

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Ghana and Nkrumah Revisited: Lenin, State Capitalism, and Black Marxist Orbits

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## Abstract

This paper reexamines African socialism, the Ghanaian political economy under Kwame Nkrumah (1957–1966), Nkrumah’s intellectual genealogical heritage, and African intellectual history as a genre that transcends the bounds of the Atlantic world. First, I sketch the lives of Black Marxists—Nkrumah, C.L.R. James, George Padmore, and Bankole Awoonor-Renner—from Africa and the Americas, to the Soviet Union, to England and Ghana, to rethink Black bodies not merely as theorists of racial and decolonial questions but also as sites, carriers, and manipulators of political-economic theories. In constructing connected and overlapping histories, I demonstrate how controversial and contested Soviet ideas became key sites of interrogation among global Black Marxists. By reframing travel as an intellectual process, I reconceptualize the movements of Black Marxists to the USSR, the United States, England, and Ghana as critical intellectual and historical processes in their understandings of Lenin’s state capitalist ideas. Second, I revisit the Ghanaian political economy under Nkrumah to argue that combining socialist and capitalist development paths was not a contradictory Marxist policy but was embedded within Black Marxist understandings of Lenin’s state capitalist ideas. In so doing, I argue that we must situate African political ideologies not solely within a romanticized Afrocentric origin but as ideas that emerge out of contemporaneous global political and ideological struggles. I draw on global Black Marxists’ correspondence; newspaper and magazine articles; British and American espionage files; and Ghanaian, American, and British state and inter-state departmental documents in imperial, colonial, and postcolonial British, Ghanaian, American, and Russian archives.

**Keywords:** Kwame Nkrumah; state capitalism; Ghana; socialism; postcolonialism; de-colonization; West Africa; historical methodology; Vladimir Lenin; Soviet Union

## Introduction

On 24 February 1966, the National Liberation Council (NLC), renegades of the Ghanaian armed forces, with Western support, overthrew the Ghanaian head of state Kwame Nkrumah as he flew to China.<sup>1</sup> The coup d’état marked a political-economic

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<sup>1</sup>Lt. General J. A. Ankrah, J.W.K. Harley, and Brigadier A. A. Afrifa led the NLC; John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story* (New York, 1984), 201.

rupture in the nascent histories of both Ghana and socialism in Africa. Whereas Ghana's Independence Day (6 March 1957) bequeathed hope and vindication to Black people, African liberationists, anti-imperialists, and anti-colonialists globally, the events of 24 February offered a dystopian break.<sup>2</sup> The tripartite combination of Ghana's slide into one-party and increasingly authoritarian rule, the forced resignation of high court judges, and Ghana's faltering economy had already precipitated an intellectual and political-economic inquest into the correctness and shortcomings of Nkrumah's reign and his political-economic philosophies.<sup>3</sup> The coup d'état exacerbated and expedited that scrutiny, often in the most unflattering ways.<sup>4</sup> I revisit two debates that emerged from this crisis: the first over Nkrumah's intellectual and political-economic connections with the Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin, and the second over whether capitalism and socialism could coexist within a Marxist framework.<sup>5</sup>

During the 1960s and 1970s, Black Marxists held contrasting positions about whether a combination of capitalism and socialism was an intellectually coherent Marxist policy.<sup>6</sup> The Caribbean Marxist historians Walter Rodney and C.L.R. James represented the two differing sides. In a 1975 lecture at Queens College in New York City, Rodney dismissed the notion that capitalism and socialism could coexist. He characterized Nkrumah's political-economic project as unviable because it was a "mish-mash" of socialism and capitalism. For Rodney, Nkrumah's socialist policies were "whimsical" and failed to address the contradiction between "socialist premises" and the capitalist system, which could not coexist within a singular economic model.<sup>7</sup> James disagreed, arguing that capitalism and socialism could exist side-by-side, concluding that a combination of capitalist and socialist modes of production was at the root of the Soviet Union's 1920s economic philosophy and political-economic project. He defined this state of affairs as state capitalism and questioned how anyone could understand the Soviet system as anything else.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2</sup>This event poured substantial gas on the flames of Afro-pessimism. See David Rieff, "In Defense of Afro-Pessimism," *World Policy Journal* 15, 4 (1998): 10–22.

<sup>3</sup>C.L.R. James, *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution* (London, 1977).

<sup>4</sup>Some of this critique took on a personal, nasty tenor and twist. Nkrumah's critics assailed his lucidity, personality, and ambitions. For instance, Russell Warren Howe, a journalist of the British *Daily Telegraph*, wrote that Nkrumah developed "Hitlerlike fits of fisticuffs" and had "psychotic periods" and that his cabinet had requested a Canadian psychiatrist to examine his mental health in 1958. See "Did Nkrumah Favour Pan-Africanism?" *Transition* 27 (1966): 128–34, 133. The NLC's Commission to examine Nkrumah's financial dealings concluded that the deposed president had a "split personality," and was a hypocrite and "schizophrenic." See Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD)-Accra, ADM5/3/115, 19 Jan. 1967, "White Paper on the Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Kwame Nkrumah Properties," 1.

<sup>5</sup>Soviet scholar Ivan I. Potekhin argued that it was utopian to believe that "private capitalist enterprises" could exist "under socialism"; see "On African Socialism: A Soviet View," in William H. Friedland and Carl G. Rosberg, Jr., eds., *African Socialism* (Stanford, 1964), 106–7. Marina Ottaway asserted, "While development is possible both through capitalism and socialism, developing countries cannot choose the latter as a path of development in the immediate future, because the conditions are not right." See "Soviet Marxism and African Socialism," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 16, 3 (1978): 477–85.

<sup>6</sup>For earlier and parallel debates about state capitalism, see M. C. Howard and J. E. King, "State Capitalism" in the Soviet Union," *History of Economic Review* 34, 1 (2001): 110–26; and Marcel van der Linden's *Western Marxism and the Soviet Union* (Leiden, 2007).

<sup>7</sup>Walter Rodney's 1975 speech, "Marxism and African Liberation," at Queen's College, New York City, at: <https://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/rodney-walter/works/marxismandafrica.htm>.

<sup>8</sup>James, *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution*, 192.

This paper wades into the Rodney-James debate by reconceptualizing Nkrumah's links to Lenin's state capitalism ideas and offers two arguments. First, that a combination of socialist and capitalist development paths—a hallmark of Nkrumah's Ghanaian economic policy—was not a contradictory Marxian policy but was embedded within Black Marxist understandings of Lenin's state capitalist ideas and the Soviet economic philosophy of the 1920s. Thus, this paper adds another intellectual dimension and genealogy to Nkrumah's political-economic philosophy by arguing that he was aware of Lenin's state capitalist ideas and that the Ghanaian economy existed and functioned within this state capitalist framework.

While focusing solely on Black figures' anti-colonial and anti-racial pronouncements has resulted in a multitude of fruitful and illuminating studies, it misses something vital about them: their economic ideologies.<sup>9</sup> Historian Robin D. G. Kelley has called on scholars to move past limiting the study of the Black diaspora to the racial "political identities" of these figures and to imagine, situate, and tie them "to other kinds of international movements" such as socialism and communism.<sup>10</sup> I urge scholars to include the bodies of Black Africans in Kelley's call. Furthermore, if we take Kelley's theory seriously, we must then necessarily rethink Black bodies as sites, carriers, and manipulators of political-economic theories and not solely as theorists of racial and decolonial questions. This is not to argue that political-economic ideologies operate on a higher intellectual terrain than race, or that we can understand Nkrumah, other Black figures, and questions of political-economy without interrogating race. Indeed, figures like Nkrumah necessarily occupied multiple intellectual and political networks. Yet, most of the historiography and literature on Nkrumah centers upon Pan-Africanism and African liberation.<sup>11</sup> Such

<sup>9</sup>Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York, 2007); Adom Getachow, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton, 2019); Su Lin Lewis and Carolien Stolte, "Other Bandungs: Afro-Asian Internationalisms in the Early Cold War," *Journal of World History* 30, 1–2 (2019): 1–19.

<sup>10</sup>Robin D. G. Kelley, "How the West Was One: On the Uses and Limitations of Diaspora," *Black Scholar* 30, 3/4 (2001): 31–35, 32.

<sup>11</sup>Jeffrey S. Ahlman's fantastic inquest into what he dubs "Living with Nkrumahism" discusses not only the promises of socialism, but Nkrumah's and Ghana's Pan-African aspirations: *Living with Nkrumahism: Nation, State, and Pan-Africanism* (Athens, 2017); Ama Biney, *The Political and Social Thought of Kwame Nkrumah* (London, 2011); Kofi Darkwah, "Nationalism and Independence," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 15 (2013): 71–89, 85; Abena Dove Osseo-Asare, *Atomic Junction: Nuclear Power in Africa after Independence* (Cambridge, 2019): 1–106; Marika Sherwood, *Kwame Nkrumah and the Dawn of the Cold War: The West African National Secretariat (1945–48)* (London, 2019); Matteo Grilli, "Nkrumah, Nationalism, and Pan-Africanism: The Bureau of African Affairs," *History in Africa* 44 (2017): 295–307; Frank Gerits, "'When the Bull Elephants Fight': Kwame Nkrumah, Non-Alignment, and Pan-Africanism as an Interventionist Ideology in the Global Cold War (1957–66)," *International History Review* 37, 5 (2015): 951–69, 964; Jean Allman, Kwame Nkrumah, "African Studies, and the Politics of Knowledge Production in the Black Star of Africa," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 46, 2 (2013): 181–203; Jemima Pierre, *The Predicament of Blackness: Postcolonial Ghana and the Politics of Race* (Chicago, 2012), 46; Jeffrey S. Ahlman, *Kwame Nkrumah: Visions of Liberation* (Athens, 2021); Jeffrey S. Ahlman, "Road to Ghana: Nkrumah, Southern Africa, and the Eclipse of a Decolonizing Africa," *Kronos: Southern African Histories* 37 (2011): 23–40; Abena Dove Osseo-Asare, "Kwame Nkrumah's Suits: Sartorial Politics in Ghana at Independence," *Fashion Theory* 25, 5 (2021): 597–632; Jeffrey S. Ahlman, "The Algerian Question in Nkrumah's Ghana, 1958–1960: Debating 'Violence' and 'Nonviolence' in African Decolonization," *Africa Today* 57, 2 (2010): 67–84; University Archives, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries (RBML), C.L.R. James Papers, box 9, folder 9, series II. 2. Nkrumah, Kwame—Various 1966–1967,

elucidating research has overshadowed other debates among twentieth-century African and Black thinkers.

