Ghana might encourage the press in Ghana to report on something constructive, rather than its current "junk and monkey business." Again, Kaiser admitted to Nkrumah that, with reluctance, he now had to rethink the logic of such a junket.<sup>32</sup>

Kaiser and Calhoun hoped for the long-range success of their "mission." On the surface, Nkrumah had appeared receptive to their presentation. According to Kaiser, "We rocked the hell out of him with President Kennedy's messages."<sup>33</sup> After three meetings, Nkrumah requested Edgar Kaiser's assistance in drafting a message to reassure President Kennedy of the lasting friendship between Ghana and the United States, but gave only vague verbal agreement that he would address the situation of the press. Ambassador Mahoney met with Kwame Nkrumah several days after the series of Kaiser meetings, and believed that Kaiser had indeed succeeded in "shaking" Nkrumah, something very few

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<sup>32</sup> NAII, 611.45J/1-2362 Accra to Secretary of State, 23 January 1963.

<sup>33</sup> NAII, 611.45J/1-2362 Accra to Secretary of State, 23 January 1963.

managed to achieve. As to the effects of the shake-up, Mahoney argued that Kaiser had been so persuasive, and so willing to stand firm with Nkrumah, the initiative had to stand as Nkrumah's last chance. If no significant change resulted from the series of meetings, Mahoney urged that the United States "radically alter" its policy toward Ghana.<sup>34</sup> Declining Mahoney's recommendation for "major action", the State Department concluded instead that Ghana be given a "reasonable period" to demonstrate the good faith expressed in meetings with Kaiser, and planned to create a list of criteria by which to evaluate Ghana's performance.<sup>35</sup>

Kaiser's meetings with Nkrumah apparently did produce some repercussions in Accra. Within a week of Kaiser's visit, Executive Secretary of the Convention People's Party N.A. Welbeck summoned personnel from Radio Ghana, and the Deputy Editor of the *Ghanaian Times*, directing that they review the treatment of the East and West in their broadcasts and publications and, "balance it out." Ghana's Deputy Foreign Minister instructed news staff to clear any attacks on foreign countries with the Ministry prior to publication. These communications resulted in an almost immediate reorientation of the press

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> NAII, RG 84, MLR 2597A, Ghana; Accra; Classified general Records (1956-1963), Box 13, Department of State to Accra, 30 January 1963.



attitude toward the United States, and belied Nkrumah's true level of control over the media.<sup>36</sup>

By early spring, a CIA assessment of Ghana reviewed the positive effects of the Kaiser meetings, noting that the volume of press attacks against the United States had, "dropped considerably." The document also reported further improvement in Nkrumah's efforts to assuage the fear of private businessmen in Accra, citing the continued preparation of a capital investment bill to protect overseas investors. By April the legislation had been introduced in Parliament. Additionally, Ghana had withdrawn requests that the US Embassy transfer Nydell and Davis. Nkrumah appointed a long-time supporter and recognized political moderate, Kojo Botsio, as Foreign Minister, filling a post that had been vacant since the detention of former Minister Ako Adjei six months prior. Nkrumah also designated the well-trained and well-respected M.A. Ribeiro as his new Ambassador to the United States. While these examples suggested positive changes in Nkrumah's actions, CIA officials reported that, "Positive examples of a change in the Ghanaian attitude, however, have been few and far between."<sup>37</sup> According to Mahoney, Kwame Nkrumah continued to believe the CIA actively conspired against Ghana, despite President Kennedy's direct message that no such covert operation existed. As long as Nkrumah accepted the allegations as true,

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<sup>36</sup> NAII, 611.45J/1-2463 Accra to Secretary of State 24 January 1963.

<sup>37</sup> JFKL, NSF, Box 100, Folder: Ghana General, 2/11/63 - 2/28/63 "Current Intelligence Memorandum, 27 February 1963.

Mahoney argued, "we have [a] long road to hoe here."<sup>38</sup> While the visit of Kaiser and Calhoun seemed to provide a respite from anti-US press attacks, Mahoney believed the results would be short-lived.

## From Improved Relations to Renewed Tensions, October 1963 - February 1964

The period of calm emanating from the Kaiser-Calhoun trip lasted for eight months. In June, Assistant Secretary G. Mennen Williams enjoyed a goodwill visit to Accra. Ghanaian Foreign Minister Kojo Botsio repaid this courtesy with a visit to Washington in late September. The men noted that their meetings contributed to the ongoing improvement in relations between their two countries, and agreed that in the past "the Ghanaian press had done its government a disservice."<sup>39</sup> Mennen Williams was convinced of Botsio's sincerity in improving US-Ghanaian relations, and believed it reflected Nkrumah's own intentions. In October the National Security Council, at President Kennedy's request, reviewed the political situation in Ghana before Kaiser Industries contributed its first "irrevocable" funds for the Valco aluminum portion of the VRP. The NSC reported that no political developments in the last twelve months in Ghana merited a reconsideration of the project, and recommended informing Kaiser that the government had no objection to their proceeding with their

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<sup>38</sup> NAII, RG 84, MLR 2596A, Ghana; Accra; General Records (1956-1963), Box 6, Accra to Secretary of State, 29 March 1963.

<sup>39</sup> NAII, RG 84, MLR 2596A, Ghana; Accra; General Records (1956-1963), Box 6, Box 6, MemCon, Subject: Ghanaian Foreign Minister's Call on the Secretary, 21 September 1963.

investment schedule.<sup>40</sup> The State Department judged relations so stable as to conclude that the United States was, "even more justified now than eight months ago in pursuing our steady course in Ghana."<sup>41</sup> Ambassador Mahoney, on a visit to the United States in November, offered a more measured assessment. While he agreed on the excellent progress of the Volta Project, and remarked favorably on the recent moderation of the press, he cautioned that Nkrumah's attitude had not undergone a fundamental change, indicating the US could expect future negative outbreaks. President Kennedy asked if Nkrumah were a Marxist. Mahoney replied that Nkrumah was too "confused" and "immature" to accept any philosophy entirely, and that he maintained the promise of a partially Western economy in Ghana. Mahoney appeared resigned that the United States "must learn to live with" Nkrumah, but warned of more trouble in the future.<sup>42</sup>

Three days after Mahoney's meeting in Washington, President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. Mahoney could not have anticipated that his predictions of trouble with Ghana would come true so soon, or in such an unsettling manner. The initial response in Ghana to the news of Kennedy's death was one of shock. Kwame Nkrumah immediately cabled his personal message of

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<sup>40</sup> *FRUS*, 1961-63, Volume XXI, p. 389-90, "Memorandum From the Department of State Executive Secretary (Brubeck) to President Kennedy," 30 October 1963.

<sup>41</sup> JFKL, NSF, Box 100, Folder: Ghana, General, 8/63-11/63, "Memorandum for Mr. McGeorge Bundy," 25 October 1963.

<sup>42</sup> JFKL, NSF, Brubeck, Box 388a, Folder: Volta Dam 8/63-10/63, "MemCon Subject: Situation in Ghana, 19 November 1963.

