American Africans in Ghana
Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era

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Haitian revolution, it is equally plausible that Frazier found in Lamming a resource for critiques of the decimation of the African American intelligentsia. As Anthony Platt has noted, Frazier reformulated his long-standing critique of the black elite during the 1950s within the context of cultural debates around anticolonialism. Frazier and Lamming’s expansive outlook presented an alternative to the rejection by African American delegates to these congresses of analogies between the condition of African and West Indian colonial subjects and African Americans forged by histories of slavery and segregation. Referring to their own societies, both writers rebutted claims of African American or West Indian exceptionalism that sought to deny the deleterious effects on black consciousness of a Western culture defined by colonialism and institutionalized American racism.

In their various ways, Wright, Frazier, Lamming, and others such as Lorraine Hansberry and James Baldwin saw black and African peoples poised uncertainly between a fading past of colonial and racial oppression and the precipice of an emergent modern world whose ultimate shape they might determine through their demands for freedom. Within the United States, increasingly riven by racial discord, this issue had a potentially combustible political resonance. Wright’s intellectual trajectory might thus be seen as a mesasphor for the postwar challenges facing African Americans and the American nation. In his earlier fiction, Wright had exposed to the nation the racial terror of the Jim Crow South and the bitter alienation and nihilism of African American men in urban ghettos. For uprooted urban African Americans, the certainties of traditional faith and denied a sense of national belonging, an identification with African anticolonial demands promised a lifeline to a wider community of struggle that might transcend the barren soil of American racism.

Who—what—were African Americans becoming in relation to modern political change in America and Africa? Would they simply become unhyphenated Americans, or, in gaining formal equality, would they enact a transnational American citizenship in solidarity with African peoples and in so doing participate in the democratization of America? The independence of Ghana and its attempts to project a new Africa inspired the efforts of Wright and other black intellectuals to forge an equally new path for African American consciousness. Thus, only through his exile could Wright finally return, so to speak, to engage these issues within what he always understood as an inherently fraught and troubled American nation. He did so through his influence on subsequent discussions of race, nation, and African American citizenship.

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PROJECTING THE AFRICAN PERSONALITY

Nkrumah, the Expatriates, and Postindependence Ghana, 1957–1960

Writing from Accra soon after the independence celebrations, George Padmore commiserated with W. E. B. Du Bois, sharing the distress felt throughout Ghanaian and African governmental circles at his absence. African reporters, Padmore informed Du Bois, had challenged U.S. Vice President Richard Nixon on the decision to deny Du Bois a visa. The reporters had made it clear that he “would be a more welcome visitor to the country than the Vice President.” If U.S. officials had hoped to isolate Du Bois, the octogenarian was still very much in the loop among Ghanaian leaders. Padmore apprised Du Bois of plans to convene two conferences in Ghana as soon as possible. The first would consist of prime ministers and foreign ministers of independent African states—Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Sudan, Ethiopia, Liberia, and Ghana—to discuss the creation of an African community within the Asian-African Bandung grouping. The other would convene representatives of all political organizations in non-self-governing territories struggling to gain independence along the lines of what he generously termed “our Pan-African idea.”

With these pan-African conferences held in Accra—the First Conference of Independent African States held in April 1958 and the All African People’s Conference held the following December—Padmore and Kwame Nkrumah laid down the framework for African leadership within the multilateral movement of new Asian and African states that sought to pose an alternative, a “Third Force,” to the bipolar Cold War vision of global order.
all over the world. Perhaps better than anyone, Sutherland perceived the similarity between King and Nkrumah, both prominent leaders of successful mass movements dedicated to nonviolent direct action. But the two were more alike than Sutherland or perhaps even they could have known. Each walked a tightrope of political expediency, downplaying his radical and socialist leanings to maintain the indispensable support of his dominant society. Both relied heavily on leftist advisers—King on Bayard Rustin, Nkrumah on Padmore—whose presence was controversial if not resented within their movements. Both leaders would come to question their optimistic belief in the prospects for substantive change. Forced to abandon that optimism, openly disowning from American and Western empire and militarism, each would experience a disorienting fall from grace. Nkrumah learned of King’s assassination while in exile in the West African nation of Guinea, vainly planning his return to Ghana. Nkrumah had long since abandoned what had been a strategic commitment to nonviolence and mourned King’s passing, incensed at the “arrogance and hypocrisy” of eulogies in the American and British press. Nkrumah, who as Ghana’s head of state had weathered two attempts on his life, wrote, “The final solution of all this will come when Africa is politically united. Yesterday it was Malcolm X. Today Luther King. Tomorrow, fire all over the United States.”

The murder of King and Nkrumah’s downfall make it extraordinarily difficult in hindsight to recapture the sense of possibility at the moment of Ghanaian independence. Yet only in light of the devastation of King’s dream of color-blind citizenship and a free society and the eclipse of Nkrumah and Padmore’s vision of African unity and liberation can we begin to grasp the exhilaration that the moment carried for many Africans and black Americans as well. That widely shared sense of possibility and the imminent fulfillment of liberatory hopes cannot be grasped without a careful consideration of the ideas and projects of those first years of independence. Black Americans extrapolate such as Sutherland and Drake would dedicate themselves to these tasks, both assisting Padmore in organizing their affiliates and alliances and leading to the December 1958 All African People’s Conference. In addition, Sutherland recruited Rustin for the international protest against French nuclear testing in the Sahara.

While King was too preoccupied with persuading the Eisenhower administration to take action on civil rights to lend more than rhetorical support to Ghana, the euphoric experience of Ghana’s independence probably bolstered his optimistic faith in America’s capacity for meaningful change. As much as his own efforts, Ghana’s independence and the potential damage to the nation’s image abroad as a result of racial crises in the South led the
administration into a more proactive stance on the issues of civil rights in the United States and independence movements in Africa.

Martin Luther King Jr. in Africa, England, and America

Fatigued by the Montgomery campaign and frustrated by the Eisenhower administration's inaction in the face of retaliatory bombings and sniper incidents during and after the campaign that desegregated that city's bus system, King and his wife, Coretta, welcomed Nkrumah's invitation to attend the independence celebrations in what would soon be Ghana. Kept abreast of the nationalist ferment in Africa by King and the other ministers leading the movement, King's congregation at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church readily allocated twenty-five dollars for a trip that was much more than a vacation. In New York, the Kings boarded a plane with other dignitaries, including Congressman Adam Clayton Powell; labor leader A. Philip Randolph; Ralph Bunche, who had taught Padmore at Howard University; LaCille Armstrong, the wife of legendary jazz trumpeter Louis Armstrong, who had performed in Accra the year before; and Norman Manley, a future prime minister of Jamaica. More than the others, a crowd of reporters gathered around King at the airport.

By inviting King, Ghana's leaders declared their solidarity with African American leaders and their cause. King's invitation was a fitting gesture, as contemporaries in the movement drew parallels between the nonviolent direct action so successfully deployed in Montgomery and that used not only in the positive action phase of Ghana's nationalist movement but also in South Africa's Defiance Campaign against segregated bus facilities and pass laws. Also present were African Americans with a long-standing commitment to African independence, including Congressman Charles C. Diggs Jr. of Detroit; Lester Granger, director of the Urban League; and Horace Mann Bond, former president of Nkrumah's alma mater, Lincoln University.