In accounts of Nkrumah's "brush" with Marxism, and among the ways scholars have linked Nkrumah to Lenin, none have tied him directly or derivatively to Lenin's state capitalist ideas.<sup>12</sup> Ali A. Mazrui declared, "Nkrumah strove to be Africa's Lenin." He noted that Nkrumah created and named his Convention People's Party's (CCP) newspaper, the *Spark*, after Lenin's paper, *Iskra* (Spark), and imitated Lenin's cult of organization.<sup>13</sup> Thomas Hodgkin concluded that Lenin's theory on world capitalism and imperialism had a great impact on Nkrumah.<sup>14</sup> P. Kiven Tunteng maintained that Nkrumah's African revolution achieved "for Africa what Lenin had achieved for the Soviet Union," which was the cultivation and amalgamation of a diverse group of people into a singular revolutionary dream and movement.<sup>15</sup> But just as Lenin's state capitalist ideas have not been linked to Nkrumah, state capitalism as an economic feature or prism for understanding the Ghanaian political economy has been absent.

Scholars have used many inflection points to comprehend the Ghanaian political economy. Rhoda Howard has argued that Ghana's economic integration into the world capitalist system in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries turned it into a peripheral capitalist economy while suppressing its capitalist potential.<sup>16</sup> Polly Hill, Margaret Peil, and Jeffrey S. Ahlman, among others, have focused on the role of organized and unorganized industrial and agricultural labor, and Ghanaian trade unions, to provide answers to the nature of the Ghanaian economy.<sup>17</sup> Bianca Murillo, Gracia Clark, and Jennifer Hart have centered Ghanaian markets, market-women, African consumers, and drivers as crucial sites of inquiry toward understanding the

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1072, annotated, p. 1, draft, "Kwame Nkrumah: Founder of African Emancipation"; James Boggs to Nkrumah.

<sup>12</sup>P. Kiven Tunteng, "Kwame Nkrumah and the African Revolution," *Civilisations* 23/24, 3/4 (1973/1974): 233–47; Steve Metz, "In Lieu of Orthodoxy: The Socialist Theories of Nkrumah and Nyerere," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 20, 3 (1982): 377–92; Robin Cohen, "Marxism in Africa: The Grounding of a Tradition," in Barry Munslow, ed., *Africa: Problems in the Transition to Socialism* (London, 1986), 41, 44; Thomas Lionel Hodgkin, "Nkrumah's Radicalism," *Présence Africaine* 85 (1er trimestre 1973): 62–72, 65, 70.

<sup>13</sup>Ali A. Mazrui, "Nkrumah: The Leninist Czar," *Transition* 26 (1966): 106–26.

<sup>14</sup>Hodgkin, "Nkrumah's Radicalism," 65, 70.

<sup>15</sup>Tunteng, "Kwame Nkrumah and the African Revolution," 233–47.

<sup>16</sup>Rhoda Howard, *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in Ghana* (New York, 1978). For more works on the Ghanaian economy via a development, underdevelopment, neocolonial framework, see Kenneth W. Grundy, "Nkrumah's Theory of Underdevelopment: An Analysis of Recurrent Themes," *World Politics* 15, 3 (1963): 438–54; Andrzej Krassowski, *Development and the Debt Trap: Economic Planning and External Borrowing in Ghana* (London, 1974); T. E. Amin argues that Ghana only became indebted because Nkrumah invested too much, too quickly, on industrialization rather than in agricultural production: *An Economic Blueprint for Ghana* (Accra, 2003).

<sup>17</sup>Polly Hill, *The Migrant Cocoa Farmers of Southern Ghana* (Cambridge, 1963); Margaret Peil, *The Ghanaian Factory Worker: Industrial Man in Africa* (Cambridge, 1972); Jeff Crisp, *The Story of an African Working Class* (London, 1984); Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism*; Naaborko Sackeyfio-Lenoch, "The Ghana Trade Union Congress and the Politics of International Labor Alliances, 1957–1971," *International Review of Social History* 62, 2 (2017): 191–213; Sarah Kunkel, "Modernising the village: State farms, agricultural development, and nation-building in 1960s Ghana," *Zeitschrift für Unternehmensgeschichte* 67, 2 (2022): 219–244. I have also discussed the Ghanaian political economy and its relationship to labor, in: "If You Trouble a Hungry Snake, You Will Force It to Bite You": Rethinking Archival Pessimism, Worker Discontent, and Petition Writing in Ghana, 1957–66," *Journal of African History* 62, 1 (2021): 59–78.

country's economy.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Stephan F. Miescher and Tony Killick have analyzed Ghana's political economy through modernization and developmental economics paradigms.<sup>19</sup> While Francis Botchway has contended that Nkrumah's regime engaged in a state-led development socialist project and "welcomed private foreign capital including foreign investment in the energy sector," he did not link this process to state capitalism.<sup>20</sup> Despite the large and innovative corpus of work centered on Ghana's political economy, none have analyzed or appreciated it as state capitalist in nature. Only Kwame A. Ninsin has mentioned state capitalism in relation to Nkrumah's Ghana. However, Ninsin does not fully investigate this intellectual genealogy or its implications for Nkrumah's political economic project.<sup>21</sup> This broader neglect is also apparent in discourses surrounding broader state capitalism, African socialism, and African political economies.

Indeed, some of the most brilliant discourses on African political economies ignore state capitalism.<sup>22</sup> But conversely, the historiography on state capitalism often ignores Africa.<sup>23</sup> And where the concept of state capitalism appears in African historiography, Nkrumah's Ghana is overlooked.<sup>24</sup> Analyses and critiques

<sup>18</sup>Bianca Murillo, *Market Encounters: Consumer Cultures in Twentieth-Century Ghana* (Athens, 2017); Gracia Clark, *Onions Are My Husband: Survival and Accumulation by West African Market Women* (Chicago, 1994); Jennifer Hart, *Ghana on the Go: African Mobility in the Age of Motor Transportation* (Bloomington, 2016).

<sup>19</sup>Stephan F. Miescher, "Nkrumah's Baby": The Akosombo Dam and the Dream of Development in Ghana, 1952–1966," *Water History* 6 (2014): 341–66; Tony Killick, *Development Economics in Action: A Study of Economic Policies in Ghana*, 2d ed. (New York, 2010); Stephan F. Miescher, *A Dam for Africa: Akosombo Stories from Ghana* (Bloomington, 2022).

<sup>20</sup>Francis N. Botchway, "The State, Governance and the Energy Industry in Ghana," *Law and Politics in Africa, Asia and Latin America* 33, 2 (2000): 176–211, 180.

<sup>21</sup>Kwame A. Ninsin, "Introduction: Thirty-Seven Years of Development Experience," in Emmanuel Hansen and Kwame A. Ninsin, eds., *The State Development and Politics in Ghana* (London, 1989), 5; Kwame A. Ninsin, "State, Capital and Labour Relations, 1961–1987," in Emmanuel Hansen and Kwame A. Ninsin, eds., *The State, Development and Politics in Ghana* (London, 1989), 19.

<sup>22</sup>Nancy Clark, *Manufacturing Apartheid: State Corporations in South Africa* (New Haven, 1994); M. Anne Pitcher, *Transforming Mozambique: The Politics of Privatization, 1975–2000* (New York, 2002); Brenda Chalfin, *Shea Butter Republic: State Power, Global Markets, and the Making of an Indigenous Commodity* (New York, 2004); Andrew Apter, *The Pan-African Nation: Oil and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria* (Chicago, 2005); Murillo, *Market Encounters*; Alden Young, *Transforming Sudan: Decolonization, Economic Development and State Formation* (New York, 2017); Stephan F. Miescher, "Building the City of the Future: Visions and Experiences of Modernity in Ghana's Akosombo Township," *Journal of African History* 53, 3 (2012): 367–90; Hannah Appel, *The Licit Life of Capitalism: US Oil in Equatorial Guinea* (Durham, 2019).

<sup>23</sup>Chua Beng Huat, *Liberalism Disavowed: Communitarianism and State Capitalism in Singapore* (Ithaca, 2017), 98–122; Raul A. Fernandez and Jose F. Ocampo, "The Andean Pact and State Capitalism in Colombia," *Latin American Perspectives* 2, 3 (1975): 19–35; Philip C. C. Huang, "'State Capitalism' or 'Socialist Market Economy?'" *Modern China* 38, 6 (2012): 587–90; Alex Dupuy and Barry Truchil, "Problems in the Theory of State Capitalism," *Theory and Society* 8, 1 (1979): 1–38; Aldo Musacchio and Sergio G. Lazzarini, *Reinventing State Capitalism: Leviathan in Business, Brazil and Beyond* (Cambridge, 2014), 24–43.

<sup>24</sup>See Karen Farsoun, "State Capitalism in Algeria," *MERIP Reports* 35 (1975): 3–30; Ben Turok, "State Capitalism: The Role of Parastatals in Zambia," *Africa Development/Afrique et Développement* 4, 2/3 (1979): 44–67; Miles D. Wolpin, "Legitimising State Capitalism: Malian Militarism in Third-World Perspective," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 18, 2 (1980): 281–95; Aldo Musacchio and Sergio G. Lazzarini, *Reinventing State Capitalism: Leviathan in Business, Brazil and Beyond* (Cambridge, 2014): 24–43; Jon Kraus, "Capital,

of African socialism<sup>25</sup> often neglect state capitalism as a cohesive political-economic policy, project, or feature of African socialism.<sup>26</sup> Examining the Ghanaian experience as the first state capitalist society in Africa links together the historiographies of the African political economy, African socialism, and state capitalism.

This essay thus puts overlapping, parallel, and at times divergent thematic, historiographical, and theoretical discourses in global and African historiography into a single conversation. Through my examination of the ideas of Black Marxists and their understandings of the Soviet political-economic project, I show that we cannot grasp African political ideologies solely through their romanticized, Afrocentric origins; we must understand them also as ideas that have emerged out of contemporaneous global political and ideological struggles. This reading debunks claims by scholars such as Basil Davidson and Walter Laqueur that African leaders either had only superficial understandings of Marxist-Leninism or were ignorant of basic economics.<sup>27</sup> Re-imagining the nature of the Ghanaian economy<sup>28</sup> and the theories that undergird it also permits an alternative reading of postcolonial, colonial, and socialist economies, socialism in Africa, and how formerly colonized peoples envisioned remaking new societies out of colonialism's extractive ashes.