"profound shock" and "deepest sympathy" to Jacqueline Kennedy, and his expression of condolences to President Lyndon B. Johnson, on behalf of the Ghanaian people.<sup>43</sup> Speaking by telephone to the US Ambassador, Nkrumah shook uncontrollably, telling Mahoney he was on his knees in prayer.<sup>44</sup> All Ghana flags flew at half-mast on 23 November, and Catholic churches across Ghana offered masses for the slain American leader. Two days later, however, Ghanaian radio and press had shifted from mourning to accusation. Claiming the President to have been the victim of a plot arranged by the "vast capitalist-military-industrial complex," the media in Ghana impugned the United States as a "hollow" society, "dead rotten inside." The *Ghanaian Times* reported that the Dallas police arranged the murder of Lee Harvey Oswald to cover up the murder of President Kennedy.<sup>45</sup> Staff at the American Embassy in Accra did not believe the majority of Ghanaian people held these opinions, and reasoned instead that they represented Soviet propaganda eagerly disseminated by radical government officials. In an off the record discussion with Foreign Minister Botsio,

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<sup>43</sup> NAII, RG 84, MLR 2597A, Ghana; Accra; Classified General Records (1956-1963), Box 15, Kwame Nkrumah to Mrs. John F. Kennedy, 22/11/63; and Kwame Nkrumah, President of the Republic of Ghana, to Lyndon B. Johnson, President of the United States, 22/11/63.

<sup>44</sup> NAII, RG 84, MLR 2597A, Ghana; Accra; Classified General Records (1956-1963), Box 15, Accra to State, 11/24/63.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., Accra to Secretary of State, 2 December 1963.

Ambassador Mahoney argued that, "if Nkrumah is trying to accomplish getting the West to leave Ghana and leave it to the Russians he is on the right track."<sup>46</sup>

Other events in Ghana highlighted Nkrumah's growing domestic struggles. In 1963 Ghana's economy had worsened. The price of cocoa continued to drop, wages decreased while taxes increased, and Nkrumah continued to spend, further decreasing foreign reserves. Ghanaians may have been unhappy with the state of affairs, but their opportunities to protest dwindled. In November Nkrumah increased the breadth of the Preventative Detention Act so that its powers of control surpassed even that of its South African counterpart. In December he unilaterally reversed the acquittal of three defendants on trial for treason in the September 1962 attempt on his life. He then summarily dismissed Ghana's Chief Justice, who had decided the case. Shortly after the conclusion of the trial, Nkrumah announced plans for a referendum on a constitutional amendment to make Ghana a one-party state. Among other effects, this would unconditionally subordinate the judiciary to the office of the President. Also in December, Nkrumah approved the Security Service Act, a measure to consolidate internal security forces and intelligence agencies into a unified service directly under his own control. He then restructured the research division of the ministry, allowing him extensive resources to monitor the activities of Ghanaian exiles, as well as

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<sup>46</sup> NAII, RG 59, Subject-Numeric File (hereafter SN), 1963, Political Affairs and Relations (hereafter, POL), 7 GHANA-US, Box 3792, MemCon, Subject: Private Discussion with Foreign Minister on Policy Trends in Ghana, 5 December 1963.

Ghanaian citizens.<sup>47</sup> On 1 January 1964, a policeman at Flagstaff House shot three times at President Nkrumah. Nkrumah responded to the attempt on his life by disarming the police force and relying instead on the protection of a newly assembled Presidential guard.

This second assassination attempt immediately triggered expectations in the US Embassy of a further deterioration in relations, as Nkrumah would certainly find the "theory of [a] CIA plot irresistible."<sup>48</sup> The State department instructed the Embassy to report any attempt to link the shooting with the United States," but the first news reports focused instead on Nkrumah's success in disarming and apprehending the suspect.<sup>49</sup> In one account, the President wrestled his assailant, while the trapped man, "struggled to free himself from Osagyefo's ju-jitsu grip." According to the report, this was testament to Nkrumah's "moral, spiritual and physical strength against his enemies."<sup>50</sup> After these initial reports attesting to Nkrumah's escape from harm, the press represented the attack as a textbook example of "class struggle," asserting that Ghana had become divided into "the people" and "enemies of the people," one of whom had plotted against

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<sup>47</sup> Thompson, p. 291. NAII, SN, 1964-66, POL 15-5 Ghana, Box 2235, Accra to Secretary of State, 2 January 1964.

<sup>48</sup> NAII, SN, 1964-66, POL 15-1 Head of State, Ghana, Box 2234, Accra to Secretary of State, 3 January 1964.

<sup>49</sup> NAII, SN, 1964-66, POL 15-1 Head of State, Ghana, Box 2234, State to Accra, 3 January 1964.

<sup>50</sup> NAII, SN, 1964-66, POL 15-1 Head of State, Ghana, Box 2234, Accra to Secretary of State, 3 January 1964.

Nkrumah.<sup>51</sup> Surprisingly, the class struggle assertion rather than the implication of American involvement in the assault did not seem to relieve officials in Washington. Instead, the State Department focused on the, "overall Marxist analyses" of the shooting. The State Department believed that Nkrumah's worsening stature in Ghana, evidenced by an internally plotted assassination, would lead Nkrumah to "hasten [the] socialization of the state in Marxist terms."<sup>52</sup> While Ambassador Mahoney reviewed the situation in Ghana and suggested overhauling the US strategy toward Ghana, G. Mennen Williams disagreed. Williams advised Secretary Rusk to maintain a "business-as-usual" attitude towards Ghana, as long as Nkrumah refrained, as he had in the recent assassination attempt, from using the United States as his "scapegoat."<sup>53</sup>

The United States, however, once again became Ghana's scapegoat in early February. Without warning the government issued deportation orders for four American professors in Accra, requiring them to leave Ghana in twenty-four hours. Press reports claimed the professors had been offering subversive instruction at the university. Two days later, a crowd of several hundred gathered in an anti-American protest at the US Embassy. While Embassy staff were at a

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<sup>51</sup> NAII, SN, 1964-66, POL 15-1 Head of State, Ghana, Box 2234, Accra to Secretary of State, 3 January 1964.

<sup>52</sup> NAII, SN, 1964-66, POL 2 Ghana, Box 2232, State to Abidjan, Conakry, Monrovia, Lagos, Accra, and London, 9 January 1964.

<sup>53</sup> NAII, SN, 1964-66, POL 2-3, Box 2232, Accra to Department of State 10 January 1964. NAII, SN, 1964-66, POL 15-1 Head of State, Ghana, Box 2234, G. Mennen Williams to The Secretary 13 January 1964.

loss to suggest a precipitating event for the protest, placards and loudspeaker comments made it obvious that renewed suspicion of the CIA was the root cause. Signs included, "We Know You Killed Lumumba," and "Go Home Yankee Rogues," while loudspeakers ranted, "US imperialism, your mentality is twisted.... One by one your agents will be found out." At one point protestors tore down the American flag.<sup>54</sup> The *Ghanaian Times* argued that the CIA had engineered the January 1<sup>st</sup> attack on Nkrumah, stating that the "dopes and drunks who run the Murder Incorporated called the CIA are after the blood of Osagyefo."<sup>55</sup> While Foreign Ministry expressed concern over the demonstrations, it maintained that the views expressed did not represent the government of Ghana. The Convention People's Party had obviously engineered the protest. Sound trucks labeled, "CPP," not only provided loudspeakers for the protest, but circled the area surrounding the Embassy corralling people to attend the event. CPP officials attended the protest carrying party banners, and wearing CPP caps. Foreign Minister Kojo Botsio nonetheless denied that the government either sanctioned or agreed with the content of the protest. Mahoney next sought an appointment with President Nkrumah, who refused, telling the Ambassador to

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<sup>54</sup> NAIL, SN, 1964-66, POL 23-8 Ghana, Box 2236, Accra to Secretary of State, 4 February 1964.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Thompson, p. 302.



seek redress with the "appropriate Ministers concerned."<sup>56</sup> The United States recalled Ambassador Mahoney the same day.