Arriving in Ghana after stopovers in Dakar and Monrovia, the Kings lodged with a British family at Achimota College. Like many first-time visitors to Africa, they were depressed by the poverty they witnessed. They were also pained to observe the subservience of the servants who worked for their hosts. Remarkable at their surprise at finding the school as well as the capital city, Accra, so modern, they realized their susceptibility to Western stereotypes of African backwardness. Representatives of seventy-two nations, including the United States and unofficially the Soviet Union, were on hand for Ghana's birth. Vice President Nixon headed the U.S. delegation, visiting Ghana as part of a fact-finding tour through several African countries that would establish guidelines for future U.S. policy toward the continent. As vice president and years later as president, Nixon showed little inclination to question racial stereotypes of Africans, referring to them in Oval Office conversations with aides as uncivilized, barely "out of the trees." In any case, there was Nixon, bringing the glad tidings of his fellow Americans and, more important, studying Africa's strategic Cold War importance.

From the standpoint of King and the movement, Ghana's novel terrain yielded something that had been impossible to achieve in the United States—high-level contact with the Eisenhower administration. Having ignored King's open invitation to President Eisenhower to come to the South and condemn the violent resistance to desegregation, the administration found that it could not easily avoid King on African soil. King and Nixon met for the first time at a reception in Accra on March 5. "I'm very glad to meet you here," King remarked, no doubt pleased by the irony of the encounter, "but I want you to come to visit us down in Alabama where we are seeking the same kind of freedom the Gold Coast is celebrating." Nixon promptly invited King to Washington for a meeting. At the stroke of midnight, King was among the crowd of fifty thousand at the Old Polo Grounds in Accra as a jubilant, weeping Nkrumah and his colleagues, attired in Northern Territories smocks and prison graduate caps, presided over the raising of Ghana's flag. After a moment of silent prayer, the crowd erupted with shouts of "Freedom!" and other exclamations of joyous celebration. Caught up in the moment, King wept, as did many others. The next morning, King gave a radio interview to Etta Moten Barnett, a jazz singer and the wife of Chicago journalist Claude Barnett, founder of the Associated Negro Press service. The Barnett's were longtime supporters of Nkrumah and prominentstaunch Republicans who were members of Vice President Nixon's official delegation. Ghana's independence, King told Etta Barnett and her radio audience back in Chicago, would have repercussions for oppressed people throughout Africa, Asia, and the American South. The occasion renewed King's hope that "somehow the universe itself is on the side of freedom and justice." King was confident of the ability of Nkrumah and the Ghanaian leadership to meet the difficult challenges ahead. To those who claimed that Africans were unprepared for self-government, King approvingly quoted Nkrumah: "I prefer self-government with danger to servitude with uncertainty."

The next day, King contracted a fever that kept him bedridden for days. Coretta King was stricken as well, though not as severely. After recovering,
the Kings attended a private lunch with Nkrumah, an honor usually reserved for those with official or diplomatic credentials. King was moved as Nkrumah related how the spirit of the people of Montgomery had given him hope in his struggle. Ghana, in Nkrumah's view, "would never be able to accept the American ideology of freedom and democracy fully until America settles its own internal racial strife."

The prime minister explained the need to industrialize and diversify the economy from its weak foundation of cocoa production. The meeting profoundly impressed King, who, as Lawrence Reddick wrote, gained inspiration from the fact that Gandhi, Nehru, and Nkrumah had also been jailed. In addition, Switzerland and Dr. Robert Lee, a recent African American emigrant to Ghana, had arranged a dinner for King with Julius Nyerere, a Tanganyikan nationalist and fellow advocate of nonviolent struggle.

Over the next several days of festivities, Lucille Armstrong presented Nkrumah with a copy of Satchmo the Great, the new U.S. Information Service film of her husband's triumphant visit the previous year to the Gold Coast. The film, which included Armstrong dictating to the prime minister the New Negro protest anthem from the 1920s, "What Did I Do to Be So Black and Blue," premiered as part of the independence celebrations. At the State Ball, the Duchess of Kent, representing the Queen of England, danced a footstomp with Nkrumah (thanks to a last-minute primer on ballroom dancing administered to the Ghanaian leader by Lucille Armstrong). In the wake of reports anticipating violence and disorder, several news accounts marveled at the peaceful nature of the transition.

After the Kings departed Ghana on March 12, they traveled to Nigeria and then on to Rome, Geneva, Paris, and London. They calmly observed the requisite sightseeing into their four days there, visiting Buckingham Palace, Parliament, and Westminster Abbey. In London, where for a time blacks from the Caribbean euphemistically referred to themselves as Ghanaians, the Kings spent the afternoon of March 24 in a discussion with George Lamming; C. L. R. James, Padmore's boyhood friend from Trinidad; and activist David Pitt. King briefed them on the Montgomery movement, its organization, and nonviolence. James told of his plans to write a book on Nkrumah and the revolution in Ghana. King sufficiently impressed James that he wrote to colleagues in Detroit to urge them not to underestimate the Montgomery movement's revolutionary potential.

After returning to the States, King, Randolph, and Roy Wilkins issued a call to converse a mass march on Washington that the organizers called a "Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom," its overt religiosity in part an attempt by organizers to deflect accusations of communist influence on the movement. At that demonstration, civil rights groups would call on the federal government to enforce existing desegregation laws, support black voting rights, and intervene against antiblack violence in the South. King's speeches delivered immediately after his return translated Nkrumah's vision of African nationalism and pan-African solidarity for African American audiences. At the same time, to white liberals and American officials he invoked the awakened aspirations of Africans during the Gold War as leverage to elicit support for desegregation.

In his early speeches and sermons, King's engagement with Gandhian nonviolence had led him to associate colonialism with antiblack oppression in the United States. Being present at Ghana's birth and conversing with Nkrumah, Nyerere, James, and Lamming enhanced King's sense of the global dimension of freedom struggles. The impact of King's travels and discussions is evident in the first sermon after his return to his congregation at Dexter Avenue. King's April 7 address, "The Birth of a New Nation," prepared with Nkrumah's autobiography as a reference, explored the implications for the African American freedom movement of Ghana's birth and the impending demise of the British empire.

King began by giving his congregation a primer on the history and geography of Africa and the Gold Coast, relating how the legitimate commerce between its chiefs and the Portuguese during the fifteenth century deteriorated into the slave trade. King stressed that colonialism was a system of economic exploitation. In reviling against it, Ghanaians expressed their fundamental humanity. King related the story of Nkrumah and the rise of the Gold Coast nationalism. Despite his humble origins, Nkrumah made his way to America for an education, working hard to support himself. Later, as a student in England, Nkrumah applied himself to the question of "how to free his people from colonialism." And so he returned to Africa, determined to lead "continual agitation, continual resistance," until the British realized they could no longer rule the Gold Coast.

King relived his elation at the "great day" marking Ghana's independence. "It was a beautiful experience to see some of the leading persons on the scene of civil rights in America on hand to say 'Greetings to you,' as this new nation was born." After the Union Jack was replaced by the new flag of Ghana, children and the elderly alike yelled "Freedom!" King's identification with the exultant Ghanaians was strong, as he eased into a now familiar peroration: "And I could hear that old Negro spiritual once more crying out: 'Tree at last, free at last, Great God Almighty, I'm free at last.' . . . And
everywhere we turned, we could hear it ringing out from the houses. . . . "Freedom! Freedom!"