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Power and Business Associations in the African Political Economy: A Tale of Two Countries, Ghana and Nigeria," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 40, 3 (2002): 395–436.

<sup>25</sup>I do not distinguish between African socialism and socialism in Africa. Emma Hunter writes an excellent overview of the various contours of African socialism—its history, the debates within it, and why the term "African socialism" drew both supporters and critics: "African Socialism," in Marcel van der Linden, ed., *The Cambridge History of Socialism* (Cambridge, 2022).

<sup>26</sup>Tom Mboya, "African Socialism," *Transition* 8 (1963): 17–18; George Bennett, "African Socialism," *International Journal* 20, 1 (1964/1965): 97–101; A. James Gregor, "African Socialism, Socialism, and Fascism: An Appraisal," *Review of Politics* 29, 3 (1967): 324–53; Walter A. E. Skurnik, "Leopold Sedar Senghor and African Socialism," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 3, 3 (1965): 349–69; Ralph Clark, "Does African Socialism Make Economic Sense?" *Transition* 26 (1966): 47–49; Priya Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania: Between the Village and the World* (Cambridge, 2015); Benedict Machava, "Reeducation Camps, Austerity, and the Carceral Regime in Socialist Mozambique (1974–79)," *Journal of African History* 60, 3 (2019): 429–55; Carl G. Rosberg and Thomas M. Callaghy, eds., *Socialism in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Berkeley, 1979); William H. Friedland and Carl G. Rosberg, Jr., eds., *African Socialism* (Stanford, 1964); Tomáš František Žák, "Applying the Weapon of Theory: Comparing the Philosophy of Julius Kambirage Nyerere and Kwame Nkrumah," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 28, 2 (2016): 147–60; Emmanuel Akyeampong, "African Socialism; or, the Search for an Indigenous Model of Economic Development," *Economic History of Developing Regions* 33, 1 (2018): 69–87.

<sup>27</sup>Basil Davidson, *Black Star: A View of the Life and Times of Kwame Nkrumah* (New York, 1973), 105; Walter Z. Laqueur, "Communism and Nationalism in Tropical Africa," *Foreign Affairs* 39, 4 (1961): 610–21, 612.

<sup>28</sup>I do not address here the scholarship that tackles the precolonial and colonial Ghanaian economy from slavery, to forced labor, to local markets, to merchants, to British trading firms, and so forth, but see: Gareth Austin, *Labour, Land and Capital in Ghana: From Slavery to Free Labour in Asante, 1807–1956* (Rochester, 2005); Raymond E. Dumett, *El Dorado in West Africa: The Gold Mining Frontier, African Labor and Colonial Capitalism in the Gold Coast, 1875–1900* (Athens, 1998); Hill, *Migrant Cocoa Farmers*; Jim Silver, "The Failure of European Mining Companies in the Nineteenth-Century Gold Coast," *Journal of African History* 22, 4, (1981): 511–29; Kwabena Adu-Boahen, "The Impact of European Presence on Slavery in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth-Century Gold Coast," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 14 (2012): 165–99.

## Methodology

By constructing overlapping intellectual and biographical histories, this essay demonstrates how contested Soviet ideas became key sites of interrogation among global Black Marxists, a group of which Nkrumah belonged. As Holger Weiss, Margaret Stevens, Marc Matera, and others have shown, these individual and global histories can be traced within the archive.<sup>29</sup> Nile Green has argued that we must “conceive travel as an intellectual process that historians can study to capture the ... multiple mental ‘horizons.’”<sup>30</sup> Gerard McCann focuses on the “travels of African activists in Asia (and beyond)” to show how non-elite Africans sought to “define African independence through international and transnational network connections.”<sup>31</sup> Ahlman maintained that the spaces within empires “provided new arenas for political, social, and cultural connections, bringing together colonized peoples across seemingly disconnected spaces, as both peoples and ideas spread within and beyond the formal and informal confines of a given empire.”<sup>32</sup> Monica Popescu reminds us that the Eastern Bloc was “a part of the contemporary diasporic routes taken by black intellectuals” to expand and to broaden our “conceptual tools and theoretical perspectives” from the Black Atlantic.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Maxim Matusевич has called on scholars to expand the boundaries of the Black Atlantic to “Pax Sovietica.”<sup>34</sup> Using travel as an intellectual history methodological tool, I sketch the circuitous lives of Black Marxists from Africa and the Americas to the Soviet Union to England and back to Ghana from the 1920s to the 1960s, to show that Marxist-Leninist ideas of state capitalism were key parameters of analysis and discussion among Nkrumah and his allies. I give particular attention to Nkrumah’s circle—George Padmore, C.L.R. James, Bankole Awoonor-Renner, and members of the British and American Communist Parties—because they maintained close ties to the Bolshevik Party and were involved in interlocked networks and relationships.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Holger Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic: African American Agency, West African Intellectuals and the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers* (Leiden, 2013); Marc Matera, *Black London: The Imperial Metropolis and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century* (Oakland, 2015); Margaret Stevens, *Red International and Black Caribbean: Communists in New York City, Mexico and the West Indies, 1919–1939* (London, 2017); Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917–1939* (Chapel Hill, 2011); Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham, 2008).

<sup>30</sup>Nile Green, “The Waves of Heterotopia: Toward a Vernacular Intellectual History of the Indian Ocean,” *American Historical Review* 123, 3 (2018): 846–74, 847–48.

<sup>31</sup>Gerard McCann, “Where Was the Afro in Afro-Asian Solidarity? Africa’s ‘Bandung Moment’ in 1950s Asia,” *Journal of World History* 30, 1–2 (2019): 89–123, 92, 93.

<sup>32</sup>Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism*, 31.

<sup>33</sup>Monica Popescu, “On the Margins of the Black Atlantic: Angola, the Eastern Bloc, and the Cold War,” *Research in African Literatures* 45, 3 (2014): 91–109.

<sup>34</sup>Maxim Matusевич, “Expanding the Boundaries of the Black Atlantic: African Students as Soviet Moderns,” *Ab Imperio* 2 (2012): 325–50, 329. More recently, Steffi Marung has also called for a more triangulated arena of intellectual inquiry between Africa, the USSR, and Black Atlantic to make sense “of postcolonial socialist modernities.” See “Out of Empire into Socialist Modernity: Soviet-African (Dis) Connections and Global Intellectual Geographies,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 41, 1 (2021): 56–70.

<sup>35</sup>Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robin D. G. Kelley, “Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World,” *African Studies Review* 43, 1 (2000): 11–45; Marika Sherwood, “The Comintern, the CPGB, Colonies and Black Britons, 1920–1938,” *Science & Society* 60, 2 (1996): 137–63; Susan Campbell, “‘Black Bolsheviks’ and Recognition of African-America’s Right to

By reframing travel as an intellectual process, we can reconceptualize the movements of these Black Marxists to the USSR, the United States, England, and Ghana as critical intellectual and historical processes in their understandings of Lenin's state capitalist ideas.

In recreating the historical background and biographies of Nkrumah and his comrades—their travelogues, I show how ideas of state capitalism were prevalent within their circles and zeitgeist. I suggest that the colonial and imperial archives reveal the presence of Lenin's state capitalist theories within Nkrumah's orbit and thinking. The biographical and intellectual histories I present below serve as contextual and interpretative monikers; they link these Black actors to intellectual debates and historical processes otherwise largely overlooked in the colonial and imperial historical record. Thus, I take seriously the texts that they wrote and read. Historian Carina Ray cautions against reading biographical accounts and evidences as unconnected tissues. To do so, Ray argues, risks dismissing them “as anecdotal evidence.” However, by reading them “collectively,” as she proposes, we can “take seriously [the] connections” and patterns that highlight the underlying ubiquity and long shadow of Lenin's state capitalist ideas and the Soviet situation within the interlapping orbits of Nkrumah and other Black Marxists lives.<sup>36</sup>

While historian Peter Gordon is accurate that contextualism can never “fully account for all the potentialities of an idea,”<sup>37</sup> I am uninterested in determining or locating state capitalism's multiple meanings across geographic spaces and time and which variant of state capitalism Nkrumah or any of the Black Marxists subscribed to—that is for another paper. What I am keen to know, though, is the degree, or perhaps the extent to which, Nkrumah knew about Lenin's state capitalist ideas. I assert that a milieu of methods can render a portrait of a Nkrumah very much aware of those ideas. Ato Quayson has argued that it is both ahistorical and impossible to explore twentieth-century African or Western modes of knowledge as distinct, because neither was “completely pure.”<sup>38</sup> African societies “appropriate, borrow, challenge, steal, and rehash (among other things) external factors in the struggle to achieve a coherent understanding of their place in the world.” One could not locate “an African gnosis” or understand the “peculiar African postcolonial condition” outside of this “flux and intertextuality.”<sup>39</sup> The figures within this paper and Nkrumah's orbit debated among themselves and studied both the Soviet experiment and Lenin's ideas. For these individuals, the nature and (on-going) construction of Soviet society and the writings of Bolshevik leaders were both political-economic guides and sources of intellectual stimulation. In what follows, I draw upon correspondences between global Black Marxists, British and American espionage documents, Ghanaian, American, and British state and inter-state department documents in

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Self-Determination by the Communist Party USA,” *Science & Society* 58, 4 (1994/1995): 440–70; Leslie E. James, *George Padmore and Decolonization from Below: Pan-Africanism, the Cold War, and the End of Empire* (New York, 2015); Bill Schwarz, ed., *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain* (Manchester, 2003).

<sup>36</sup>Carina Ray, “Decrying White Peril: Interracial Sex and the Rise of Anticolonial Nationalism in the Gold Coast,” *American Historical Review* 119, 1 (2014): 78–110, 85.

<sup>37</sup>Peter E. Gordon, “Contextualism and Criticism in the History of Ideas,” in Darrin M. McMahon and Samuel Moyn, eds., *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History* (Oxford, 2014), 33.