While Nkrumah's actions in December 1963 -- the expansion of political detention, consolidation of security services, and a referendum for a one-party state -- clearly indicated Nkrumah's moves toward totalitarian control, these events did not capture the notice of officials in Washington DC. Embassy reporting of these events merited no greater reply from the Department of State than an acknowledgement of receipt. Even the analysis that these moves by Nkrumah posed a true threat to democratic freedoms in Ghana did not receive consideration in the Department of State. The US responded to the deportation of four professors based on the accusation that they fomented subversion, not the reality that their deportation was a small part of Nkrumah's directive to assume control of the content of all academic instruction.<sup>57</sup> Officials instead focused on Ghana's public rhetoric, accusations, and anti-American demonstrations. While these events certainly deserved a US response, more than likely they represented the actions and theatrics of Ghana's zealous CPP leaders, and impacted the daily lives of Ghanaian citizens very little. In their response to events in Ghana, US officials displayed a preference for style over substance in Ghanaian policy. Kwame Nkrumah was free to do what he wished to his citizenry, as long as he appeared to support the United States. The Johnson administration wanted from

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<sup>56</sup> PRAAD, 17/1/77, President Kwame Nkrumah to Mr. Mahoney, 5 February 1964.

<sup>57</sup> NAII, SN, 1964-66, POL 29 Ghana, Box 2237, Accra to State 6 February 1964.

Nkrumah the same allegiance President Franklin D. Roosevelt had earlier demanded from Anastasio Somoza García of Nicaragua. Nkrumah was free to be a son of a bitch, as long as he was "our" son of a bitch.<sup>58</sup>

## Responding to Ghana: Renewed Diplomacy or Subversion, 1964

While Mahoney returned to the United States for consultation in February 1964, officials in Washington discussed possible responses to the situation, and proposed new courses of policy and action for Ghana. Members of the National Security Council immediately considered using "Volta as a club against Nkrumah."<sup>59</sup> At this point the United States had signed agreements to provide funding for the Volta, but had yet to send its loan disbursements. The State Department's legal team concluded that most clear cut "outs" from the project related to Ghana's failure to fulfill contractual obligations.<sup>60</sup> To date, however, Ghana had met every deadline. The VRP was ahead of schedule and under

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<sup>58</sup> Although Roosevelt's statement has been well known since first quoted in a 1948 *Time* magazine article, archivists at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library in Hyde Park, New York have been unable to find the origins of the comment. Other sources have reported that Roosevelt referred to the Dominican Republic's Rafael Trujillo when he allegedly made the statement. David F. Schmitz, *Thank God They're On Our Side: The United States and Right-Wing Dictatorships, 1921-1965* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), p. 4 FN1.

<sup>59</sup> *FRUS*, 1963-68, Volume XXIV, p. 411, "Memorandum From William H. Brubeck of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy)," 3 January 1964.

<sup>60</sup> NAI, SN, 1964-66, FSE 12 Ghana, Box 940, "Memorandum for Governor Harriman," 7 February 1964.

budget, and there were no projections that Ghana would fail to meet future requirements.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk wished, nonetheless, to consult with the British in considering whether or not to use the continued financing of the Volta River Project as leverage with Kwame Nkrumah. British and American officials, including President Lyndon Johnson and Prime Minister Alec Douglas-Home, met in Washington on 12 February. The meetings included no representatives from the Bureau of African Affairs, nor the corresponding British office, despite the topic of recent events in Ghana and the VRP. Nor did the Bureau of African Affairs prepare briefing materials for the American participants. According to Averell Harriman, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, there was still a narrow window of opportunity available to stop funding the VRP. It would be possible to halt the project entirely, or to postpone work for one year. Harriman stressed that Nkrumah's behavior had become "intolerable," blaming the United States for all of his problems, including assassination attempts. British Foreign Minister Butler asserted that while holding up the VRP to accomplish objectives could be useful, a withdrawal would prove disastrous. Prime Minister Home agreed that Nkrumah was nearly a communist at this point, but he feared that taking away the Volta would send him directly to the Russians.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Tellingly, Home first stated that the Russians would rush to supply money for Aswan, then corrected himself to say Volta. *FRUS*, 1963-68, Volume XXIV, pp. 417-418, "Memorandum of Conversation," 12 February 1964. Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, Texas (hereafter LBJL), NSF, Country File, Box 213, Folder: UK PM Home Visit, 2/12-13/64, "Memorandum of Conversation, 12 February 1964."

The Office of West African Affairs independently had reached the similar conclusion that the United States must maintain a "determined effort to remain in Ghana," despite the increasing difficulties precipitated by Kwame Nkrumah.<sup>62</sup> Failure to act would lead to progressive deterioration in the US-Ghana relationship, opening the door for Soviet success. While the report suggested numerous actions, including a World Bank review of the VRP, postponing Mahoney's return to Accra, and an "intensive" campaign of psychological warfare to diminish support for Nkrumah, the suggestion the State department immediately accepted was an old standard: call in Edgar Kaiser.

Edgar Kaiser and Chad Calhoun returned to Ghana on 21 February 1964, barely thirteen months after the State Department had last called them to meet with Nkrumah. As had occurred before his previous trip, Kaiser traveled to Washington for a State Department briefing. Officials instructed him to voice his opposition to Nkrumah on anti-American press attacks or propaganda, any measures that would stymie private foreign investment, and specifically the demonstrations at the Embassy and the expulsion of American professors. Above all, Kaiser was to demonstrate the negative effect these attacks had on the potential for private investment, including the continuation of the Volta. Kaiser and Calhoun met three times with Nkrumah over a three-day period. Kaiser focused more on the difficulties for foreign investment in Ghana than during his

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<sup>62</sup> *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXIV, pp. 413-16, "Memorandum From the Director of the Office of West African Affairs (Trimble) to the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Williams), 11 February 1964.

previous meetings. Noting the negative atmosphere created by the press in Ghana, Kasier explained that his employees in Accra did not wish to stay, let alone could he convince new families to accept positions. No one wanted to live in an anti-American, one-party state. Kaiser referred to Valco as a test case for investment in Ghana, and assured Nkrumah that if Valco were to fail, Ghana would see no more private investment.<sup>63</sup> The way for Nkrumah to assure Valco's success would be to improve relations with the United States. While not directly threatening to back out on his contract to build the aluminum smelter in Ghana, Kaiser argued that a contract was only as good as the spirit behind it. As long as US-Ghana relations remained strained, he considered that spirit to be poor. Nkrumah noted that he would be in great need of Western investment in Ghana in order to implement his fiscal Seven-Year Plan, and hoped to discuss it with President Johnson. Kaiser could only reiterate that without a drastic improvement in his government's public attitude he could not hope for the success of Valco, he could not hope for investment, and certainly he could not hope for a meeting with the American President. Responding to Nkrumah's claims that he faced tough critics of capitalism in the Ghanaian press, Kaiser resurrected the idea of trip to the Kaiser Co. aluminum smelter in West Virginia, suggesting that Nkrumah come and bring his harshest critics along. While Nkrumah did not agree to travel, he did suggest a list of reporters that Kaiser should invite. Kaiser concluded the meetings feeling discouraged. While Nkrumah had made verbal assurances that

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<sup>63</sup> The Valco portion of the Volta River Project was the construction of the aluminum smelter. At this point in time the dam and power station were under

he would "take care of the situation," his promises were vague, and Kaiser believed he had not made a strong impression on Nkrumah. The Embassy stated that Kaiser had indeed impressed Nkrumah with the severity of his tone and message. They also characterized the meetings as "distressingly familiar."<sup>64</sup>

After returning from Ghana, Edgar Kaiser reported during his State Department debriefing and subsequent meeting with President Johnson that Nkrumah had been anxious to discuss CIA operations in Ghana. In Kaiser's opinion, the alleged role of the CIA was a crucial factor in Nkrumah's attitude toward the US. While Nkrumah claimed he had no qualms with the business of intelligence gathering, he could not tolerate conspiracies, and the United States, Nkrumah claimed, "permits [the] CIA to run riot in Africa." Nkrumah stated that he could believe Ambassador Mahoney's claims that the CIA did not wish to subvert Ghana, only because Mahoney had no idea of the true nature of CIA operations. He continued that two American Embassies operated in Accra, one of them run by the CIA. So secretive and independent were their operations that even CIA Director John McCone had no control of their activities. When Kaiser had finished relaying Nkrumah's comments, McCone asked Mahoney if there

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construction, but "Valco" as Kaiser referred to it, was not yet underway.