King reminded his audience that difficult days lay ahead. "This nation was now out of Egypt and had crossed the Red Sea. Now it will confront its wilderness." That wilderness was the underdeveloped economy of a colonial one-crop economy, making it crucial to diversify and industrialize. Cocoa provided too flimsy a foundation for Ghana's economy. "Nkrumah said that one of the first things he would do is work toward industrialization." Universal free education was needed to battle illiteracy. King hoped that Americans by the "hundreds and thousands" would emigrate to Ghana to lend their technical assistance. Noting the rich opportunities, King told his congregation that "American Negroes can lend their technical assistance to a growing new nation. . . . And Nkrumah made it very clear to me that he would welcome any persons coming there as immigrants and to live there." King related the situation to the continuing struggles of blacks in Montgomery and throughout the segregated South. As with Ghana's independence, the desegregation of mass transportation in Montgomery marked the beginning rather than the end of struggle. More important, Ghana taught that "the oppressor never voluntarily gives freedom to the oppressed." Persistent agitation and revolt marked the only road to freedom: "We've got to keep on keeping on in order to gain freedom." Ghana also demonstrated that oppression could be overcome without violence. Resistance would lie ahead as the oppressor reacted with bitterness and violence against those seeking their freedom. Despite the violence against the black community in Montgomery after the court order desegregating the bus system, "Ghana tells us that the forces of the universe are on the side of justice." The raising of the new flag of Ghana was no epiphenomenon, a coincident event but instead signaled "that an old order is passing away. . . . An old order of colonialism, of segregation, of discrimination is passing away now. And a new order of justice, freedom and good will is being born." King concluded by recalling his visit to London. Despite their fascination, Buckingham Palace and Westminster Abbey appeared to King as monuments of empire, symbols of a dying system. King emphasized the finitude of British imperial power and welcomed the rise of the Afro-Asian bloc of new nations emerging from colonial rule, the anticolonial bloc "that now thinks and moves and determines the course of history in the world." He marveled that the Church of England never took a forthright stand against this immoral system of exploitation. Taking a somewhat mystical turn, King argued that where organized religion failed to oppose oppression, "the God of the universe eventually takes a stand." Those who struggled for justice did not struggle alone. "God grants that we will . . . start marching with God because we got orders now to break down the bondage and the walls of colonialism, exploitation and imperialism." Reporting to his congregation on his trip, King articulated Nkrumah's political vision, his standing offer to people of African descent to devote themselves to nation building in Ghana, and the anti-imperial sensibility of such supporters as James and Lamming. As King brought the message of pan-African solidarity to his congregation, Vice President Nixon drew different conclusions from his tour of Africa, which took him to Morocco, Liberia, Uganda, Ethiopia, Sudan, Libya, and Tunisia in addition to Ghana. Nixon recommended increased government aid and foreign investment for African nations to counter the threat posed by international communism. Nixon also requested greater support for U.S. Information Agency programs and a strengthening of the caliber of U.S. diplomatic representation. Speaking like a liberal—albeit one with priorities dictated by the Cold War—in the context of the Eisenhower administration, Nixon warned that continued racial discrimination of African Americans undermined U.S. influence in Africa, making desegregation a matter of urgent national interest as well as a moral concern.

King's next major speech, which occurred at an interacial St. Louis fundraiser for the Montgomery Improvement Association, suggested that the Reverend had taken Nixon's report to heart. But as other African American leaders had done since the late 1940s, King used the Cold War as leverage to demand justice for African Americans and the nonaligned world. He urged his audience to keep up the fight against segregation, which was "nothing but slavery covered up with certain niceties of complexity." "We are not fighting for ourselves alone," King argued, "but we are fighting for this nation." The United States must coexist with the two-thirds of the world's population that was colored and that had recently thrown off the yoke of colonialism. "They had assembled in Bandung several months ago, and [this] was the word that echoed from Bandung and colonialism must go." That was the refrain he heard from African and Asian leaders throughout his trip to Africa and Europe. Subjecting Nixon's report to the critical perspective of Nkrumah and Ghana's minister of finance, Komla Gbedemah, King observed that while Ghana's leaders were disposed toward the United States, "we are making it clear in the U.N. and . . . around the world that beautiful words and extensive handouts cannot be substitutes for the basic simple responsibility of giving freedom and justice to our colored brothers in the United States."
King insisted that the upcoming Pilgrimage for Prayer in Washington would not be an occasion for confrontation or "threats." But in arguing for the importance of desegregation, King waxed apocalyptic, subsuming the rhetoric of anticolonialism to Cold War anxieties to join an unresponsive administration into action. "Oh, the hour is getting late... For if America doesn't wake up, she will one day arise and discover that the uncommitted peoples of the world will have given their allegiance to a false communist ideology." King's appeal to segregationists in Congress that "the civil rights issue is not some ephemeral, evanescent domestic issue" to be exploited by reactionary and hypocritical politicians; rather, "it is an eternal moral issue which may well determine the destiny of our nation in its ideological struggle with communism." King hammered away at this point, reiterating it in his address during the Prayer Pilgrimage, a gathering of fifty thousand that foreshadowed the 1963 March on Washington. As Martin Luther King and Thomas Boyce, have shown, American administrations would resist this understanding of the issue of civil rights until chaos reigned in Birmingham during the spring of 1963.  

Responding in part to Nixon's report highlighting Africa's strategic importance for the Cold War, King argued along similar lines that the maintenance of segregation in the nation in its global struggle against communism. However tepid the president's response, Eisenhower apparently was initially more responsive to King's appeal than to Nixon's. The civil rights issue was far more pressing, as time and again angry mobs' resistance to desegregation resulted in internationally publicized incidents of violence that brought shame on the nation. A diluted version of the civil rights bill proposed by the Justice Department was passed in late August despite a record-breaking filibuster by segregationist senator Strom Thurmond. Despite the first passage of civil rights legislation since Reconstruction, Eisenhower's prosouthern leanings and apartheid toward desegregation led to the 1957 Little Rock school desegregation crisis. Worldwide press headlines and photographs of black schoolchildren beset by enraged white mobs, egged on by segregationist governor Orval Faubus, exposed the racial antagonisms that U.S. officials insisted were disappearing. In late September, Eisenhower ended his standoff with Faubus by sending federal troops into the state to maintain order as nine black children attended previously all-white Central High School.

His energies taxed by Little Rock, Eisenhower faced another racial incident, this time involving a visiting African politician, that again sent the administration into damage-control mode. When Gbedemah, visiting the

United States on a trade mission, was refused service at a Howard Johnson's restaurant in Delaware, Eisenhower invited Gbedemah to breakfast at the White House. The incident occurred while Gbedemah was accompanied by Bill Sutherland and two black American professors who had invited the minister to speak at their Delaware college. Incredulous when the professors noted that local custom prevented them from being served in Delaware, Gbedemah insisted on stopping. While Sutherland knew what would happen, "it wasn't my job to take care of the U.S.'s dirty linen," he recalled. After the snub, Gbedemah delivered his lecture; when he returned to New York, he broached the incident with reporters. Soon, Frere Fredric Morrow, the lone African American on the White House staff, was on the phone, extending Eisenhower's invitation. Gbedemah appeared at the White House resplendent in full-length kente robes, while Sutherland was shown to Eisenhower's office. According to Sutherland, an African affairs specialist in the State Department suggested to Eisenhower that the impromptu breakfast with Gbedemah would be an opportune moment to discuss the Volta River project. In a bizarre conclusion to the affair, Gbedemah was handed what a State Department officer termed "a scurrilous crank letter addressed to him in care of the White House." Once again, officials scrambled to appease Gbedemah and Sutherland while they investigated the source of the letter.  