<sup>38</sup>Ato Quayson, “Protocols of Representation and the Problems of Constituting an African ‘Gnosis’: Achebe and Okri,” *Yearbook of English Studies* 27 (1997): 137–49, 140.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 149.



imperial, colonial, and postcolonial British, Ghanaian, American, and Russian archives.

### Interconnected Black Marxists, Geographies, and Histories

In 1932, C.L.R. James moved to England from Trinidad to succeed as an intellectual and writer. He earned wages as a cricket correspondent primarily for the *Manchester Guardian* and *Glasgow Herald*. While enmeshed in cricket's intricacies, James keenly followed the global colonial situation and debates within the communist movement. During this period, he called for the dismantling of the British Empire, imperialism, and colonialism. In 1934, James joined the Trotsky movement.<sup>40</sup>

The intricacies, debates, and history of the communist movement and the Communist International consumed James. As a Trotskyite faction member, he gave public lectures in England and frequented France to attend Communist-inspired meetings and conferences. During this moment, he began writing *World Revolution: The Rise and Fall of the Communist International*. As he was in the throes of writing *World Revolution*, James became the editor of *Fight*, a Trotskyite journal. By the time *World Revolution* hit the shelves in 1937, James had become "perhaps the leading British Trotskyist of the day."<sup>41</sup> In 1938, James visited the United States to give "a lecture." The twin misfortunes of illness and the start of World War II prevented him from returning to England for another fifteen years. At this historical juncture, the Trotskyist movement splintered and fell apart. James attributed the movement's demise to the Stalin-Hitler pact and Trotsky's assassination in 1940.

James returned to the writings and histories of the Bolshevik Revolution and its Marxist progenitors during these moments of intellectual and political crisis. He interrogated the correctness of Trotskyism in relation to the Soviet Union, and where it collapsed. After spending eleven years studying "Marxism in all its respects—philosophical, economic and political," James realized that he had been deceived. James concluded that "Trotsky had misled the movement" and left it in 1951. This led to James's *State Capitalism and World Revolution*.<sup>42</sup> The book established James as not simply perhaps the leading British Trotskyist of the day but also one of the twentieth-century's foremost thinkers of Marxist-Leninism and the Bolshevik revolution.

Within *State Capitalism's* pages, James conveyed his understanding of state capitalism and the Soviet New Economic Policy (NEP), which entailed the pursuit of capitalism alongside socialism during the 1920s.<sup>43</sup> He argued that Karl Marx advocated for state capitalism in *Capital, Volume 1*.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, James concluded

<sup>40</sup>RBML, CLR James Papers, box 4, folder 3, series II, 1. For instance, as Italy invaded Abyssinia (Ethiopia) in 1935, one of the few non-colonized African spaces, James, like other Black anti-colonialist figures, joined efforts to defeat the Italian army. He subsequently joined and helped organize the International African Friends of Abyssinia group.

<sup>41</sup>RBML, CLR James Papers, box 4, folder 4, series II, 1.

<sup>42</sup>RBML, CLR James Papers, box 5, folder 2, series II, 6.

<sup>43</sup>While a classic, Alexander Erlich's three volumes still provide one of the best treatments on the internal Soviet and Bolshevik debates about the New Economic Policy and the importance of capitalism to the Soviet experiment: *The Soviet Industrialization Debate, 1924–1928* (Harvard, 1960).

<sup>44</sup>James, *State Capitalism*, 25.

that Lenin developed and tackled his ideas of state-monopoly capitalism in two books — *Imperialism* (1915) and *State and Revolution* (1917)<sup>45</sup>—and in two pamphlets — “The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It” (1917) and “The Present-Day Economy of Russia” (1918).<sup>46</sup> In both pamphlets, Lenin articulated the intellectual and practical importance of state capitalism. In the former pamphlet, Lenin argued that “state-monopoly capitalism inevitably and unavoidably implies a step ... towards socialism” because socialism was “merely the next step forward from state capitalist monopoly.”<sup>47</sup> Later in the document, Lenin was more emphatic: “state-monopoly capitalism is a complete material preparation for socialism, the threshold of socialism, a rung on the ladder of history between which and the rung called socialism there are no intermediate rungs.”<sup>48</sup> According to Lenin, there were no *degrees* of socialism; state capitalism was *the way* to socialism.

In “The Present-Day Economy of Russia,” Lenin reiterated his thoughts on state capitalism. He reminded his readers that he had discussed “‘high appreciation’ of state capitalism” in “The Threatening Catastrophe and How to Fight It” in 1917, before the Bolshevik Revolution. In making the temporal and intellectual reference, Lenin reminded his audience that state capitalism was an integral part of socialism and his conceptions of the Soviet experiment. The Bolshevik leader maintained that establishing state capitalism in the USSR within six months would ensure that socialism would “have gained a permanent firm hold and will have become invincible in this country.”<sup>49</sup> Lenin dismissed concerns that state capitalism undermined the socialist revolution or its gains. Rather, Lenin stated that the hoarding “petty bourgeois” were an “enemy of state capitalism” and that state capitalism was the “surest road” to “socialism.”<sup>50</sup>

After reading Lenin’s and Marx’s works, James chided Stalinists and orthodox Trotskyism for failing to address Marx’s and Engel’s take on state capitalism. Instead, James praised Lenin’s analysis of state capitalism as *the* Marxian model, argued that state capitalism was ubiquitous within Lenin’s writings, and claimed that one could not “escape the theoretical possibility that Russia might be a form of state capitalism.”<sup>51</sup> Whether James misread Lenin is a different question that I shall not delve into.<sup>52</sup> What is apparent is that James very much grappled with Lenin’s discussions on state capitalism. He concluded that “Lenin’s *method* of economic analysis is ours to use” and that the “problems of *production* which Lenin had to tackle in Russia in 1920 are *universal* (his italics).”<sup>53</sup> In *Nkrumah and the Ghana*

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>47</sup>Vladimir Lenin, “The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It,” in V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 25, June–Sept. 1917 (Moscow, 1964), 357–58.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 359.

<sup>49</sup>Vladimir Lenin, “The Present-Day Economy of Russia,” in V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 32, Dec. 1920–Aug. 1921 (Moscow, 1965), 330.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 332, 333.

<sup>51</sup>James, *State Capitalism*, 25, 28.

<sup>52</sup>There is a rich historiographical debate as to how to define state capitalism and whether it can be considered socialist. Karen Pfeifer, “Three Worlds or Three Worldviews? State Capitalism and Development,” *MERIP Reports* 78 (1979): 3–11, 26; H. K. Paranjape, “‘Socialism’ or ‘State Capitalism?’” *Economic and Political Weekly* 8, 4/6, annual number (1973): 319–24; Dupuy and Truchil, “Problems in the Theory of State Capitalism,” 1–38; Musacchio and Lazzarini, *Reinventing State Capitalism*, 7–9.

<sup>53</sup>James, *State Capitalism*, 93.

*Revolution*, James dedicated a chapter to the relevance of Lenin's ideas to Africa and "underdeveloped economies."<sup>54</sup> Black Marxists were not simply having conversations about race or de-colonization but also grappling with questions about political-economic development and alternative economic models. It was this James—very knowledgeable about Leninism, the internecine communist debates, and grappling with their meanings and his place within it—who met the young Kwame Nkrumah in the United States in 1943.

Dr. James Kwegyir Aggrey, a founding member of Achimota College, an elite colonial Ghanaian secondary school institution in Accra, encouraged Nkrumah to apply for a non-quota immigration visa to attend Lincoln University, a historically Black educational institution in the United States in 1935.<sup>55</sup> Perhaps to their later regret, the U.S. government granted Nkrumah the visa, and he departed from Sekondi on 6 August, arriving in America on 31 October.<sup>56</sup> Four years later, Nkrumah graduated from Lincoln with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology and Economics while studying at the Theological Seminary.<sup>57</sup> He won the Robert H. Nassau Prize for best exemplifying "the ideal of the Theological Seminary of Lincoln University in scholarship and personality."<sup>58</sup> After Lincoln, Nkrumah studied at the University of Pennsylvania, earning a Master of Science degree in Education in 1942 and a Master of Arts degree in Philosophy in 1943.<sup>59</sup>

Between 1943 and 1945 James and Nkrumah became close.<sup>60</sup> They and their friends traveled to Pennsylvania and New York City to exchange ideas with each other.<sup>61</sup> As James was peeling away from Trotskyism and engaging seriously with Lenin's and Marx's state capitalism ideas, Nkrumah attended James's Trotskyist group meetings.<sup>62</sup> James remembered that Nkrumah often talked about Leninism, imperialism, and the export of capital.<sup>63</sup> In fact, Nkrumah's dissertation committee failed his dissertation, "Mind and Thought in Primitive Society: A Study in Ethno-Philosophy,"<sup>64</sup> "on three separate occasions because it was nothing more nor less than a vicious indictment of Imperialism and could not qualify as a philosophical thesis."<sup>65</sup> This counters Marika Sherwood's suggestion that Nkrumah's dissertation

<sup>54</sup>James, *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution*.

<sup>55</sup>"Philadelphia Kingfish in West Africa," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, 30 May 1949.

<sup>56</sup>The British National Archives (TNA), FCO141/4933, 1 Apr. 1949, R. Thistlethwaite to the Director-General of the Security Service.

<sup>57</sup>Kwame Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (New York, 1957), 33.

<sup>58</sup>PRAAD-Accra, SC21/4/6, The Lincoln University Bulletin, Prizes Awarded at Commencement, 12 May 1942.

<sup>59</sup>Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 33, 34.

<sup>60</sup>RBML, C.L.R. James Papers, box 10, folder 25, series II, 3, 14. James and Nkrumah remained amicable until Nkrumah dismissed Sir Isaac Korsah from the Ghanaian judiciary in 1963 for acquitting the alleged plotters on Nkrumah's life. See James, *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution*, 180–81.

<sup>61</sup>RBML, C.L.R. James Papers, box 9, folder 9, series II.2, 1966–1967, 1072, C.L.R. James, "Kwame Nkrumah: Founder of African Emancipation," *Black World*, July 1972.

<sup>62</sup>C.L.R. James Papers, box 10, folder 25, series II. 3, James giving a talk, "George Padmore: Black Marxist Revolutionary: A Memoir by CLR James," in North London, 1976.