<sup>64</sup> NAII, SN, 1964-66, POL UK-US, Box 2785, Accra to Secretary of State, 22 February 1964; Accra to Secretary of State, 24 February 1964; Accra to Secretary of State, 25 February 1964.

could be any truth to Nkrumah's claims. Was it possible the CIA was operating independently of the Embassy? Mahoney stated that it was absolutely not true.<sup>65</sup>

The sudden appearance of CIA Director McCone at meetings regarding Ghana suggests a high level of CIA interest and involvement. Certainly the Agency could have assigned a lower level representative to cover the meetings had the only issue been President Nkrumah's allegations of CIA operations. Various intelligence offices had regularly provided assessments on Ghana since the early days of US involvement there, but beginning in January 1964, Director McCone actively participated in meetings on Ghana with top Administration officials. Additionally he met with Edgar Kaiser privately upon his return from Ghana to discuss Nkrumah's beliefs about CIA activity there. In fact, while Ambassador Mahoney protested the unfounded accusations made by Nkrumah in Ghana, McCone discussed the possibility of an overthrow of the Nkrumah government with Secretary Rusk. Rusk and McCone reviewed the Ghana situation on 6 February, two days after the demonstrations at the US Embassy. Rusk raised the question of Ghana's Deputy Chief of Army Staff J.A. Ankrah taking over the government, and McCone agreed to research the possibility. Meeting again on 11 February, McCone reported that although he had no indication of the General's plans, "if it was desired to develop something, we

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<sup>65</sup> NAIL, RG 59, Lot Files, Records of the Bureau of African Affairs, 1958-66, MLR 5235, Ghana, 1964, Box 65, "Memorandum for the Files," 26 February 1964; MemCon, 25 February 1964. *FRUS*, 1963-1968, Volume XXIV, p. 422-24, "Memorandum for the Record," 26 February 1964, and "Memorandum of Meeting," 26 February 1964.

might work with the British."<sup>66</sup> Subsequent reports by the CIA and information passed through the American Embassy in London considered a coup unlikely at the time. While dissatisfaction with Nkrumah mounted in the armed forces, most officers were likely to join a coup, rather than lead it.<sup>67</sup> G. Mennen Williams later discussed the possibility of a coup d'état with his British colleagues, who agreed that that the "disappearance of Nkrumah would be [the] best thing for the West."<sup>68</sup>

Documentary evidence reveals that the United States and Britain first discussed the possibility of a coup d'état in Ghana in the spring of 1961, prior to John F. Kennedy's June 29 letter that committed the United States to fund the VRP. The Kennedy Administration further explored the possibility in the fall of 1961, after Nkrumah's trip to the East and China, and the President's issuance of National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) No. 96, stating his desire to review the decision to fund the VRP. During both of these periods, documents that make reference to a possible coup have been heavily censored, or removed from files, opening the possibility that the United States did far more than discuss the coup in theory. The Administration apparently hoped that their support for the Volta would provide assistance to the people of Ghana, and that the Nkrumah

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<sup>66</sup> *FRUS*, 1963-68, Volume XXIV, p. 412, "Memorandum for the Record," 11 February 1964.

<sup>67</sup> LBJL, NSF, Country File, Box 206, Folder: United Kingdom Cables, Volume 1, 11/63-10/64, London to Secretary of State, 5 February 1964. LBJL, NSF, Country File, Box 89, Folder: Ghana -- Memos and Miscellaneous (2 of 2) Vol. 1, 11/63-2/64, "Research Memorandum," 12 February 1964.

<sup>68</sup> LBJL, NSF, Country File, Box 206, Folder: United Kingdom Cables, Volume 1, 11/63-10/64, "London to Secretary of State," 25 March 1964.



administration would soon be replaced. References to a coup continue throughout 1962-1963 during bilateral talks with the United Kingdom and in CIA assessments of the political climate in Ghana. In October 1962 an offhanded reference in a telegram from the British High Commission in Lome, Togo to the British Foreign Office in London notes contacts between Americans and Ghanaian exiles. Nkrumah always suspected CIA involvement with exiles in Lome, and the British were certainly aware of these contacts. Documents in 1962-1963 also attest to the meetings between the United States, Britain and exiled Ghanaians K.A. Gbedemah and K.A. Busia, both of whom sought Western aid for their ill-conceived plans to stage a coup in Ghana. The sum of these leads suggests a longer history of US attempts at subversion in Ghana than currently declassified documents reveal. When the archival records become available it will further permit a reevaluation of Ghana's role in the January 1963 assassination of President Sylvanus Olympio of Togo. Perhaps the accepted argument that Nkrumah falsely accused Togo of harboring and supporting the military training of Ghanaian refugees is wrong, and Olympio did actively support US intelligence activities in Togo directed against Ghana.

Edgar Kaiser's February meetings with Nkrumah produced an outcome similar to that of his 1963 meetings. Immediately after his departure, anti-American press virtually ceased, and relations between Ghana and the United States acquired a tense normalcy. The United States attempted to maintain this relative calm through a series of high-level contacts between Nkrumah, his

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Ambassador to the United States, and Western leaders, along with biweekly meetings between Nkrumah and Ambassador Mahoney. President Johnson received Ghana's Ambassador, Miguel Ribeiro, in early March. Johnson focused the conversation on the VRP negotiations undertaken during the Kennedy Administration. Noting the commitments Nkrumah had made to President Kennedy in December 1961 he told Ribeiro, "I want you to live up to them, and we will live up to our commitments."<sup>69</sup> Johnson also felt the need to respond again to Nkrumah's constant refrain of CIA involvement in Ghana. He informed Ribiero that he had ordered the full investigation of allegations of CIA activity in Ghana, and assured him that CIA in Ghana was firmly and completely controlled by Ambassador Mahoney. President Johnson followed up on the meeting with a cordial yet brief letter to President Nkrumah. Highlighting first the importance of private investment for Ghana, Johnson also offered his assurance, "that there is no basis in fact for the allegation that the CIA is carrying on subversive activities in Ghana or attempting to impair the good relations between our governments." He asked that Nkrumah contact him directly if he had further doubts.<sup>70</sup> Later that month Under Secretary Averell Harriman visited Accra. His conversations with

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<sup>69</sup> *FRUS*, 1963-68, Volume XXIV, pp. 432-33, "Memorandum of Conversation," 11 March 1964. LBJL, NSF, Country File, Box 89, Folder: Ghana, Volume 2, 3/64-2/66, MemCon, Subject: President's meeting with Ghanaian Ambassador, 11 March 1964." NAII, SN, 1964-66, POL Ghana-US, Box 2238, MemCon, 11 March 1964. Although each source refers to the same document for the same meeting, each offers variation in the text, and different portions of the text are classified in each source.