State Department officials need not have worried about any damage to relations with Ghana. While Gbedemah had been a trusted ally during Nkrumah's imprisonment, he was now the prime minister's most powerful political rival. Nkrumah shared with the U.S. ambassador his annoyance at Gbedemah for making a fuss over the incident and suspected Sutherland of manipulating his boss. Whether or not Nkrumah's disapproval of Gbedemah's handling of the incident was merely a performance for the ambassador's benefit, Nkrumah was sufficiently dismayed by Gbedemah's breakfast with Eisenhower to order a halt to further Ghanaian radio and press coverage of the incident. More incensed at what he perceived as Gbedemah's grandstanding than the actual slight, Nkrumah assured an apologetic State Department that he would have handled the incident differently.  

Nkrumah's conciliatory response reflected Ghana's pre-World War stance at that time and its need for U.S. investment in the Volta River project. Even as Nkrumah subordinated his pan-African opposition to American racism to what he perceived as his own and Ghana's political self-interest, Gbedemah's encounter with Jim Crow ironically initiated high-level discussions between the two nations on vital U.S. economic assistance. In the months following his return from Ghana, King often argued that
desegregation was the crucial standard by which newly independent non-white African and Asian nations would judge the United States in its rivalry with the Soviet Union. Rarely—and only to African American audiences such as his congregation or the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People when accepting that organization's Spingarn Medal for his contribution to the cause of civil rights—did King speak proudly of Ghana and its significance for African Americans' struggles for equality. Segrega-
tionists had accused King and the Montgomery movement of having been influenced by communists, and he was careful to appropriate the rhetoric of anticomunism to deflect criticism on this issue. With the nation's leader-
ship more focused on the Soviet threat and the Hungarian invasion than the struggle against Jim Crow, King insisted on the importance of the anti-colonial movement for the containment of international communism. Although the worst of the Red Scare of the 1950s was long past, King re-
mained highly sensitive to the dictates of Cold War America in crafting his message and the nature of his claims for African American citizenship. The serviceability of anticomunism for segregationists' intransigence com-
pelled King and other civil rights leaders to limit their claims to citizenship to civil rights, advocating the incremental integrationist agenda that E. Franklin Frazier and others found inadequate for the socioeconomic plight of working-
class blacks. King played the hand dealt him with eloquence and aplomb as well as with a low tolerance of political risk. When King advised Bayard Rustin, an African American pacifist and socialista who had convinced an initially skeptical King of the importance of nonviolence as a principle, urged King to highlight the cause of organized labor in his address at the Pilgrimage for Prayer, King remained silent on the issue. Tactfully permitting the move-
ment's terms and tactics to be dictated by the enemies of change, King also saw Rustin's private life as a threat to the movement's image. Although an indispensable counselor, King and the rest of his circle of advisers viewed Rustin as a potential liability as an ex-communist and homosexual with a previous arrest on a morals charge. In 1960, Rustin was devastated when King severed ties after rival African American leaders threatened to disclose that the two were involved in a sexual relationship, an allegation lacking even the slightest basis in fact.22 In a Cold War environment defined by official suspi-
cion of communist influences, and given the difficulties of building a con-
sensus for civil rights in the face of antilabor, red-baiting strictures in the United States, King would downplay the vision of pan-African solidarity and social citizenship on which he had staked in Ghana and London. King and Nkrumah shared a pragmatic view of pan-Africanism. Both drew parallels between distinct and far-flung black movements in support of their respective local struggles for freedom. At the same time, each prioritized the needs of his movement in light of the immediate political challenges it faced. Just as Nkrumah, incensed at Gbedemah's political windfall, downplayed his opposition to U.S. racial discrimination, King selectively deployed anticolon-
al and pan-African rhetoric, primarily before black audiences. With a wil-
derness of difficulties looming ahead for both leaders and their constituencies, Nkrumah and King had little time to bask in their public acclaim. Each may well have recognized in the other the fundamental tension between their people's democratic aspirations and the impossible task of negotiating concessions from the architects of their domination. In years to come, Nkrum-
ah's willingness to view the U.S. government as a potential ally would be sorely tested by the long-standing and occasionally violent opposition to his government and the Congo Crisis of 1960. For his part, King's occasional declarations of support for African nationalism were subordinated to the need to defend the movement from charges of communist influence.

Projecting a New African American Personality: Nkrumah's Visit to the United States

In July 1958, Nkrumah visited the United States, providing many African Americans in the North an intimation of their anticipated future as self-
determining citizens, a glimpse of who they aspired to be as a people. After a state visit in the nation's capital, the prime minister received tumultuous greetings from African Americans in Harlem and Chicago, where Claude Barnett headed the Civic Reception Committee. The contrast between Nku-

rah's reception in Washington and that of African American civil rights leaders was striking. That group, including King, was begrudgingly granted an unwelcoming Oval Office meeting with Eisenhower. But during his visit, Nkrumah met with Eisenhower, Nixon, and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles; addressed sessions of Congress and the National Press Club; and appeared on NBC's Meet the Press. Nkrumah remarked that he had been "all but overwhelmed by hospitality."

Public officials in New York and Chicago scrambled to duplicate Nku-

rah's red-carpet treatment in Washington. Nkrumah received a far more demonstrative welcome from African Americans in Harlem and Chicago. If King was the internationally acclaimed leader of the southern black freedom movement, for Harlemites as well as many residents who had such black urban enclaves as Detroit, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Cleveland, Nkrumah occup-

ied the first rank of enlightened African leadership. In Harlem, crowds lined
Franklin D. Roosevelt, for whom the university was named. A photo of the presentation with a smiling Drake and a somber Nkrumah sitting at the sculpture, appeared on the front page of the Accra Daily Graphic.

The All African People's Conference (1958)

Drake had negotiated an exchange between Roosevelt and the University of Ghana that would have based him in the sociology department for three years. But when Drake arrived in the fall of 1958, the department chair, Kofi A. Basua, a prominent opposition politician, informed Drake that he would be the new department chair, enabling Basua to devote himself entirely to politics. Drake reluctantly shouldered the responsibility and in time restored the department's morale and had affairs running smoothly.

Drake also found time to provide various political services to the Ghanaian government. He had previously helped to formulate the list of African American Invites to the independence festivities. More significantly, he had authored a 'sheaf of well-informed articles on Ghana's independence and Padmore's role in it for various African American and liberal publications. Now, with the approach of the long-planned All African People's Conference, an overeager Padmore asked his friend to write a paper on 'racialism' for the conference. Padmore allowed Drake to assist in planning meetings and even to record the proceedings, although what became of what were presumably audio recordings is unknown.