<sup>63</sup>Howard University, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Dabu Gizenga Collection on Kwame Nkrumah, 128-19, from Du Bois to Fanon: C.L.R. James.

<sup>64</sup>PRAAD-Accra, SC21/4/8.

<sup>65</sup>TNA, FCO141/4933, 18 Apr. 1949, E. H. Roach to the Honorable Colonial Secretary.

was rejected because it was “too pro-Communist.”<sup>66</sup> These gatherings between James, his comrades, and Nkrumah, largely invisible in the archive, are where Black Marxists debated Lenin’s state capitalist ideas, the success and failures of the Soviet New Economic Policy, Stalinism, Trotskyism, Black liberation, and imperialism. James and his colleagues must have sharpened Nkrumah’s analysis of Marxism and introduced him to some of Lenin’s more obscure writings. Nkrumah became better acquainted with Lenin’s state capitalist ideas and the Soviet experiment through moments of self-study and intellectual gatherings with James.

During those impressionable years, Nkrumah wrote “The Philosophy of Property,” which provides a window into his thinking on Marx’s ideas of private property and nationalization, and their applicability for colonial and postcolonial Ghana. For Nkrumah, land did not belong to the laborer in the Marxian sense, and the nullification of private property was impractical. He rejected the premise that a government could nationalize all lands or private property even if it deemed it necessary.<sup>67</sup>

Nkrumah sought to further his knowledge about communism and Soviet history. On 21 August 1943, he wrote to the Secretary of the Communist Party of Minnesota Carl Ross to discuss going to New York City to train at the Communist Party school. It is unclear if he ever attended. He did apply successfully to Cornell University to undertake intensive study of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1944,<sup>68</sup> but due to financial constraints he was unable to attend. Instead, he allegedly enrolled in a Communist Party School in England in either August or September of 1947.<sup>69</sup> However, in 1944, after almost a decade away from West Africa, Nkrumah felt homesick and wished to return home.<sup>70</sup> Before returning, though, he hoped to spend a few months in the Soviet Union.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, as his financial and academic problems mounted in the United States, Nkrumah decided that a change in scenery was warranted. In 1945, he moved to Britain to study law and anthropology at the London School of Economics and to engage in political activity.<sup>72</sup> Consequently, James introduced Nkrumah to his childhood friend, George Padmore, and asked him to train Nkrumah in revolutionary matters.<sup>73</sup>

According to historian Marika Sherwood, Nkrumah “received an ‘injection of Marxism’” from Padmore.<sup>74</sup> In 1945, Padmore was one of the most renowned Black

<sup>66</sup>Marika Sherwood, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Years Abroad 1935–1947* (Accra, 1996), 64.

<sup>67</sup>Nkrumah stuck to this principle as Ghana’s head of state. During the last years of World War II, he sought to further his Marxist, Communist, and Russian education. See PRAAD-Accra, SC21/1/97-112 (SC21/1/79), Kwame Nkrumah, “The Philosophy of Property.”

<sup>68</sup>PRAAD-Accra, SC1/40/96, 23 June 1944, Ernest J. Simmons to Nkrumah; Nana Osei-Opare, “Uneasy Comrades: Postcolonial Statecraft, Race, and Citizenship, Ghana-Soviet Relations, 1957–1966,” *Journal of West African History* 5, 2 (2019): 85–111, 89.

<sup>69</sup>TNA, FCO141/4933, 9 Dec. 1947, “Francis Nwia-Kofie Nkrumah alias F. B. Kwame Nkrumah,” by R.W.H. Ballantine; TNA, FCO141/4933, 21 Dec. 1947, “Note on F. N. Kwame Nkrumah (alias Francis Nwia-Kofie Nkrumah),” by K. Bradley.

<sup>70</sup>PRAAD-Accra, SC21/4/8, 6 Oct. 1944, Robert M. Laboll (name illegible) to Nkrumah.

<sup>71</sup>TNA, FCO141/4933, 1 Apr. 1949, R. Thistlethwaite to Director-General of the Security Service.

<sup>72</sup>TNA, FCO141/4933, 9 Dec. 1947, “Francis Nwia-Kofie Nkrumah alias F. N. Kwame Nkrumah,” written by Commissioner of the Gold Coast Police R.W.H. Ballantine.

<sup>73</sup>RBML, C.L.R. James Papers, box 10, folder 25, series II. 3, 14.

<sup>74</sup>Marika Sherwood, “Kwame Nkrumah: The London Years, 1945–47,” *Immigrants & Minorities* 12, 3 (1993): 164–94, 187.

Communists and Marxists of the era.<sup>75</sup> In his introductory letter to Padmore, James described Nkrumah as “not very bright.” In explaining his comments, James noted: “Nkrumah was a very sophisticated and fluent man—I didn’t mean he was a fool.... I knew he was politically sound. He was determined to throw the Europeans out of Africa and I asked [Padmore] to do what he could for him. George understood at once: This man is a born revolutionary, devoted completely.”<sup>76</sup> James argued that Nkrumah’s exploits in Ghana were only possible through Padmore’s political education and guidance. Thus, an interrogation of Padmore’s biography is necessary to sharpen our understanding of Nkrumah’s probable knowledge of state capitalism.

While at Howard University in 1927,<sup>77</sup> Padmore had joined the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA). In 1932, he moved to the Soviet Union and became one of the best-known Black Communists in the world. There, Padmore was elected a delegate to the Moscow City Soviet, lived in the Kremlin, and during the Soviet May Day celebrations sat on the platform with Stalin, Vyacheslav Molotov, and other prominent Soviet officials.<sup>78</sup> Padmore also taught at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East (KUTV), which was established to train the world’s burgeoning Communists to lead a worldwide revolution.<sup>79</sup> Padmore soon moved to Hamburg, Germany, and replaced the African American Communist James Ford as the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUCNW), also known as the Hamburg Committee.<sup>80</sup>

As the figurehead of the Hamburg Committee, Padmore both communicated to the outer reaches of what Weiss calls the “Radical African Atlantic” and sought to provide material support for possible communist or communist-leaning Africans to spread communism’s tentacles and tackle imperialism and colonialism. Due to the seeming omnipresence and repressive nature of the colonial security apparatus, these efforts were largely unsuccessful. Padmore’s relationship with the Soviet Union and the Communist International quickly soured. He quit the Bolshevik Party and its affiliate organizations and left the USSR in 1934 when the Soviets refused to defend Ethiopia against the invading Italians. Padmore returned to England and knocked on C.L.R. James’s door. James opened it and found a “disheveled” man, noting that Padmore’s “eyes were not what they ought to be.”<sup>81</sup> It was at this juncture that the Padmores’ and Nkrumah’s lives intersected.

It was here that Nkrumah encountered Dorothy Padmore, George Padmore’s partner. C.L.R. James declared that Dorothy understood Marxism as well as anyone in the Communist Party. Dorothy helped George write his books, advised him on what books to acquire, and aided him in reading his books, raising a series of

<sup>75</sup>Padmore had an extensive network of alliances. See Leslie E. James, “‘Playing the Russian Game’: Black Radicalism, the Press, and Colonial Attempts to Control Anti-Colonialism in the Early Cold War, 1946–50,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 43, 3 (2015): 509–34, 523.

<sup>76</sup>Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Kwame Nkrumah, 128–19, from Du Bois to Fanon: C.L.R. James.

<sup>77</sup>Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 38.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>79</sup>Woodford McClellan, “Africans and Black Americans in the Comintern Schools, 1925–1934,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 26, 2 (1993): 371–90 and in Maxim Matusevich, ed., *Africa in Russia, Russia in Africa: Three Centuries of Encounters* (Trenton, 2007).

<sup>80</sup>Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 455–570.

<sup>81</sup>RBML, C.L.R. James Papers, box 10, folder 25, series II 3, 7.

questions regarding the unrecognized intellectual labor of Black women.<sup>82</sup> Like James, the Padmores wrote two books, *How Russia Transformed Her Colonial Empire: A Challenge to Imperialist Powers* (1946), in collaboration with Dorothy Pizer, and *Pan-Africanism and Communism? The Coming Struggle for Africa* (1958) about the Soviet experiment and its potential impact on Africa.

Nkrumah spent “much time sitting in Padmore’s small kitchen, the wooden table completely covered by papers, discussing” politics.<sup>83</sup> George Padmore’s experiences at the heart of the Soviet experiment, the Padmores’ thoughts about the USSR, and the debates surrounding the NEP, Leninism, Stalinism, and Marxism would have been discussed with and relayed to Nkrumah. These political discussions informed Nkrumah’s ideas on Soviet approaches to economic development, de-colonization, and the viability of the Soviet and Marxist economic system in Ghana and Africa. James and the Padmores were not the only figures woven into Nkrumah’s world who ventured to the USSR; another was Bankole Awoonor-Renner.

Unlike the other comrades born outside of the African continent, Awoonor-Renner was born in Elmina, colonial Ghana, as a British colonial subject on 6 June 1898. In 1921, he went to the United States to study journalism at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pennsylvania and Booker T. Washington’s Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.<sup>84</sup> In 1924, his life fundamentally changed when he met the African American Communist Lovett Fort-Whiteman and he registered with the CPUSA the following year.<sup>85</sup> With Fort-Whiteman’s aid, he left the capitalist empire for the communist one,<sup>86</sup> around August or September<sup>87</sup> in 1925 where he underwent communist training at KUTV until 1928.<sup>88</sup>

Awoonor-Renner was the first African to study in Moscow in the 1920s.<sup>89</sup> There, he would have taken courses on “political economy” and “Leninism.”<sup>90</sup> He studied in the USSR at the height of the Soviet state capitalist development and debates. During this period, Lenin’s political-economic philosophy and the NEP surrounded him in the classroom and on the streets. In 1928, Awoonor-Renner left the USSR for Latvia and Lithuania, supposedly “posing as a journalist and representative of an American publication called ‘Asia.’”<sup>91</sup>

Despite leaving the USSR for West Africa, and being “destitute” between 1928 and 1929,<sup>92</sup> Awoonor-Renner continued to think favorably of the Soviet Union

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<sup>82</sup>RBML, C.L.R. James Papers, box 10, folder 25, series II, 3, 18; Black women’s intellectual history is a growing and exciting field. See Mia Bay, Farah Jasmin Griffin, Martha S. Jones, and Barbara Savage, eds., *Towards an Intellectual History of Black Women* (Chapel Hill, 2015); Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham, 2011); Ashley Farmer, *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era* (Chapel Hill, 2017); Merve Fejzula, “Gendered Labour, Negritude, and the Black Public Sphere,” *Historical Research* 95, 269 (2022): 423–46.