<sup>70</sup> *FRUS*, 1963-1968, Volume XXIV, pp.433-434, "Telegram from Department of State to the Embassy in Ghana," 17 March 1964.

Nkrumah followed roughly the same lines as those of Edgar Kaiser, with the important difference that Harriman could claim he spoke on behalf of President Johnson. Washington hoped this would allow Nkrumah to feel he was developing a personal rapport with the Johnson Administration similar to that which he had felt with President Kennedy. Harriman reported that he successfully communicated to Nkrumah his very real personal responsibility in the success or failure of the VRP. By maintaining an atmosphere in which US citizens could work, and conveying an image of this hospitable atmosphere through the Ghanaian press, Nkrumah could make or break the project.<sup>71</sup> Harriman was unsure that Nkrumah accepted the message. At best he hoped that a sustained effort by the United States, including more frequent visits by US representatives, and a letter from Prime Minister Douglas Home could "keep Nkrumah within tolerable bounds."<sup>72</sup>

These efforts proved largely successful for the remainder of 1964. In May G. Mennen Williams visited Accra as part of a two-week tour of Africa, and returned to suggest "glimmerings" of hope that Nkrumah was leaning back toward the West. He noted almost no anti-US press in Ghana since Kaiser's visit, and

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<sup>71</sup> *FRUS*, 1963-1968, Volume XXIV, pp. 435-36, "Telegram From the Embassy in Ghana to the Department of State," 23 March 1964.

<sup>72</sup> NAII, SN, 1964-66, POL 7 Harriman, US, Box 2816, Accra to State, 26 March 1964.

reported that Ghana would soon request surplus food aid from the United States.<sup>73</sup> Ambassador Mahoney continued his regular meetings with President Nkrumah, which served to maintain an open channel of communication. Chad Calhoun traveled to Accra in September to discuss plans for the groundbreaking ceremony of the Valco aluminum smelter, and enjoyed positive discussions with Nkrumah. The ceremonies, planned entirely by Kaiser Corporation, took place on 5 December.<sup>74</sup> While highly anticipated in Ghana, the groundbreaking raised serious questions in Washington. For Kwame Nkrumah breaking ground for the aluminum smelter heralded the beginning of the next phase of development for Ghana. For the United States, the ceremonies signaled the loss of a prize bargaining chip. Without the VRP, how would the United States influence policy in Ghana?

### From Disengagement to Covert Action, 1965-66

In 1965 relations between Ghana and the United States settled into an agreement to disagree. Events that would earlier have sent the State Department calling for Edgar Kaiser, such as demonstrations at the USIS Library and American Embassy, roused little response.<sup>75</sup> Indicative of the new attitude in

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<sup>73</sup> LBJL, NSF, Country File, Box 76, Folder: Africa General, Memos and Miscellaneous, 2/64-6/64, Volume 1 (2 Of 2), "G. Mennen Williams to The Secretary," 21 May 1964.

<sup>74</sup> NAI, SN, 1964-66, INCO-Aluminum Ghana, Box 1084, State to Accra, 27 November 1964. While no representatives of the United States traveled from Washington, Ambassador Mahoney did attend the ceremonies.

<sup>75</sup> NAI, SN, 1964-66, POL 23-8 Ghana, Box 2236, Accra to Secretary of State 13 March 1964. Ghana apologized for the protest and agreed to pay for damages and the State Department declined to pursue the matter further.

relations was the US response to Ghana's request for additional financial aid. In February 1965, Ghana's Finance Minister informed the US Embassy that a delegation would soon depart for Washington to approach the United States for urgent financial assistance.<sup>76</sup> Ghana had contemplated the request for more than ten months, and Ambassador Mahoney correctly had predicted the request to come early in 1965. Ghana's foreign reserves had fallen to near zero in 1964, and its international credit standing had nearly collapsed. Shortages of consumer goods were increasingly common, and a shortage of raw materials had caused the shutdown of several factories. Unemployment, which had never been permitted to become widespread, was now on the increase. Despite these factors, the Finance Ministry had presented a new budget to Parliament in January 1965 calling for increased expenditures.<sup>77</sup> While the State Department agreed to receive the delegation, Secretary Rusk had already decided to refuse their request.<sup>78</sup> US officials did consult, however, with their British counterparts before officially responding to Ghana. British intelligence reported that Nkrumah was supremely confident that both the United States and United Kingdom would grant his requests for aid. He believed that if the financial mission met with failure, his personal phone calls to Prime Minister Harold Wilson and President Johnson

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<sup>76</sup> This request was independent from Ghana's June 1964 application for surplus food aid.

<sup>77</sup> NAI, SN, 1964-66, POL 2-3 Ghana, Box 2232, Accra to State, 22 January 1965.

<sup>78</sup> NAI, SN, 1964-66, POL 1 Ghana-US, Box 2338, State to Lagos, 3 June 1964

would result in immediate assistance.<sup>79</sup> American and British officials agreed to encourage Ghana to approach the International Monetary Fund for a stabilization program. They further agreed that no amount of money could guarantee Nkrumah's improved attitude toward the West. Oliver Troxel, Charge d'Affaires at the US Embassy in Accra summed up the prevailing view, "There [is] no reason to believe that new promises by Nkrumah...would have any more meaning than those he is now in [the] process of breaking."<sup>80</sup>

The United States decision to disengage from constant diplomatic haggling with Kwame Nkrumah resulted not only from the lost leverage of the VRP, but also from the belief that Nkrumah's presidency would not last another year. In early March, Ambassador Mahoney, and CIA Director McCone met in his Washington office to discuss the likelihood of a coup d'état in Ghana.<sup>81</sup> The Ambassador commented on the precarious state of Ghana's economy, and the continued weakening of Nkrumah's position. He reported on the plans Ghanaian Generals Michael Otu and J.A. Ankrah, and Police Commissioner John Harlley were drafting to overthrow the government, but noted that the timing was not yet specific. McCone queried who would assume control, and Mahoney replied that

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<sup>79</sup> NAII, SN, 1964-66, AID 9 Ghana, Box 480, London to Secretary of State, 10 March 1965, and 11 March 1965.

<sup>80</sup> NAII, SN, 1964-66, AID 9 Ghana, Box 480, Accra to Secretary of State, 9 March 1965.

<sup>81</sup> Another participant, labeled as "Deputy Chief, Africa Division" was also present. The name has not been declassified.

initially the new government would be under the control of a military junta.<sup>82</sup>

Three weeks later Mahoney reported to the Department of State that Nkrumah was a "badly frightened man," whose "emotional resources seem [to] be running out." During a meeting with Mahoney, Nkrumah pleaded through his own tears that the Ambassador try and appreciate the strain he had been under. He maintained his belief that the CIA was attempting to assassinate him.<sup>83</sup>

In late April the Embassy in Accra prepared a report for the Department of State entitled, "Proposed United States Aid Posture toward a Successor Government to Nkrumah's." The document detailed the continuing deterioration of Ghana's economy, noting significant unemployment, long lines to purchase staple goods, and a universal drop in income the result of new mandatory government withholding. Stating that dissatisfaction was certain to intensify, making conditions favorable for a coup, the report advocated immediate technical and financial advisory assistance and a package of emergency aid and credit, should the coup occur.<sup>84</sup> One month later, Robert Komer, a member of Johnson's NSC staff, also cited the dismal economy, when he sent a memo to Special Advisor McGeorge Bundy, alerting him that a pro-Western coup in Ghana seemed imminent. Komer stated that combined efforts of Britain, France, and the

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<sup>82</sup> *FRUS*, 1963-1968, Volume XXIV, pp. 442-444, "Memorandum of Conversation," 11 March 1965.