The All African People's Conference that met in Accra in December 1958 sought to implement Nkrumah's commitment to the total liberation of the African continent. Nkrumah and Padmore, the gathering's principal organizers, hosted well over two hundred delegates representing sixty-two nationalist organizations and parties from twenty-eight African countries. The conference forcefully demanded African freedom and independence and Pan-African unity as speaker after speaker excoriated the evils of colonialism under the slogan "Hands off Africa! Africa Must Be Free!" enshrined across the front of the dais. Independent African states were called on to render maximum assistance to those still struggling for self-government. The militancy of the conference was a vote for many of the nationalist leaders, who upon returning home laboried to keep pace with the surge of popular nationalist sentiment. Bringing together such rising African nationalist figures as Kenyan labor leader Tom Mboya, the conference co-chair; Patrice Lumumba of the Congo; and Francois Fagon, a Martinican psychiatrist who represented the Algerian struggle against French rule, the conference establi...
lished Accra, according to historian Adu Boahen, "as the Mecca of freedom fighters and nationalist leaders and [turned] Nkrumah into the greatest and most popular of the heads of state of independent African countries." Exiled South African writer Etciel Mphahlele, then based at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria, praised the confident leadership of Nkrumah and Mboya while noting the tensions indicated by those participants who failed to share Nkrumah's enthusiasm for pan-African unity. Delegates from the not-yet-independent Nigerian federation resented Ghana's leadership, wondering aloud why their vast and populous nation and others should cast their lot with the tiny (population 7 million) Ghana-Guinea Union, forged with Sekou Touré in November 1958 after Guinea's emphatic rejection of membership in the French community in that imperial nation's referendum for its colonial peoples. Ghana had come to Guinea's rescue with an emergency loan of $28 million after France's vindictive withdrawal of resources and the gutting of its colonial infrastructure, making good on the diplomatic union between the two West African nations.

A more important tension emerged in the debate over whether liberation struggles should maintain a commitment to nonviolence. A resolution binding the conference to Gandhian nonviolence in the struggle against colonialism was rejected after criticism from a delegate from the United Arab Republic. Fanon electrified the gathering with his testimony regarding French atrocities against Algerians that left the nationalists no recourse but to fight back. His impassioned speech, widely reported in the Western press, received the longest ovation of all those presented. Fanon's remarks seemed to sway the gathering, though the Liberian delegation "drag[ged] the tone down," in Mphahlele's view, when its leader claimed that advocacy of violence threatened his government's sovereignty.

The conference represented a watershed in the history of pan-Africanism, and both supporters and skeptics closely monitored the events. The doubters inherently distrusted the neutralist global political forums created by decolonization after World War II, which posed forthright challenges to U.S. power and prestige. America's status as the leader of what was often prematurely referred to in the American press as the free world was contested by new Afro-Asian delegations at the United Nations and most prominently at the 1955 Bandung Conference. At such gatherings, which might now be characterized as meetings of the Global South or the Third World but which constituted at that time a nonaligned political project that sought an independent Third Force in global affairs that refused to take sides in the conflict between Cold War antagonists, the United States and its institutionalized
nation solidarity epitomized Ghana’s vision of freedom and modernity, binding together Africans and peoples of African descent. The sizable U.S. delegation contained many pan-African activists, who, like Padmore, stressed the non-communist nature of African liberation movements. Yet for others, Ghana’s ideological and points-of-independence and the legitimacy of the neutralist Third Force remained an open question. But those who wished to score propaganda points for America at the Accra conference were underminded by U.S. diplomatic indifference. The Eisenhower administration refrained from sending an official high-level greeting to the conference, fearful of jeopardizing its North Atlantic Treaty Organization alliance with such colonial powers as France, England, and Belgium. The deafening silence from Washington angered Nkrumah and many of the Africans in attendance.

Presence with U.S. apathy was apparent from several of the reports of the conference, penned for official and quasi-official consumption by American observers. Merzer Cook, a black American scholar of Francophone literature and future U.S. ambassador to Senegal, covered the proceedings for the Congress for Cultural Freedom, whose covert funding from the Central Intelligence Agency (probably unbeknownst to Cook and many of the group’s members) was exposed in 1967. Cook praised Mboya, the victim of political murder in Kenya in 1969, as the African leader of the future, whose “sustained performance” was “electrifying.” In Cook’s estimation, Mboya repeatedly “steered the conference away from the shoals of extremism.” Cook regarded Mboya as the responsible alternative to Fanon, restoring calm after Fanon had brought the audience to its feet with his declaration that Algeria was not a part of France. Mboya had effectively countered Fanon by restating his stand for a policy of nonviolence, albeit one allowing for revolution. In their shared preference for Gandhian methods, Cook compared the “important” Mboya to Martin Luther King Jr.

Cook complained that the conference was badly organized and protested the apparent denigration to observer status of fraternal delegates such as himself and Aloume Dpp, secretary-general of the Paris-based Society of African Culture. As observers, they were denied access to the closed sessions where delegates drafted the conference resolutions. (Soviet observers were similarly restricted.) Cook also reported that French-speaking delegates protested the inadequacy of translation and disapproved of the gathering’s Anglphone emphasis (a perception evidently not shared by the French-speaking Algerian delegation). Leopold Senghor, present on behalf of his party, the Union Progressiste Senegalaise, aired his dissatisfaction in Le Monde, which his friend Cook quoted in length.
"We have never refrained from criticizing the French government when we felt that criticism would serve the interest of Africa and of France. But we cannot allow Pan African conferences to condemn France while whitewashing Anglo-Saxon colonialism. Nor can we accept English as the official language of Pan African conferences. We respect the English, but we prefer French culture, which we consider more progressive and more humanistic. . . . Opportunities of revolutionary verbalism attack us in Africa because we try to keep a cool head, because we prefer the reality of an independence prepared and organized collectively, to the risk of an immediate pseudo-independence. . . . [We] shall persevere along this middle road."