<sup>83</sup>Sherwood, “Kwame Nkrumah,” 183.

<sup>84</sup>TNA, KV2/1840, “Personality Note.”

<sup>85</sup>Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 69.

<sup>86</sup>TNA, KV2/1840, “Personality Note.”

<sup>87</sup>Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 69.

<sup>88</sup>TNA, KV2/1840, 1 Jan. 1949, written by R.A.A. Badham.

<sup>89</sup>Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic*, 72, 73.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>91</sup>TNA, KV2/1840, “Personality Note.”

<sup>92</sup>Sean Hanretta, “‘Kaffir’ Renner’s Conversion: Being Muslim in Public in Colonial Ghana,” *Past & Present* 210 (Feb. 2011): 187–220, 189; TNA, KV2/1840, “Personality Note.”

and Stalin. Moreover, he still communicated with leading Marxist intellectuals and dignitaries of the Eastern bloc. He cabled “Comrade Stalin” in 1936. In 1940, he wrote to the Soviet Ambassador in London, Ivan Maisky, congratulating him on the Soviet Union’s foreign policy in the Baltic States and suggesting that the Soviets should open a consulate in Accra.<sup>93</sup> While Padmore lived in Paris during the mid-1930s, he and Awooner-Renner were in frequent contact.<sup>94</sup> In 1943, Awooner-Renner moved to England to consult eye and heart specialists and study law at Lincoln’s Inn.<sup>95</sup> The British feared that his relationship with the USSR and communists and his strong anti-colonial pronouncements might “cause trouble to the police.”<sup>96</sup> According to British intelligence reports, Awooner-Renner remained in close contact with “known Communists” in Britain and the British Communist Party’s headquarters in London,<sup>97</sup> while frequenting the Czechoslovakia Embassy to meet “communist plotters.”<sup>98</sup>

Nkrumah and Awooner-Renner were both in England between 1945 and 1947.<sup>99</sup> Historian Basil Davidson noted that Nkrumah “further developed his ideas about socialism, talking with colleagues such as Bankole Awooner-Renner, though still in a very theoretical way.”<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, Awooner-Renner helped create the West African National Secretariat with Nkrumah. When Awooner-Renner and Nkrumah returned to West Africa, British intelligence reports suggested that Awooner-Renner convinced Nkrumah to “repudiate” the United Gold Coast Convention Party (UGCC) and to start the Convention People’s Party (CPP) in 1949.<sup>101</sup> This decision had profound repercussions for African de-colonization. Rather than the gradual approach to independence that the UGCC advocated, the CPP demanded independence now, forcing elections in the colony. We can see, now, that the two early CPP leaders—Awooner-Renner and Nkrumah—were cosmopolitan and global figures steeped in broader intellectual traditions and

<sup>93</sup>TNA, KV2/1840, 2 Nov. 1942, Gold Coast Governor to Secretary of State for the Colonies, London.

<sup>94</sup>TNA, KV2/1840, “Personality Note.”

<sup>95</sup>TNA, KV2/1840, 5 Dec. 1942, Colonial Office to L. W. Clayton.

<sup>96</sup>TNA, KV2/1840, 8 Dec. 1942, British Home Office to P. Kennedy.

<sup>97</sup>TNA, KV2/1840, 1 Jan. 1949, written by R.A.A. Badham.

<sup>98</sup>TNA, KV2/1840, 24 July 1948, written by P. F. Hancock-Kratky. The Commercial Secretary at the Czechoslovakia Embassy, informed the British Board of Trade that he believed Awooner-Renner was a “secret agent,” and was conducting business with his communist subordinates such as Miss Ruppertova, her brother, Dr. Ruppert, and Goldstuecker, a communist counsellor. See TNA, KV2/1840, 28 Sept. 1948, T.A.K. Elliot to Mr. Joy; TNA, KV2/1840, 22 Oct. 1948, Sir Percy Sillitoe to W.L.B. Monson, Chief Secretary of the West African Council.

<sup>99</sup>They were immersed in Black Communist and Pan-African circles and participated in the 1945 Pan-African Manchester Conference together, alongside Du Bois. For more information on the Black anti-colonial circles in Britain from the 1920s to the 1940s, see Matera, *Black London*; Hakim Adi, “Pan-Africanism and West African Nationalism in Britain,” *African Studies Review* 43, 1 (2000): 69–82; and *West Africans in Britain, 1900–1960: Nationalism, Pan-Africanism and Communism* (London, 1998); Paul Rich, “The Black Diaspora in Britain: Afro-Caribbean Students and the Struggle for a Political Identity, 1900–1950,” *Immigrants & Minorities* 6, 2 (1987): 151–73; Gabriel Olusanya, *The West African Students’ Union and the Politics of Decolonisation, 1925–1958* (Ibadan, 1982); David Killingray, ed., *Africans in Britain* (London, 1994); Sherwood, *Kwame Nkrumah*.

<sup>100</sup>Davidson, *Black Star*, 48.

<sup>101</sup>TNA, KV2/1840, “Extract from ‘Comments on the Secretary of State’s Despatch No.7’ of March 31, 1948; and Dennis L. Cohen, “The Convention People’s Party of Ghana Representational or Solidarity Party?,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 4, 2 (Spring 1970): 173–194, 176.

political debates, from colonial Ghana to the United States, the Soviet Union, and Britain. These intellectual traditions perturbed the British colonial government deeply.

The British monitored Nkrumah as a member of a more extensive communist network.<sup>102</sup> Their anti-communist reports suggested that Nkrumah associated “mostly with communist and other extremist groups”<sup>103</sup> and often remarked upon his communist views<sup>104</sup> and links with the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB).<sup>105</sup> They monitored Nkrumah’s calls to and from CPGB.<sup>106</sup> These observations unearthed the stark reality that he was involved in Black and white Marxist circles. His knowledge of Marxism and Marxist-Leninism was not merely confined to his Black interlocutors. Nkrumah was friendly with William Rust, the editor of the British Communist Paper the *Daily Worker*, and with Michael Carritt, the head of the British Communist Party’s Colonial Section.<sup>107</sup> Through British Communist Maud Rogerson, Nkrumah sought the CPGB’s “support ... for the West African National Congress [*sic*].”<sup>108</sup> Nkrumah possessed notebooks containing the names of numerous CPGB members, including Margot Parish, a pamphlet entitled “The Communist Party in the Factories,” a collector’s card, and a CPGB membership card.<sup>109</sup> During Nkrumah’s trial in April 1948 before the Commission of Enquiry into the Disturbances in the Gold Coast, Nkrumah admitted to attending “many of the Communist meetings” during his time in London.<sup>110</sup>

In 1954, the British colonial government banned communist literature from entering into and circulating within colonial Ghana,<sup>111</sup> but Kojo Botsio, then Minister of State for Nkrumah’s transitional government, still received communist literature despite ceremonially approving the ban.<sup>112</sup> Nkrumah had assured his fellow CPP member, Anthony Woode, that “he and his colleagues were still true ‘socialists at heart,’ and it was only force of circumstances which made them keep their opinions to themselves.” On 15 September 1953, a British Security Liaison Officer in the West Africa department noted that Marxist teachings were “ingrained” within Nkrumah’s mind and underpinned his anti-colonial and anti-imperial utterances.<sup>113</sup> On 6 July 1956, Rita Hinden, a South African London Socialist Union and Fabian Society member, wrote to Nkrumah reminiscing about their long debates about socialism

<sup>102</sup>TNA, KV 2/1847/2, 7 Apr. 1948, R. Thistlethwaite to the Director General of the Security Service.

<sup>103</sup>TNA, FCO141/4933, 12 Dec. 1947, “Extract from Enclosure B to Gold Coast Secret Dispatch Dated 12th December 1947.”

<sup>104</sup>TNA, KV2/1848/1, 14 Oct. 1949, “Comments of the Secretary of State’s Dispatch No. 7.”

<sup>105</sup>TNA, KV2/1850/3, 3 Aug. 1951, H. L. Brown to Director General.

<sup>106</sup>TNA, KV2/1847/3, “Temple Bar 2151—Communist Party Headquarters,” Nkrumah on the phone with Maud Rogerson [wiretap].

<sup>107</sup>TNA, FCO141/4993, 21 Dec. 1947, K. Bradley to Y. E.

<sup>108</sup>TNA, FCO141/4993, 12 Dec. 1947, “Extract from Enclosure B. to Gold Coast Secret Dispatch dated 12th December 1947.”

<sup>109</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup>The Commission was created to address the ex-servicemen protests and march in Accra in February 1948, which resulted in the British colonial apparatus killing several ex-servicemen. See Jarvis L. Hargrove, “*Ashanti Pioneer*: Coverage of Growing Political Developments in the Gold Coast, 1946–1949,” *Journal of West African History* 5, 2 (2019): 29–56, 44.

<sup>111</sup>TNA, KV2/1916, 30 Aug. 1954, M.J.E. Bagot to Barton.

<sup>112</sup>TNA, KV2/1916, 28 Aug. 1954, W.M.T. Megan to M.J.E. Bagot.

<sup>113</sup>Osei-Opare, “Uneasy Comrades,” 91.



during their London years. She enclosed a copy of a “controversial” book, *Twentieth Century Socialism*, by Socialist Union, a group on the right wing of the British Labour Party, which, she alleged, challenged the “old [socialist] dogmas and slogans” they were “brought up” on. Hinden concluded: “Who would have thought it possible [the imminence of self-government] when we were fighting out these battles [socialist ideas]—so bitterly and controversially among ourselves ten-years ago!”<sup>114</sup> On 15 August, Nkrumah responded: “Thank you very much indeed for the copy of ‘20<sup>th</sup> Century Socialism’ which you sent me.... as a Socialist the title appeals to me....”<sup>115</sup>

These bitter and controversial debates almost certainly centered on the correctness of the NEP, state capitalism, Trotskyism, Stalinism, and socialist economic development models. The documents underscore Nkrumah’s wide-ranging discussions with and contacts among key figures of the Marxist movements in the 1920s through the 1950s. He labeled himself a “Marxist socialist.”<sup>116</sup> More than merely a receptor of Marxist and socialist debates, Nkrumah contributed to these discourses. His links to Lenin would go beyond verbal articulations.