<sup>83</sup> *FRUS*, 1963-1968, Volume XXIV, pp. 444-446, "Telegram From the Embassy in Ghana to the Department of State," 2 April 1965.

<sup>84</sup> NAII, SN, 1964-66, AID 1 US-GHANA, Box 551, Accra to State, 27 April 1965.

United States in ignoring Nkrumah's plea for financial assistance strengthened the position of the conspirators. He further noted, with an aside to the reality of the situation, that although the plotters were keeping the US involved, "we're not directly involved (I'm told)... All in all, looks good."<sup>85</sup>

By late June, Ghana's ailing economy, teamed with Nkrumah's absence from Ghana while he attended the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference in London, produced the threat of a massive strike in and around Accra. Coup leaders, who had planned to seize the government before Nkrumah's return, decided to delay until the strike commenced. This created dissent among several officers and high level civil servants, many of whom began to suspect that General Otu was in fact in league with Nkrumah. The United States feared that if Otu did not mobilize soon, the coup would be undertaken by younger officers who would oppose not only Nkrumah, but also Otu.<sup>86</sup> Alerted to the impending coup, but unaware of the identity of the plotters, Nkrumah made plans to return to Accra earlier than expected, changing his flight several times. CIA reports indicate that Nkrumah grew increasingly paranoid upon his return on 28 June, cutting short arrival ceremonies in Accra, and ordering that no heavy artillery be involved in the Ghana Armed Forces parade on 3 July. Nkrumah also endeavored

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<sup>85</sup> *FRUS*, 1963-1968, Volume XXIV, "Memorandum from Robert W. Komer of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy)," 27 May 1965.

<sup>86</sup> NAII, SN, 1964-66, LAB 6-1 Ghana, Box 1297, Accra to Secretary of State, 12 July 1965.



to curry favor with his probable enemies, awarding impromptu citations to Generals Otu and Ankrah during the parade, and holding an elaborate private dinner for senior military on 4 July.<sup>87</sup>

Acrimony between the United States and Ghana showed increased intensity in the fall of 1965. In September, Nkrumah addressed Ghana's Parliament with an urgent plea for dismissing the government of Taiwan and seating The People's Republic of China at the United Nations. In October, immediately following a visit to Accra by G. Mennen Williams, the Ghana press renewed its campaign of attacks against the United States, claiming countless CIA ventures across Africa. Eliciting the most attention was the publication of Nkrumah's latest book, *Neo-colonialism -- The Last Stage of Imperialism*, with the United States clearly cast in the role of the imperialist aggressor, determined to thwart the development of Africa. The United States regarded the book, in which Nkrumah specifically attacked the Peace Corps, United States Information Service, and CIA, as an unprecedented "attack by [the] Head of State of [a] friendly country."<sup>88</sup> Ghana believed these events negatively affected the outcome of its long-pending request for surplus food assistance. Ghanaian Ambassador Ribiero called the November aid refusal a "punitive action," with the Counselor of

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<sup>87</sup> LBJL, NSF, Country File, Box 89, Ghana Cables, Volume II, 3/64-2/66, "CIA to Secretary of State, 7 July 1965. Two full paragraphs of this telegram remain classified.

<sup>88</sup> *FRUS*, 1963-1968, Volume XXIV, pp. 451-452, "Circular Telegram From the Department of State to Embassies in Africa," 23 November 1965. LBJL, NSF, Country File, Box 89, Folder: Ghana Cables, Volume II, 3/64-2/66, Accra to Secretary of State, 13 November 1965.

Embassy adding that the move not only would hurt Ghanaians, but also leave them with the belief that American aid came with strings attached.<sup>89</sup>

The State Department considered a stringent reply to the allegations of Ghanaian officials. Considering, however, the dedication of the VRP in January 1966, officials opted for a "cool but correct," posture. While diplomatic staff proceeded with any necessary daily interactions with government officials in Accra, they declined the majority of invitations to events and appeared "less in evidence" in general.<sup>90</sup> When approached by members of the Foreign Ministry for assistance in planning the Dedication of the Volta Dam, diplomatic staff remained non-committal, refusing to suggest who should be invited, and stating it would be inappropriate to assist in drafting a letter of invitation to President Johnson.

More than 20,000 people attended the formal inauguration ceremony of the Volta River Project on 22 January 1966, including Mr. and Mrs., Edgar Kaiser, and Ambassador and Mrs. Franklin Williams, representing the United States.<sup>91</sup> The festivities included an impressive thirty-minute display of fireworks, the unveiling of two plaques expressing appreciation to Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy, and speeches by Edgar Kaiser and Kwame Nkrumah. Nkrumah

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<sup>89</sup> NAIL, SN, 1964-66, POL 1 Ghana-US, Box 2388, "Memorandum of Conversation," 6 December 1965.

<sup>90</sup> LBJL, NSF, Country File, Box 89, Ghana Cables, Volume II, 3/64-2/66, Accra to Secretary of State, 26 November 1965.

<sup>91</sup> Ambassador William Mahoney left Ghana in the spring of 1964 citing family health issues. Franklin Williams presented his credentials as the new United States Ambassador to Ghana on 17 January 1966.

focused his remarks on the theme of "common advantage," and referred to Kaiser, Eisenhower and Kennedy with great warmth and admiration. With the massive dam floodlit in the background Nkrumah spoke of the project as proof, "that nations and people can co-operate and co-exists peacefully...despite differences of economic and political opinions." The festivities ended on Sunday evening with a State dinner. In the final toast of the evening, Nkrumah raised his glass, "To President Lyndon Baines Johnson, President of the United States of America."<sup>92</sup>

One month after the dedication of the Volta Dam, while Kwame Nkrumah was in China en route to Vietnam, the US Embassy in Accra reported small arms fire at Flagstaff House.<sup>93</sup> Within hours, CIA field agents telegraphed a message to the White House Situation Room that elements of the Ghanaian Army, supported by the police, had launched a coup designed to overthrow the government of Kwame Nkrumah. The CIA obviously had been following, if not participating in, preparations for the overthrow. The telegram stated, "The coup leaders appear to be implementing the plans they were reported earlier to have agreed on for the immediate post-coup period," suggesting CIA officials knew of the post-coup action plan in advance, and had earlier briefed the United States on its details. General Ankrah, who McCone, Mahoney and Rusk had identified as a possible leader of the coup two years earlier, immediately assumed control of the military.

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<sup>92</sup> NAIL, SN, 1964-66, FSE 12 Ghana, Box 945, Accra to State, 1 February 1966, and Accra to Secretary of State, 24 January 1966.

Coup leaders quickly gained control of Radio Ghana, the airport, and all major roads leading into the capital. There was no adverse popular reaction to the takeover. Later reports from the US Embassy in Accra reported the coup to have been relatively bloodless. Approximately twenty of Nkrumah's loyalist Presidential guard were killed, and twenty-five wounded. Within twenty-four hours of the takeover, Accra appeared jubilant, and completely calm. Demonstrations in support of the coup included an orderly march staged by university students and an enthusiastic crowd who ripped down the larger than life-sized statue of Nkrumah from its pedestal outside Parliament. All roadblocks, with the exception of those surrounding the airport, had been lifted, and shops reopened throughout the city. General Ankrah declared a general amnesty, releasing at least four hundred political prisoners.<sup>94</sup> Ambassador Franklin Williams declared the overall outcome of the coup to have been, "extremely fortunate."<sup>95</sup>

It is ironic that so soon after the grand opening of Kwame Nkrumah's dream for Ghana -- the Volta Dam -- he was toppled by a coup, supported by the citizens of Ghana, and facilitated by Nkrumah's partner in the massive development initiative, the United States. For nearly four years, the United States had attempted to use the funding of the Volta River Project to leverage Kwame

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<sup>93</sup> NAII, SN, 1964-66, POL 23-9 Ghana, Box 2236, Accra to Secretary of State, 24 February 1966.