Cook's respect for Nkrumah seemed merely after his lavish praise of Mboya. Perceptively, Cook quoted a statement from Nkrumah's keynote address that sparked much discussion. "Do not let us also forget that colonialism and imperialism may come to us yet in a different guise and not necessarily from Europe." Delegates debated whether Nkrumah meant the United States, the Soviet Union, or the United Arab Republic. Indeed, after the Afro-Asian solidarity conference held in Cairo in 1957, the United Arab Republic had generated alarmist coverage in the Western press that claimed that the republic had procommunist leanings. While the large delegation from the United Arab Republic spared no expense in courting African delegates, raising suspicion of its motives in some quarters, Mphaelele, for one, believed such suspicion to be unfounded. According to Cook, Cairo had overplayed its hand, though, as surprisingly, he remained silent on the question of American intentions. Putting the best case on his skepticism, Cook claimed that despite his claims of neutralism, Nkrumah was "more attracted to the Free World because of his background and friendship with numerous U.S. Negroes." Nkrumah's opening speech had started the conference on a note of moderation, stressing that his vision of pan-Africanism was founded on nonrationalism. Moreover, Nkrumah decided against reading messages to the conference because Khrushchev had sent a lengthy missive while nothing had come from Washington. Vice President Nixon sent a message in time for the final session after Representative Charles Diggs warned the administration that its silence was damaging. African delegates concluded from Nixon's belated greeting that the U.S. government cared far more about containing communism than supporting African freedom. Uncomfortable at Nkrumah's apparent political inscrutability, Cook described the Ghanaian leader as seeming to be a different person each time Cook saw him. The ben Cook could muster was wary praise for "a master politician, a force to be reckoned with in world affairs." In spite of the considerable disorganization and conflict manifested at the gathering, Cook believed that by bringing together such a variety of African perspectives on independence and unity, the conference represented an important achievement. Quite different in tone and intent from Cook's pro-American depiction of the conference were the reports written by African American labor activist George McCray and the white liberal executive director of the American Committee on Africa, George Houser. Both McCray and Houser were part of Draper's extended network of supporters of African freedom. Along with Drake and Claude Barnett, who also attended the conference (writing home a human interest dispatch on a dinner with Nkrumah and his Egyptian bride, the former Fatia Ritz), McCray was a member of the Chicago-based Afro-World Fellowship. Moreover, as a State Department labor specialist and member of the noncommtunist International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), McCray had worked since independence to provide training and assistance to the Ghanaian labor movement. Houser, whose pacifism within the Fellowship of Reconciliation contributed to the cause of African freedom, attended the conference as a representative of the American Committee on Africa, which lobbied in support of African nationalism and associated African nationalisms visiting the United States. McCray supported the autonomy of African aspirations to a greater degree than did Cook. That said, the influence McCray sought with his conference report was a complicated matter. As an ICFTU delegate affiliated with the international labor division of the American Federation of Labor, his reports circulated among that organization's leaders, including its president, George Meany, and the director of international labor, hard-line antimperialist Jay Lovestone. Like Lovestone, McCray believed that American foreign policy should support African and Asian anticolonial aspirations. The two men agreed that America's unlikeliness to do so capitulated to the Soviet Union's pursuit of the allegiance of these "uncommitted" peoples. But while Lovestone's anticolonialism placed him to the left of the Eisenhower administration, his view of Soviet communism as the ultimate evil also fully accorded with that of the White House and the intelligence community. Indeed, Lovestone was working as a paid Central Intelligence Agency informant, serving as the cover link between the American Federation of Labor and U.S. intelligence. The reports he received on African labor (as well as on labor movements throughout the Third World) circulated among high-level U.S. officials, including Meany, and Central Intelligence Agency officials.
McCray read the conference through the lens of a pan-African anticolonialism that was closer to George Padmore’s worldview than Lovestone’s. For McCray, both the U.S. government and the free trade union movement were not doing enough to support African aspirations. McCray was a forceful advocate for Nkrumah and his anticolonialism, emphasizing Africans’ determination to rid the continent of foreign control. McCray believed that the colonial powers backed Nkrumah’s vision of pan-Africanism over the radical alternatives of the United Arab Republic’s nationalism and communism. For all the talk of socialism, Nkrumah remained friendly to foreign investment and capitalism. He and his colleagues, labor activists Irving Brown and Maida Springer (both longtime associates of Lovestone), constantly debated Africans who charged that the United States was showing its hand as the main support of colonialism and imperialism in Africa through its political alliances and private investments. They went to great lengths to make amends for the silence of American politicians while American public opinion was applauded. McCray said that U.S. Ambassador to Ghana Nike Kinnake refused to solicit such greetings from Washington despite the urging of U.S. embassy officials (“shades of the ugly American”). McCray welcomed the permanent organization of the conference as a mechanism for reconciling the tensions Cook emphasized. McCray and his American associates opposed a plan by the labor delegates to convene an all-African labor conference largely because it was sponsored by leftist and neutralist parties emphasizing to minimize the influence of the non-communist ICFTU, whose British, French, and Belgian members were tainted by their support for colonialism. While a neutralist All African Labor Federation expressed the justifiable demand for an African labor movement predicated on nationalism and economic democracy, McCray and the American Federation of Labor delegates feared that such a movement would prove to communist subversion. “Accordingly, we persuaded Tom Mboya and the Ghanaian trade union leader John Tettegah to defend the ICFTU,” pointing out that not all of its unions were apostles for colonialism. Both Mboya and Tettegah mentioned support from the American Federation of Labor—Congress of Industrial Organizations in the United States as an exception. McCray warned that the ICFTU was losing the battle by failing to mobilize the staff and resources in Africa that would persuade Africans that the West sympathized with their desires for freedom and unity. It was fortunate, McCray’s view, that he and his colleagues were present and able to call on their close, friendly relations with Nkrumah, Mboya, and Tettegah. Otherwise, the prestige of American labor and the ICFTU would have been irreparably diminished.

McCray saw no contradiction between his pan-African and black nationalist sentiments and his anticolonialism. Padmore and Drake shared this perspective. Nkrumah, Padmore, and Drake likely pragmatically regarded the work of trade unionists McCray, Springer, and Brown (who was legendary for his work in undermining communist-dominated trade union movements throughout postwar Europe) as a source of technical, material, and political support and on the whole compatible with pan-Africanism. Indeed, the alliance between the Ghanaian government and the U.S. labor movement was mobilized as part of Ghana’s diplomatic protest of the death sentence given to Jimmy Wilson, an African American in Alabama. Tettegah hobnailed Meany and the U.S. trade union movement to intervene on Wilson’s behalf.

Compared with Cook’s and even McCray’s, Houser’s account of the conference was more closely attuned to African concerns. Insofar as Houser invoked the Cold War, he did so to pressure the U.S. government to alter its policy of neglect. Houser urged the Eisenhower administration unilaterally to endorse African nationalist aspirations. The failure to do so would forfeit the continent to Soviet influence. Houser considered the conference the most representative gathering of African leaders ever assembled. It was also significant that the leaders from the continent’s English- and French-speaking areas were in contact for the first time. Less troubled than Cook by the difficulties of translation, Houser and his colleagues pressed the importance of contact across language and colonial barriers. The depth and high level of African nationalist participation compelled the colonial powers to take seriously the conference’s demands. Noting the controversy over armed struggle, Houser reported the conference’s resolution to endorse nonviolent methods but not to rule out other methods if the choice were imposed on independence fighters. In noting the conference’s promotion of a pan-African agenda through regional federations’ pursuit of the ultimate goal of a United States of Africa, Houser singled out St. Clair Drake’s paper on racism, which added a new
dimension to the pan-African concept. No doubt drawing on his experience as part of a progressive interracial culture of pro-African labor and peace ac-
tivists, Drake described a shift from pan-Africanism as a racial concept ("Af-
rica for the Africans") to a more inclusive political framework. As Houser de-
scribed Drake's formulation, "Anyone living in Africa, 'white or black, could be a part of the Africa of the future so long as the basic principle of democ-
ocracy ('One man one vote') is accepted." In espousing on Padmore's and Nkrumah's rejection of the opening address, Drake, like Richard Wright, envisioned a new Africa defined in universalist political terms rather than by race and color. While the movement's African leadership was taken for granted, progressive whites from Africa as well as from the West could also contribute.

As King had done, Houser invoked the Cold War primarily to join Ameri-
can policy makers out of their complacency. He believed that the confer-
ence's articulation of a foreign policy defined by nonalignment and positive neutrality represented a concrete expression of the projection of the "African personality" in world affairs. Houser believed that Soviet presence and influ-
ence on the continent were minimal but were sure to increase if the con-
licts in the multiracial areas of the continent and in Algeria were not quickly resolved. It was fortunate that, in addition to the delayed message from Nixon, the bland, unsigned statement from an anonymous official U.S.
spokesperson went unmentioned; otherwise, American prestige would have suffered even further. The Soviets were anxious to dispense material support to African political parties. Houser argued that the American Committee on Africa could provide nongovernmental assistance in the service of the U.S. government by raising special funds to support concrete projects in support of equality and freedom in Africa.