Nkrumah’s library possessed books such as Joseph Stalin’s *Problems of Leninism* and *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, a well-marked copy of Lenin’s *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, and the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute’s *Vladimir I. Lenin: A Political Biography*.<sup>117</sup> These texts discussed the NEP and state capitalism in some measure. For instance, *History of the Communist Party’s* chapters nine and ten were dedicated to those topics. Stalin wrote: “The Tenth Congress ... adopted the New Economic Policy (NEP). The turn from War Communism to NEP is a striking instance of the wisdom and farsightedness of Lenin’s policy.” Stalin acknowledged that the NEP entailed the “freedom of trade” and the “revival of capitalism in the country.” Even Stalin admitted that Lenin had thought it “necessary to permit private trade and to allow private manufacturers to open small businesses.... to a rapid improvement of agriculture.” Stalin declared that “the state-owned industries would be restored” and would become “the economic foundation of Socialism.”<sup>118</sup> By analyzing the remaining contents of Nkrumah’s library to consider the range of texts that may have shaped him, I take seriously the archive’s materiality and Nkrumah’s library’s remnants as historical artifacts worthy of analysis. Although we cannot prove with certainty that he read every book in his library, these collections do permit us to think about the intellectual worlds Nkrumah was exposed to during his lifetime. These political-economic philosophical debates and musings would assume a concrete character in independent Ghana, which became independent on 6 March 1957 with Nkrumah as its leader.

## Foreign Capital, Capitalism, and Socialism

At the opening of the Unilever Soap Factory in Tema, Ghana, in August 1963, Nkrumah noted, “Some people think that Capital Investment is in contradiction with

<sup>114</sup>PRAAD-Accra, RG17/1/5D, 9 July 1956, Rita Hinden to Nkrumah.

<sup>115</sup>PRAAD-Accra, RG17/1/5D, 15 Aug. 1956, Nkrumah to Rita Hinden.

<sup>116</sup>Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 13.

<sup>117</sup>PRAAD-Accra, in the basement.

<sup>118</sup>Joseph Stalin, *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York, 1939), 256–57.

our socialist aims and ideas. This is not true.”<sup>119</sup> Nkrumah maintained that capitalism and socialism were not innately contradictory, but compatible. Consequently, from the early stages of his regime’s existence, the duality of the capitalist and socialist project—state capitalism—was underway. The Ghanaian government actively pursued foreign capital and investment. Nkrumah noted that his government was thus “obliged to seek investment from abroad” to industrialize the nation. Nkrumah argued that “foreign capital” was beneficial to an “emerging developing country where large-scale sources of capital accumulation” were difficult to mobilize domestically. “Investment capital,” Nkrumah admitted, “is our great need.”<sup>120</sup> British officials agreed. They commented that Ghana lacked both the “finance for urgent development”<sup>121</sup> and “level of capital” to undertake its development schemes,<sup>122</sup> transforming its agricultural economy away from the extractive export-orientated colonial economy into a self-sufficient, modern, industrialized, socialist economy. While Ghana lacked a large local base to acquire foreign currency,<sup>123</sup> its cocoa farmers—who Polly Hill described as early colonial capitalists—were amassing wealth and producing surplus capital through the production and sale of cocoa.<sup>124</sup> Despite vigorously tapping into the cocoa farmers’ funds, this source was insufficient to build the state capitalist society Ghana’s leaders envisioned.<sup>125</sup> New streams of revenue had to be actively explored and courted.

To this end, the Ghanaian government hunted for capital from various racial groups, multi-national companies, and ideologically opposed governments. In March 1957, American Vice-President Richard Nixon and Nkrumah “discussed American economic and technical assistance.”<sup>126</sup> That same month, the Ghanaian government encouraged the Shell Oil Company to invest in Ghana.<sup>127</sup> Nkrumah and Bob Fleming, a Mobile Oil executive, also discussed how Fleming could convince “international banking firms in New York” to “give favorable consideration to” investment in Ghana. More famously, Nkrumah also conversed with American presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower and John Fitzgerald Kennedy Jr., members of the Henry J. Kaiser Company, and the Soviets to secure funds for Ghana’s Volta River

<sup>119</sup>“Our Civic Duty”: Speech by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah at the Opening of the Unilever Soap Factory at Tema on Saturday, 24 Aug. 1963.

<sup>120</sup>Kwame Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite* (New York, 1963), 101.

<sup>121</sup>PRAAD-Accra, RG17/1/5D, 30 Dec. 1957, Hector Hughes to Nkrumah.

<sup>122</sup>TNA, DO166/12, 10 Oct. 1963, S. J. Gross to V. E. Davies.

<sup>123</sup>While Ghana lacked a huge surplus, it had £200 million locked up in England’s security exchanges. From 1957–1958, its Minister of Finance Komla Agbeli Gbedemah and Chief Economic Advisor Sir W. Arthur Lewis traveled to England to retrieve Ghana’s £200 million foreign reserves from Britain’s security exchanges. British Crown Agents had mismanaged these funds. Robert L. Tignor, *W. Arthur Lewis and the Birth of Development Economics* (Princeton, 2006), 154–59; PRAAD-Accra, RG17/1/98, 18 Dec. 1957, Sir W. Arthur Lewis to Nkrumah.

<sup>124</sup>Hill, *Migrant Cocoa Farmers*.

<sup>125</sup>A. W. Osei, *Ghana National Assembly Parliamentary Debates*, 28 Oct. 1963. This process was very similar to the Soviet Union’s taxation of its *kulak* class. See Moshe Lewin, “Who Was the Soviet Kulak?” *Soviet Studies* 18, 2 (1966): 189–212, 195.

<sup>126</sup>Douglas G. Anglin, “Ghana, the West, and the Soviet Union,” *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 24, 2 (1958): 152–65, 157.

<sup>127</sup>PRAAD-Accra, RG17/1/5B, 13 Mar. 1957, A. E. Fellowes to Nkrumah.

Project.<sup>128</sup> In September 1957, Minister of Finance Komla Gbedemah met with Curtis Candy Company executives to inquire into the possibility that the Chicago-based company might establish an export-import business in Ghana.<sup>129</sup> Gbedemah also met “with the World Bank, the American consortium in New York,” and the Aluminum Limited Company in Canada to secure foreign investment.<sup>130</sup> Organizations like the American Rockefeller Brothers Fund concurrently arranged meetings and workshops to help Ghana entice “international financial organizations” to expend capital in the country.<sup>131</sup> Ghanaian officials also encouraged African Americans to provide financial capital and expertise. This was often framed in terms of racial solidarity and uplift.<sup>132</sup> The African American magazine *Ebony* published a March 1958 edition that encouraged its readers to invest in Ghana, and its message seemed to find fertile soil. After reading the issue, African American businessman John M. Scott contacted Nkrumah, on 2 March, about the “possibilities of [establishing] a garment industry” in Ghana.<sup>133</sup> Historian Keri Lambert wrote that Nkrumah also requested state-farm financial assistance from the Soviets and the Americans.<sup>134</sup> C.L.R. James informed an audience that Ghana’s policy was “to say quite frankly to capitalism, particularly, fast capitalism: we need you.”<sup>135</sup>

The Ghanaian government also created tax-friendly policies for foreign companies to channel money into the country. Ghana’s 1958–1959 budget provided tax incentives to attract foreign investment. In explaining the budget, Gbedemah stressed the importance of “private capital” and “reducing the company tax” to support “pioneer industries” and industrialization.<sup>136</sup> In April 1960, the government removed exchange controls “of money coming from outside the sterling area by companies with authorized capital of £15,000 or less,” and

<sup>128</sup>Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*, 115; Thomas J. Noer, “The New Frontier and African Neutralism: Kennedy, Nkrumah, and the Volta River Project,” *Diplomatic History* 8, 1 (1984): 61–79; T. E. Hilton, “Akosombo Dam and the Volta River Project,” *Geography* 51, 3 (1966): 251–54; Miescher, “Nkrumah’s Baby,” 341–66; Dzodzi Tsikata, *Living in the Shadow of the Large Dams: Long Term Responses of Downstream and Lakeside Communities of Ghana’s Volta River Project* (Leiden, 2006), 37–84; Miescher, *A Dam for Africa*; Russian Foreign Ministry Archive (AVP RF), d. 250, op. 4, por. 25, p. 5, 23 Mar. 1960.

<sup>129</sup>PRAAD-Accra, RG17/1/5B, 25 Jan. 1958, Portia D. Spencer to Nkrumah.

<sup>130</sup>Anglin, “Ghana, the West, and the Soviet Union,” 158.

<sup>131</sup>PRAAD-Accra, RG17/1/5B, 1957/1958 (date unclear), Bob Fleming to Nkrumah.

<sup>132</sup>Edmund G. Hutchinson, the Assistant Administrator for Africa Bureau Aid, noted in a 29 April 1964 report, “American Congressional Hearing for the Foreign Operations Appropriations for 1965,” that African Americans showed a “very significant interest in employment in Africa.” See PRAAD-Accra RG17/1/420.

<sup>133</sup>PRAAD-Accra, RG17/1/5B, 2 Mar. 1958, John M. Scott to Nkrumah. Furthermore, Sir W. Arthur Lewis wrote to Nkrumah that while he was pleased to have Scott’s factory in Ghana, that he could not “offer any special privileges to Mr. Scott.” See *Ibid.*, 17 Mar. 1958, Sir W. Arthur Lewis to Nkrumah. For a more detailed account of African Americans in Ghana during the Nkrumah era, see Kevin Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill, 2006).

<sup>134</sup>Keri Lambert, “It’s All Work and Happiness on the Farms: Agricultural Development Between the Blocs in Nkrumah’s Ghana,” *Journal of African History* 60, 1 (2018): 25–44. I have also written elsewhere about Ghana’s attempts to secure funding from the USSR. See Osei-Opare, “Uneasy Comrades.” Alessandro Iandolo also examines economic development schemes between Ghana and the Soviet Union. See Alessandro Iandolo, *Arrested Development: The Soviet Union in Ghana, Guinea, and Mali, 1955–1968* (Ithaca, 2022).