<sup>94</sup> NAII, SN, 1964-66, POL 23-9 Ghana, Box 2236, Accra to Secretary of State, 25 February 1966.

<sup>95</sup> *FRUS*, 1963-1968, Volume XXIV, pp. 455, FN 3.

Nkrumah toward the public support of the United States and the West. In what became a political ping pong match, the United States repeatedly responded to Ghana's anti-American rhetoric with a series of diplomatic visitors, each toting the veiled threat to withdraw VRP financing. The United States worried only of Ghana's public persona as a Westward-leaning neutral. The reality of Kwame Nkrumah's actions to repress the population of Ghana merited no action from US policymakers. Nkrumah's authoritarianism was of no consequence. While officials in the Eisenhower Administration had agreed to accept the beginnings of this dictatorial rule as a means to promote stability in Ghana and, therefore, discourage communist penetration, the Johnson Administration espoused no such purpose. Rather, the Administration expected to receive favorable press in exchange for its aid. As Johnson once explained to the Ghanaian Ambassador: You live up to your commitments and we'll live up to ours.<sup>96</sup> When this leverage ceased to be available, the United States bided its time, maintaining minimal contact with Ghana, until conditions were ripe to oust Nkrumah and install an "almost pathetically pro-Western," government.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Johnson's direct quote, in reference to the commitments Kwame Nkrumah's made to President Kennedy in December 1961 was "I want you to live up to them, and we will live up to our commitments." LBJL, NSF, Country File, Box 89, Folder: Ghana, Volume 2, 3/64-2/66, MemCon, Subject: President's meeting with Ghanaian Ambassador, 11 March 1964.

<sup>97</sup> *FRUS*, 1963-1968, Volume XXIV, pp. 457-458, "Memorandum From President's Acting Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Komer) to President Johnson," 12 March 1966.

## CONCLUSION

This study of Ghana, Great Britain, and the United States from the threshold of Ghana's independence to its 1966 coup d'état contributes to a new understanding of the international context of US foreign relations.

Moving from the confines of colonialism to explore independence and solidify a position in the world community, Ghana transitioned from a necessary reliance on Great Britain to reciprocal relationship with the United States. Kwame Nkrumah, the first leader of a new Ghana, the first "universal African" of the century, played a pivotal role in these negotiations.<sup>98</sup> His charismatic personality, explosive rhetoric, and political leadership not only moved Ghanaians to bring him from prison to parliament, but also created a swell of supporters across Africa. Ghana's role as the first nation in sub-Saharan Africa to achieve self-governance, combined with Nkrumah's extraordinary visibility made positive relations with Ghana an unexpectedly important goal for the United States.

Ghana embarked on nationhood with an excellent prognosis for success. Nkrumah's education at Lincoln University and the University of Pennsylvania and his wide-ranging political affiliations in London buoyed American expectations that he understood the character of the West and would be an agreeable and reliable partner in international affairs. His education, teamed with his leadership in Ghana's independence movement, also encouraged the opinion that he was prepared for his role as Ghanaian Prime Minister. Ghanaian and

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<sup>98</sup> Quoted in Marika Sherwood, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Years Abroad, 1935-1947* (Legon, Ghana: Freedom Publications, 1996), p. 1.

British officials had worked closely in drafting a Constitution to guide the country's future political system, and Britain had trained Ghana's civil servants since 1955 in preparation for the new government. A new Oxford-model university outside Accra promised to provide a continuing influx of educated Ghanaians to bolster this transition. Ghana's wealth of natural resources, such as gold, diamonds, manganese, and bauxite, augmented its position as the world's leading producer of cocoa in contributing to a stable economic forecast for the country.

At the same time, Nkrumah and Ghana faced difficult challenges, not the least of which was its exalted position as the leader of Africa's independence movement. While Nkrumah clearly took pride in his country's achievement, Ghana's role as the first self-governing nation left him with no model to follow in consolidating the diverse tribes and territories of Ghana into a unified, but artificially constructed, country. Tribal and ethnic rivalries, once united in common battle against colonialism, dissolved upon independence, leaving Nkrumah a legacy of frustrated and powerless chiefs, and a northern populace dissatisfied with territorial boundaries they considered arbitrary and unfair. In addition to these internal struggles, Ghana faced the immediate weight of international relations when the United States, challenging Ghana's desire for nonalignment, introduced the pressures of the Cold War as Ghana prepared for its ceremonies of independence. Despite his international education, Nkrumah possessed no real experience in navigating the often-tumultuous waters of

international affairs. In this and numerous other matters, he relied on the guidance of Great Britain.

Increasingly frequent challenges to colonial rule across the globe, and the decreasing ability to financially support this empire combined to erode Great Britain's attempts to restore its colonial authority to pre-WWII levels. In 1948 Ghana, what began in Accra as a demonstration by ex-servicemen over unpaid benefits, ended three days later with mass rioting in Accra and neighboring cities and towns. By 1950, Britain had introduced a new Gold Coast Constitution, laying the groundwork for self-government in Ghana. Intent on fostering Ghana's future membership in the Commonwealth, Britain worked to impart a Westminster model of government, and facilitate a smooth transition to independence. From 1951-1957, Kwame Nkrumah and British Governor General Sir Charles Arden-Clarke cooperated unceasingly on matters of suffrage, the legislature, the judiciary, cabinet appointments and advisors -- in short, all matters necessary for the eventual transfer of power. From 1954-1957, Nkrumah served as Prime Minister with an all-African Cabinet. While Arden-Clarke retained oversight of the government, in reality he exercised responsibility only for the police and defense.

Great Britain intended to leave Ghana in a position of economic and political stability, enabling the new nation to stand on its own. Continued participation in the Commonwealth would endorse Ghana's independence, while facilitating new international relationships. Great Britain also mediated Ghana's earliest contacts in foreign affairs. Ushering the United States into Ghana, by



suggesting that Ghanaian officials pursue US support of the Volta River Project (VRP), Britain simultaneously protected Ghana's interests when American officials sought to force a Cold War agenda at Ghana's ceremonies of independence. This pattern of guiding US involvement in Ghana continued as American-Ghanaian relations developed. Repeatedly warning Americans to approach Ghana-Soviet relations with subtlety rather than zealotry, British officials intervened to prevent a Ghanaian backlash against fervent anti-communism. Britain argued that Ghana would repel communist advances more readily by solidifying its independence and achieving stability, rather than by a strict conformity to American directives. British guidance, while at times paternalistic, offered greater experience and insight than officials in Washington could provide.

With the impending decolonization of Africa and the concomitant loss of European influence, the United States recognized Africa as the newest power vacuum susceptible to Soviet penetration and Ghana as its first target. This fear of a Soviet foothold in sub-Saharan Africa motivated the United States to seek early relations with Ghana, despite an indeterminate American policy on supporting the metropole or the right of self-determination. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, more attuned to the importance of Africa than earlier studies have suggested, encouraged this new relationship by sending Vice-President Richard Nixon to Ghana's ceremonies of independence, and inviting Kwame Nkrumah to visit the White House. This is not to suggest that sub-Saharan Africa occupied a top position on Eisenhower's agenda. With a focus on European security, conflict

in the Middle East, and continuing tensions in Southeast Asia, the Eisenhower Administration committed comparatively little time to Africa policy. When policymakers did turn to African affairs, however, they did so with a relatively mature vision and willingness to depart from traditional policies.