In the provisional court of world opinion convened at the 1958 Accra
conference, the attempt to project the African personality elicited a range of responses that illustrated both the promise and the precariousness of these independent global forums during the Cold War. The war of position waged
within these forums and beyond at base concerned the meaning of Black and
African aspirations and solidarities. Houser's view that the U.S. government
needed to change its policy in accord with Africans' essentially legitimate
objectives of freedom and pan-Africanism reversed the official presupposition
that obliged Africans to adapt their politics to the imperatives of U.S. na-
tional security. Because Drake and Houser were members of independent
and nongovernmental organizations concerned with gaining African aspira-
tions a fair hearing in the West, their noncommunist rhetoric sought to
engage the dominant assumptions of Cold War officialdom. Focused on forging
alliances with anticolonial allies within a seemingly divided American
foreign policy establishment, Drake, Houser, and McCray, like King, believed
that the Cold War provided moral and political leverage to lobby the U.S.
government actively to support African peoples' aspirations. Yet while these
advocates and others believed that they were playing their strongest hand,
Nkrumah only briefly enjoyed latitude after independence, as the Cold
War almost instantaneously eclipsed the promise and optimism sparked by
Ghana's independence and its continuing fight for African freedom. Even as
Lord Kitchener sang of the unforfeitable achievements of Ghana and Nku-
mah and as black peoples in the West celebrated the first years of Ghana's
independence, what Africans and their allies understood to be the winds of
tide change were in fact the persistentguests of Cold War machinations distorting
African aspirations and stifling Ghana's dynamism as the vanguard of black
and African hopes.

Although King and Padmore may have overestimated their autonomy in
phrasing their demands for freedom and citizenship within the terms of Cold
War antimunism, at the All African People's Conference and subsequent
pan-African gatherings hosted by the Ghanaian government, Nkrumah could
at least dictate his independent agenda. By comparison, few members of the
American Society for African Culture suspected the extent to which govern-
ment officials monitored the group's deliberations on African American iden-
tity within the context of African freedom. In June 1959, the society held
its annual conference in New York City. The organization had assembled
an impressive program of African American and African intellectuals,
perhaps capitalizing on the momentum of the Accra conference. Keynote
speakers included Kenyan politician J. Gikonyo Kiano; Senator John F. Ken-
dedy, chair of the newly established African Affairs Subcommittee of the
Senate Foreign Relations Committee; and Detroit Representative Charles C.
Diggs Jr., who called for increased African American investment and par-
ticipation in the affairs of the New Africa: "The American Negro should have
as much interest in the development of Africa as the American Jew has in
the development of Israel." Kennedy endorsed African independence, position-
ing himself for the upcoming presidential election by voicing support for
the aspirations of the African people while holding the volatile domestic civil
rights issue at arm's length. In a rebuke to the Eisenhower administration,
Kiano insisted on the priority of African's desire for freedom over the West's
concern with keeping communism out of Africa. Graced by the presence of
distinguished Africans including Mboya and Arkhurt, the gathering was also

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from discussing Digg's speech, perhaps taking the more prudent course of challenging black solidarities in the abstract.) Whatever the accuracy of the report's characterizations, the official attempt to monitor, interpret, and guide the projection of new African American personality along politically acceptable lines was unmistakable. At the same time, the interracial nature of the meeting might have raised warning signs to some of the African Americans present, prompting watchfulness and wary questions about whose interests the gathering ultimately served.32

Bill Sutherland and the Sahara Protest Team

After France announced its intention to explode an atomic bomb in the Sahara Desert, anti-nuclear activists contacted Bill Sutherland, who successfully lobbied the Convention People's Party to back an international team that would attempt to stop the nuclear test with an audacious plan to drive across the Sahara to the test site in Niger. Sutherland became a liaison between the Ghanaian government, the British anti-nuclear movement, and the US civil rights and peace movements. He enlisted Bayard Rustin to join the campaign, which included British pacifist and anti-apartheid cleric Michael Scott. The team consisted of eleven Ghanaians, two Africans from outside of Ghana, and six persons from Britain, France, and America, including Rustin and Sutherland. The Sahara team caravanned through northern Ghana, stopping for mass meetings at towns along the route. Mobilised by the Convention People's Party, the group would meet the group in each major center, where Rustin and others would address open-air rallies. In addition to government support, the team raised twenty-five thousand dollars from Ghanaians.33

Sutherland had arrived in the Gold Coast in 1954, making him one of the earliest African American emigrants. His path had been traced by Christian pacifism, African American civil rights activism, and imprisonment for his defiant conscientious objector status during World War II. As with so many others, he was recruited to pan-Africanism by George Padmore. As a teenager during the 1930s, Sutherland joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The Congregational Church in his predominantly white hometown of Glen Ridge, New Jersey, introduced him to pacifist and socialist causes, and through the church he joined the movement to save the Scottsboro defendants as well as Christian peace campaigns. After graduating from Bates College, Sutherland joined the Youth Committee against War. He lived with other pacifists in a Newark commune based on
Having secured Nkrumah's blessing to establish chapters of the pacific war Resisters' League and Fellowship of Reconciliation on the African continent, Sutherland struggled to find paid employment. With the support of the American Committee on Africa, Sutherland moved to rural Ghana and began a family with his new Ghanaian wife, Efiux Theodora Mouage, a poet and playwright who later contributed to an anthology of African writing edited by Langston Hughes and who would become a leading figure in the arts and culture in post-independence Ghana. The couple put into practice their belief in rural development and a vision of a modernized society in the context of a secondary school in Tito in the Coast-Volta state of Awdogone. This was a collaborative effort with Ghanaian educators and the local community, encouraged by a progressive chief who had attended Achimota College, Sutherland penned an account of the school's establishment, praising the determination, financial sacrifice, and generous voluntary labor of Tito's impoverished villagers, many of them women and children, in raising the buildings. In addition to training its citizens for life in a modern rural community, the school's curriculum was grounded in an "appreciation for the best in the local traditions and culture." Employing skilled workers and artisans among the village's residents, the school planners broadened the scope of the project, introducing a cooperative farm inspired in part by a report on industrialization and the Gold Coast penned by the West Indian economist W. Arthur Lewis, another associate of Padmore and Nkrumah in the black Anglophone pan-African commonwealth. Lewis had recommended that the first priority be the development of subsistence agriculture, an essential precondition for industrial development. The planners believed that sufficient skills existed to launch several village industries, including the manufacture of sugar and soap, fruit canning, and the production of some vegetable oils. Sutherland's account of the school was intended to solicit material support for the project from his pacific colleagues back in the States. Sutherland moved his family to Accra in 1955 when he was appointed personal secretary to Godemah, the minister of finance. A friend of Sutherland's from the United States, Marguerite Carwright, a political columnist for the Pittsburgh Courier who had known Nkrumah since his student days in the United States, helped to arrange the position for Sutherland. Sutherland worked alongside Delwai in planning the independence celebrations. Dedicated to the cause of nonviolent protest, Sutherland further expanded the pan-African network of leaders and activists by making sure that Martin Luther King Jr. was invited as one of Nkrumah's honorary guests.
The Sahara protest, backed by a global antinuclear movement, underscored Ghana's willingness to challenge French colonial ambitions. As Sutherland recalled, "[T]he plan was to get as close to the test site as possible . . . preventing the testing through our physical presence." The team had chosen a route through Upper Volta into French-controlled West Africa, hoping to elude French patrols and somehow reach the test site. The wide publicity the test had received throughout Africa, the United States, Britain, and the United Nations granted a measure of protection when the protesters were detained by French forces in Sritrou, Upper Volta. During a standoff of several days, the protesters distributed leaflets, and Rustin and Sutherland, who passed the time rallying the protesters and villagers by singing Negro spirituals, briefly contemplated moving ahead clandestinely on foot. The team finally relented and was escorted back to the Ghana border. Sutherland and Scott again attempted to reach the test site but were quickly apprehended and jailed by French troops and then transported back to Ghana.24