<sup>135</sup>James, *Nkrumah and the Ghanaian Revolution*, 170.

<sup>136</sup>Tignor, *W. Arthur Lewis*, 159.

guaranteed companies “permission to remit profits and repatriate capital from Ghana.”<sup>137</sup> In 1963, the Ghanaian government passed the Capital Investments Act, which removed the requirement that companies re-invest 60 percent of their profits after tax to Ghana.<sup>138</sup> Nkrumah hailed the Act’s success in “encouraging ... many private investors ... to flock in with proposals to establish business[es] in Ghana.”<sup>139</sup> The British conservative newspaper the *Daily Telegraph* acknowledged that Ghana’s “lifting of ... re-investment regulations” would enable British corporations like the Ashanti Goldfield Company and the Consolidated African Selection Trust, a diamond group, to continue “to make large investments in Ghana.”<sup>140</sup> These measures prompted the British *Financial Times* to highlight the numerous concessions Ghana was making to “foreign investors and would-be investors.”<sup>141</sup>

Despite assertions that Ghana was anti-capitalist, conservative and anti-communist contemporaries recognized Nkrumah’s economic agenda in relation to foreign capital and investment. For instance, on 19 September 1962, the United Party, led Dr. K. A. Busia, an exiled political opponent, released a memorandum calling for the Ghanaian government to eschew “communist dogmas and practices.”<sup>142</sup> The following month, the Ghana Students’ Association of the Americas expressed anxiety that Ghana’s “policies and actions” were “drifting the country more and more into the Communist fold.” The students expressed grave concern that the “Nkrumah regime’s socialist planning ... endangered Ghana’s economic progress through misconceived and misdirected economy plans.”<sup>143</sup> On 8 January 1964, the *New York Times* published an article entitled, “Ghana Is Viewed as Going Marxist,” alleging that “Diplomats in Accra ... almost unanimously” concluded that Ghana “is rapidly becoming an undisguised Marxist state” and that Ghana had engaged in a “Total War” on “Capitalism.”<sup>144</sup> Yet, the American ambassador to Ghana, Wilson Flake, repudiated overzealous Western press reports and “red-baiting” within the American government that Nkrumah was anti-capitalist, and the U.S. State Department concluded that Ghana pursued “a mixed economy in which private capital is active and foreign investment welcomed.”<sup>145</sup> British officials and the British conservative press made similar assessments. On 16 October 1963, the *Daily Telegraph* conceded

<sup>137</sup>TNA, LAB13/1409, 19 Apr. 1960, inward telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office.

<sup>138</sup>TNA, DO166/12, 16–18 Oct. 1963, Acting High Commissioner in Accra to Ghana Fortnight Summary Distribution.

<sup>139</sup>“Ghana’s President Reviews Progress in Ghana,” *The African Chronicle: A Diary of Weekly Events in Africa* 1, 21 (3–9 Oct. 1963): 278.

<sup>140</sup>“Flexibility for Companies,” *Daily Telegraph*, 16 Oct. 1963.

<sup>141</sup>“Ghana Concession to Foreign Investors,” *Financial Times*, 16 Oct. 1963.

<sup>142</sup>Hoover Archives Institution Library & Archives (Hoover Archives), Jay Lovestone Papers, box 73.18, “Aims of Dr. K. A. Busia’s United Party,” 19 Sept. 1962.

<sup>143</sup>Hoover Archives, Jay Lovestone Papers, box 73.18, Ghana Students’ Association of the Americas, “Democracy at the Crossroad: The Ghana Scene,” 1 Oct. 1962.

<sup>144</sup>“Ghana Is Viewed as Going Marxist; Regime Proclaiming ‘Total War’ on Capitalism,” *New York Times*, 8 Jan. 1964.

<sup>145</sup>Hoover Archives, Karl August Wittfogel Papers, box 203, folder 203.4, cited in Senator Thomas J. Dodd’s introduction in “Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and other Internal Security Laws,” “Ghana Students in United States Oppose U.S. Aid to Nkrumah,” 19 Aug. 1963, and 11 Jan. 1964, 3.

that Ghana “continued to ... welcome” private investors as long as they were “fair to us [Ghana].”<sup>146</sup>

While crisscrossing the globe to secure capital, Ghana’s leaders remained wary of capital’s ability to destabilize the new state’s sovereignty. In attracting “capital,” Nkrumah was very adamant that Ghana would be “continually ... alert to ensure that” it did not “subordinate [itself] to a new form of imperialism.”<sup>147</sup> The crux of Ghana’s economic and political problem was: “how to obtain capital-investment and still keep it under sufficient control to prevent undue exploitation; and how to preserve integrity and sovereignty without crippling economic or political ties to any country, bloc or system.”<sup>148</sup> While the Ghanaian government made foreign investment “as attractive as possible,”<sup>149</sup> the government maintained it was pursuing a socialist developmentalist path.

For socialism’s backers, Ghana’s pursuit of capitalism was not jarring or contradictory; it was merely a part of the state capitalist agenda. The Director of Ghana’s Television department, Shirley Graham Du Bois, argued that Ghana’s Seven-Year Development Plan was designed “to build a socialist state.”<sup>150</sup> She admitted that the Ghanaian government “was undertaking socialist planning and trying to introduce socialist practices in a land just escaping colonialism, a people still burdened with the practices and mentality of colonialism (her emphasis).”<sup>151</sup> In an interview with the *BBC Network of Africa* in 1979, Imoru Egala, the former Minister of Industries in Nkrumah’s cabinet, reminded his questioner that Ghana had a “mixed economy” under Nkrumah, where the state did not own most of the means of production.<sup>152</sup> In a letter to the editor of the *Nkrumaist* in 1965, George Kwaku Duah, from Benin-Mampong Ashanti, praised the country’s socialist state capitalist agenda in part for the “great strides in industrial development, education, health, communication, and living standards.”<sup>153</sup> Socialism was seen as a vehicle to lead toward postcolonial nirvana, and it had to penetrate every sphere of public and private life. In 1965, the CPP political activist J. Oforu Appiah observed that Ghana was changing from a “corrupted system of society like colonialism to a progressive system—socialism.”<sup>154</sup> For these Afro-socialists, there was no intellectual contradiction in pursuing socialism and capitalism—Lenin and his comrades had already broken that intellectual barrier.

## Conclusion

While visiting the USSR in July 1961, Nkrumah declared that he was making every effort to “Leninize” not just Ghana but also Africa.<sup>155</sup> The Bolshevik revolution and

<sup>146</sup>“Ghana Invites Investment,” *Daily Telegraph*, 16 Oct. 1963.

<sup>147</sup>Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*, 101.

<sup>148</sup>*Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>149</sup>*Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>150</sup>Howard University, MSRC, Kwame Nkrumah papers, series B, Conakry Correspondence, box 3 file 56, Shirley DuBois, 1967 (154-3- file folder 56), Shirley Graham Du Bois, “A Careful Look at Ghana,” 3.

<sup>151</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>152</sup>“We Are all Socialists,” *West Africa*, 30 Apr. 1979.

<sup>153</sup>George Kwaku Duah, “Letter to the Editor,” *Nkrumaist*, Jan./Feb. 1965 42.

<sup>154</sup>J. Oforu Appiah, “From Colonialism to Socialism,” *Nkrumaist*, Jan./Feb. 1965, 26.

<sup>155</sup>AVP RF, d. 142, op. 5, por. 16, p. 7, 16 July 1961.

Lenin's ideas about state capitalism offered fascinating possibilities and unmasked troubling realities for these global Black intellectuals and Marxists. While Pan-Africanism, anti-racism, de-colonization, and global Black liberation movements and ideas were essential components of Black people's relationships to the Soviet Union and Leninist thought, they were not the only significant dimensions of those relationships. Black people in the USSR in the 1920s and 1930s absorbed its economic and intellectual happenings. The complexities of the Soviet experience and Lenin's ideas dominated the intellectual circles that Black socialists and Marxists traversed. While James and the Padmores would repudiate particular factions and intellectual trajectories of Marxism or the Soviet experiment, they reached this juncture after close scrutiny of the Communist movement and that experiment. Whether Black Marxists considered the Soviet experiment a betrayal of, or as necessary to, the Bolshevik Revolution, they lived at a time of fantastical political-economic experimentation and debate. These Black sojourners transported these experiences and ideas with them to their compatriots. Under the glare and weight of imperial eyes and might, Black Marxists collapsed intellectual and geographic borders. Their epistemological and physical footprints traversed the multi-focal metropolitan and rural centers of the globe.

Nkrumah would come to know and refine his ideas about Lenin's state capitalist ideas and the Soviet experiment from his conversations with global Black Marxists. He was a self-proclaimed socialist who keenly engaged with Russian and Soviet affairs. From 1957–1966, Nkrumah's administration pursued a state capitalist project to construct a new, vibrant, and thriving society against the hydra of imperialism, colonialism, neocolonialism, and white supremacy. Unlike how David Rooney or Steve Metz have portrayed the Ghanaian economic program,<sup>156</sup> it was distinctively not against capitalism or foreign capital per se, but only the complex ways in which foreign capital and capitalism—operating primarily through older colonial and new imperial, transnational economic forms—could exploit the new nation and its inhabitants. This fine but important theoretical and practical distinction is important in reexamining the early years of the Ghanaian state. Contrary to Rodney's assessment, that state's pursuit of socialism and capitalism was not a contradictory policy but rather was deeply rooted in Black Marxist understandings of Lenin's state capitalist ideas. By examining Nkrumah's links to Lenin's state capitalist ideas, this paper has offered a new window into the wide array of intellectual influences that shaped the Ghanaian state and its larger-than-life leader. By doing so, it frees African political-economic theories from the confines of the Atlantic circuit.<sup>157</sup>

<sup>156</sup>See David Rooney, *Kwame Nkrumah: Vision and Tragedy* (Accra, 2007), 236; and Metz, "In Lieu of Orthodoxy," 386.

<sup>157</sup>Mamadou Diouf's and Jinny Prais's compelling call to insert Black intellectuals' interventions into global intellectual history is situated within the corners of the Atlantic Ocean's corners; see their "'Casting the Badge of Inferiority Beneath Black Peoples' Feet': Archiving and Reading the African Past, Present, and Future in World History," in Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, eds., *Global Intellectual History* (New York, 2013).

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