Kwame Nkrumah attempted to marshal unity in Ghana through a series of increasingly authoritarian initiatives. It was Nkrumah's belief that only a strong, centralized leadership could restructure Ghanaian society, curbing tribalism, ending corruption, and grafting national identity onto local consciousness. A strong and efficient national government, showcasing Ghana's growth and vitality, additionally would promote Nkrumah's claim to pan-African leadership, and establish Ghana's legitimacy in the wider world. A policy of nonalignment would further display Ghana's strength, demonstrating an ability to set its own course and refuse dogmatic participation in the super power conflict. Having thus honed Ghana's national and international political agenda, Nkrumah sought reinforcement through a strong economy. With the Volta River Project, he would bring industrialization, the key to healthy and diversified fiscal growth, to Ghana.

Following the repeated overtures of the British for moderation and a valuation of Ghana's unique position in Africa, the Eisenhower Administration responded to Nkrumah's goals and methods by accepting authoritarianism as the necessary means to an end in Ghana. Convinced that Nkrumah's "strongman" tactics offered stability, which in turn prevented communism from taking root, State Department officials revised Africa policy to accept dictatorial rule. Promoting stability as a means to prevent communism also allowed for a revision

of US attitudes toward neutralism. As long as Nkrumah could maintain a stable government, the United States accepted his nonalignment with unprecedented latitude. Policymakers declared neutralism a benign characteristic of newly-minted national governments, accepting their refusal to commit to a singular ideology, or enter into political alliances. Nkrumah's capacity to provide stability further motivated the United States to support his economic efforts for Ghana, by agreeing to provide financing for the Volta River Project. Tensions did challenge US-Ghana relations with Nkrumah's negative and accusatory rhetoric regarding the role of the West in the Congo. Nonetheless, by the end of the Eisenhower Administration, the United States recognized Ghana's nonalignment, accepted Nkrumah's authoritarian rule, and verbally agreed to provide financial support for Ghana's massive development program.

President John F. Kennedy entered into relations with Ghana, based not only on the policies of his predecessor, but also on a campaign rhetoric that indicated a new and dedicated commitment to Africa. Kennedy indicated the importance of Africa by announcing his Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs before all other cabinet posts, and paid tribute to the primacy of Ghana, by sending them the first Peace Corps volunteers. Despite this positive start, and the multiplication of newly independent African states since 1960, Africa remained low on a presidential foreign policy agenda crowded by the USSR, Cuba and China. When Africa did merit review, it was through the lens of the Cold War.

Prompted by Nkrumah's impetuous public commentary on US foreign affairs, a hallmark of the Ghanaian President's mercurial personality, Kennedy's

advisors began to reconsider US participation in the Volta River Project. Nkrumah's growing relationship with the East, which Kennedy's own advisors had anticipated and accepted in a 1960 policy review, resulted in a suspension of progress on VRP financial agreements. For months Kennedy vacillated in his support of the development effort, sending various envoys from the government and private sector to assess Nkrumah's actions and intentions. Great Britain continued to offer guidance and share information resources. Appealing to Kennedy's Cold War sensibilities, British officials argued that a withdrawal of American support would certainly damage the image of the West throughout Africa, a continuing battleground of communist subversion. Kennedy agreed, in the end, to support the project, after having exacted from Nkrumah a series of public commitments to Western democratic ideals such as a free press and the support of private enterprise. That US policy continued to accept, and even encouraged, far less than these ideals in an effort to thwart communism did not matter as long as Nkrumah paid public lip service to their importance.

This emphasis on rhetoric came to define Kennedy's policy toward Ghana, as did his clear intention to achieve this public compliance with the West through economic coercion. Each time Nkrumah or his government colleagues publicly disagreed with US policies through the vehicle of Ghana's government controlled press, the United States responded with the threat to halt funding of the Volta River Project. Fully aware of Nkrumah's commitment to the VRP, in particular his hopes for the success of the Kaiser Corporation's aluminum smelter, Kennedy sent company president Edgar Kaiser to present US ultimatums to Nkrumah.

These meetings, which resulted in an immediate cessation of anti-American press in Ghana, did little to impact the character of Nkrumah's regime. Repression continued, and the democratic ideals to which Kennedy forced a public commitment, remained absent. Kennedy's policy toward Ghana, remarkable only in its consistent lack of sophistication, pushed Nkrumah's government further and further from its democratic origins. By refusing to extend aid without allegiance and threatening to punish Ghana each time it disagreed with its benefactor, Kennedy encouraged Nkrumah's own authoritarian rule that rewarded those who feigned agreement and penalized those who refused to comply.

By the time of Kennedy's assassination, the entrenched US policy that demanded Ghana's compliance, and absent that, required Ghana's silence, easily carried over into the Administration of Lyndon B. Johnson. Ghana and the United States repeated this cycle of acrimony and retribution until January 1965, when the Kaiser Corporation signed the final agreements for the construction of the VRP aluminum smelter, eliminating the bargaining chip policymakers had repeatedly employed in exacting compliance from Kwame Nkrumah. Devoid of leverage, preoccupied with Vietnam, and increasingly convinced of the futility of continued attempts at positive relations with Nkrumah, the Johnson Administration effectively disengaged from Ghana until the 1966 overthrow that ousted Kwame Nkrumah.

The Central Intelligence Agency, meanwhile, was clearly involved in Ghana by early 1965, and likely had been active there since 1961, although sources do not permit the delineation of the nature of CIA activities nor to date

accurately their earliest involvement. Several months prior to the coup, intelligence reports had allowed the United States to predict correctly the leaders of the new military government, and prepare for its immediate recognition by the United States, even to the point of outlining US emergency aid. While sources are not available to pinpoint the level of CIA involvement in planning and implementing the coup, it is clear that CIA field agents not only understood the basic plans of the conspirators, but also knew, hour-by-hour, what next would transpire as the coup progressed. The preponderance of CIA shadows suggests that the Johnson Administration, deeply mired in framework of the Cold War, and no longer able to apply meaningful economic pressure resorted to political subversion to ensure pro-Western government in Ghana.

It is obvious, with the benefit of hindsight, that the United States, and particularly the Administrations of John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, allowed the concerns of the Cold War to overshadow the importance of Ghana as a model for independence in Africa. In preparing for the transfer of power, Great Britain encouraged American support for Ghana, a country of extraordinary promise for successful self-government. Envisioning Ghana with a stable parliamentary administration, a healthy economy, a nonaligned foreign policy and an active membership in the Commonwealth, Britain believed that Ghana's long term success rested in its ability to maintain this independence. Disinclined to replace colonial rule with communist rule, Ghana would assiduously protect its independence, and Britain hoped that US financial assistance could further this goal. Instead Eisenhower introduced the Cold War to Ghana, Kennedy amplified

its importance, and Johnson allowed it to overrun any diplomatic control. Each Administration seemed to lose sight of the benefits of a stable Ghana outside Cold War bipolarization. As a corollary, the United States promoted authoritarianism over democracy as the means to prevent communist growth in Ghana. Kwame Nkrumah contributed to the downward spiral through immature and at times ill-conceived leadership and the Soviet Union cannot be discounted in exacerbating Cold War tensions. Nonetheless, it was the US failure to heed the advice of Great Britain; inability to understand the aspirations of independence; and refusal to accept alternative ideological choices that led to the demise of Ghana's first government, and a legacy of instability that continues to plague Ghana today.

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