The protesters again tried and failed to reach the site, and the French exploded atomic bombs in February and April 1960. Yet the international team had focused opposition to French nuclear policy in a manner that strengthened the international initiatives to end underground nuclear testing. For months, the team's efforts received highly favorable front-page headlines in the Ghanaian press, supporting Nkrumah's view that Ghana should actively support the antinuclear movement.25

"A Great Bacon Is Dimmed"

For many years George Padmore had been a fountain of political advice and material support for the African nationalists who found their way to his Cranleigh Street flat in London. During the independence celebrations, Nkrumah had loaned his private bungalow across from the statehouse to Padmore and his British wife, Dorothy. Padmore subsequently stayed on, assisting with the departure of British expatriate officials and helping defuse a border dispute instigated by French Togoland and the Ghanaian opposition National Liberation Movement. Although an appreciation of his abilities was far from universal within the government, Padmore received many offers to remain in the newly independent country.26

Amid the celebrations, Nkrumah initially had invited Padmore to stay and promote the advancement of their idea of African unity. An advisory role for Padmore, so strongly identified with anticomunism, might have been expected to send a reassuring signal to a watchful Western world. But the prime minister hesitated as senior members of the cabinet opposed working alongside Padmore, who, Dorothy Padmore believed, posed a formidable obstacle to their expressions of self-aggrandizement. Pressured by younger radicals in the Convention People's Party who resented the cabinet's neo-colonial elements, Nkrumah relented, appointing Padmore as an adviser on African affairs.

Prior to independence Padmore had urged Nkrumah to retain personal control over the portfolio of African affairs and foreign relations generally. Both men well knew that his ministers could not be trusted with this linchpin of pan-Africanism and continental unity. Mediating between the left and right wings of the government, Nkrumah was reluctant to endow Padmore's office with the importance and responsibilities it required. Against the interference of ministers and members of the civil service, Padmore secured offices and a staff, though he refused a personal secretary, preferring to entrust his confidential work to Dorothy. While engaged in the planning of the All African People's Conference, Padmore told Nkrumah that under present circumstances, he could not continue as an adviser. Nkrumah persuaded Padmore to remain, granting him an increase in salary, though Padmore was not compensated as lavishly as British expatriates.

Padmore seems to have borne these slights with equanimity. A tireless agitator for pan-Africanism, he had always insisted that Africans should lead in the struggle, with black "strangers" from the New World providing support. The treatment accorded his wife—a paltry reward for many years of sacrifice in London—embittered Dorothy Padmore, however. No one among the ministers was prepared to emulate her husband's selfless example. "All want to take. And so they jostle and scheme and are not for Africa but for themselves." To her friend, Richard Wright, Dorothy contrasted the shabby treatment of her husband with the handsome sinecures bestowed on British hangovers. In her view, Ghanaians customarily "reward[ed] their enemies in the hope of buying them off! Your friends you condemn."27

Dorothy Padmore believed that her husband's difficulties were symptomatic of the failure to transform the Convention People's Party from an electioneering mechanism into a vanguard party committed to an ideological program of pan-African socialism. By the time of Padmore's sudden October 1959 death in London as a result of liver disease, he had vindicated himself with his work placing Ghana in the forefront of African affairs. Despite opportunistic whisperings against the "stranger" and claims that it was inappropriate for a West Indian to exercise leadership in African foreign relations, his contribution and incorruptibility were acknowledged by his ene-
mies and certainly by Nkrumah, who paid Padmore a lavish tribute with a state funeral and a heartfelt eulogy: "To our friendship developed into that indescribable relationship that exists between two brothers." Nkrumah considered it fitting that Padmore’s ashes be interred at Christianborg Castle, the seat of the Ghanaian government, where, perhaps hundreds of years ago, his ancestors stood, as silent sentinels, awaiting their wretched lot. . . .

Pate returned George Padmore home to us. . . . While we mourn his loss, the battle for Africa's total emancipation must continue unabated."31 Dorothy Padmore remained in Ghana, where she embarked on a never-completed biography of her late husband. She was employed by the government as a writer and researcher, remaining in Ghana until her death in 1964.

Through George Padmore’s state funeral and the extensive press coverage over several days devoted to his passing, the Ghanaian government reaffirmed its leadership in African affairs. Nkrumah continued to campaign for African unity with diminished fervor. Unmistakable in the many tributes to Padmore was Nkrumah’s transnational vision of nation building. At the time of his death, Padmore had been involved in drafting Ghana’s republican constitution, whose adoption in July 1960 would end the Ghanaian government’s dependent relationship with the British government and monarchy. As Ghana celebrated its new status as a republic, Nkrumah’s diplomatic efforts to resolve the Congo Crisis, precipitated by the Belgian-backed secession of Katanga Province shortly after the Congo’s independence in July 1960, would have repercussions throughout Africa and beyond. This crisis would dramatically sour the Ghanaian government’s relationship with the United States and the West. Nkrumah told Drake that the U.S. ambassador to Ghana had told the prime minister is a fit of anger, "If you think you can throw your weight around in the Congo because the U.S. will cut you down to size."32

The Congo Crisis would bring an abrupt end to the period of optimism that characterized the first months of Ghanaian independence, which were marked by attempts not only to define but also to enact the African personality and codify pan-Africanism with projects designed to link African nations so that they could achieve autonomy from their former colonizers. Events in the Congo would sorely test the assertion of the African personality and indeed hopes for peaceful, nonviolent change in Africa. The Congo Crisis, which included the first coup d’etat against an independent African government, roiled Ghanaian politics and sparked global outrage and an angry protest by African Americans at the United Nations. Unrest in the Congo also inflamed tensions between black radicals and nationalists (in both Ghana and the United States) and such African American liberals as

attorney Paul Murray, who sided with the U.S. government during her brief residence in Ghana. In emphasizing her view that African Americans were Americans first and foremost, Murray would inadvertently echo the terms of a liberal counteroffensive against African American criticism of U.S. foreign policy toward Africa. That counteroffensive sought to debunk the ideals of pan-African solidarity espoused by Nkrumah and Padmore. Support for Nkrumah’s political vision among African Americans would lead to an intense preoccupation in the U.S. media with the relationship between African and African Americans, a debate that testified to the high stakes attached to the matter of the political identities of African Americans.

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