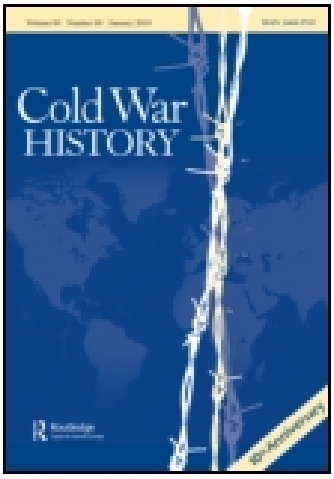
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The rise and fall of the 'Soviet Model of Development' in West Africa, 1957-64

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The rise and fall of the 'Soviet Model of Development' in West Africa, 1957–64

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Between 1957 and 1964 the Soviet Union tried to export to West Africa a model of economic and social development. Moscow's policy was driven by the conviction that socialism was a superior economic system, and could be replicated in Ghana and Guinea. However, Soviet confidence in the project was undermined by the unreliability of local leaders, and by the Congo crisis. Combining Soviet and Ghanaian sources, this article shows the importance of modernisation in the Third World for Moscow's foreign policy during the Khrushchev era. Moreover, the setback in West Africa taught the Soviet leadership crucial lessons: the importance of supporting ideologically reliable leaders and the necessity of building military strength.

Introduction

The study of Soviet policy in West Africa during the Khrushchev era has received limited attention from Cold War scholars. The first pioneering account by Robert Legvold, published in 1970, was not followed by other works due to a lack of accessible sources and declining interest in Moscow's policy in the Third World after the collapse of the Soviet Union.[1] Only very recently Sergey Mazov published a history of Soviet engagement with Ghana, Guinea, Mali, and Congo, drawing on Russian and Western sources.[2] Building on Legvold and Mazov's works, this article focuses on the Soviet attempt to export a model of development to Ghana and Guinea, using recently declassified Russian, Ghanaian and British documents as sources.

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[1] Legvold, *Soviet Policy in West Africa* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).

[2] Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War. The USSR in West Africa and the Congo, 1956–1964*, ed. James H. Hershberg, Cold War International History Project (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

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Moscow's engagement in West Africa during the Khrushchev era is an important case to study for a number of reasons. First of all, the USSR's relations with newly independent Ghana and Guinea represented the first instance of significant Soviet engagement in sub-Saharan Africa. Second, as this article will show, the Soviet aim was to export to Ghana and Guinea a model of economic development based on socialist principles. Moscow's expectation was to use West Africa as a base from which to expand further its model of 'non-capitalist' development to other regions of Africa and the Third World. Although Soviet aid to West Africa was less substantial in absolute terms than aid to other areas of the Third World, the small size of Ghana's and Guinea's economies meant that their development strategies were critically dependent on economic cooperation with the Soviet Union. This was not the case with larger Third World countries that received aid from the Soviet Union, such as Egypt and Indonesia, meaning that Ghana and Guinea met the ideal conditions to test the 'socialist model of development'.

However, the model was not successful, and the frustration of Moscow's expectations had important consequences for the development of Soviet policy in the Third World. The failure of the modernisation project in Ghana and Guinea modified Soviet assumptions on the reliability of local allies, whose incompetence was blamed for the lack of success. Moreover, the negative impact of the Congo crisis on Soviet policy in West Africa highlighted the importance of 'hard power' to build influence in the Third World. Moscow would apply the lessons drawn from the disappointing experience in West Africa to policy towards the Third World in the next decade.

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The Soviet Union in 1957

In 1957 Nikita Khrushchev appeared to be in full control of the USSR's foreign policy. He had been First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) since 1953, and had begun the process of de-Stalinisation in 1956. By June 1957, he had finally defeated powerful adversaries such as Georgy Malenkov and Vyacheslav Molotov who challenged his leadership and his views on foreign policy. No one now had enough influence or prestige in the Kremlin to disagree with the First Secretary's line.[3]

Khrushchev was thus at the head of a stronger, increasingly more self-confident country. The USSR's economy had been growing at higher rates than the Western economies since the end of the war; Soviet advancements in science and technology culminated in the launch of the *Sputnik*, which amazed the whole world, and the Virgin Lands campaign – a huge effort aimed at expanding the amount of Soviet land used for agriculture by establishing state farms in the 'virgin lands' of western Siberia and of the Kazakh Republic of the USSR – was producing record harvests. In short, the USSR 'was arguably the second most successful economy in the world', after Japan.[4]

[3] Aleksandr A Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 144–49.

[4] Robert C. Allen, 'The Rise and Decline of the Soviet Economy,' *The Canadian Journal of Economics / Revue canadienne d'Economique* 34, no. 4 (2001): 861.

Being more confident about the USSR's economic strength, Khrushchev now sought to change the terms of the competition with the United States. He launched the notion of 'peaceful coexistence', which meant renouncing the idea of a military confrontation with the West in favour of a competition between economic models, that is, between liberal capitalism and Soviet socialism as contrasting ways to organise society and production. Given the recent Soviet economic and technological exploits, Khrushchev was convinced that the USSR could win such a competition.

The Third World was to play a crucial role for the triumph of socialism over capitalism as a system of life. Khrushchev and other Kremlin leaders thought that it was possible to apply to the newly independent countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America the same principles that had allowed the Soviet Union to turn from one of Europe's most backward nations into an industrialised superpower. Indeed, the Soviet leadership had been very active in courting the members of the emerging 'neutral' bloc during the previous two years. Khrushchev and Soviet Premier Nikolai Bulganin had embarked in 1954–55 on a series of official visits to India, Burma, and Afghanistan (as well as Yugoslavia), with the intent of showing the USSR's friendly attitude towards the developing countries and to signal Moscow's readiness to help them in their quest for modernisation and development.

Khrushchev's dream was as simple as it was visionary: once the developing world saw the full economic potential of socialism, it would turn its back on the capitalist and colonialist West, and adopt socialism as a way of life. This would mean the final victory of state planning and production over free markets and private enterprise. As Khrushchev himself declared during his visit to India in 1955, 'let us verify in practice whose system is better, [. . .] We say to the leaders of the capitalist states: let us compete without war'.[5]

The Soviet Union's economic help to Third World countries came in an attractive form. The loans from Moscow carried low interest rates and could be paid back over a long time, usually after the completion of the project. Furthermore, these debts could be repaid in local currency, or even using 'traditional exports' (rice, cotton, cocoa, etc.), a real blessing for countries short of hard currency. Finally, the USSR 'never sought any equity or share of the profits or participation in the management of the project built with its assistance'.[6] The USSR's economic offensive gained considerable popularity among Third World regimes, to the point that the British Foreign Office in late 1955 dubbed Soviet loans as a 'sinister new phenomenon very attractive to small countries' that could even be 'gravely more menacing than the supply of armaments'.[7]

These were major shifts from the rigid dogmatism of Stalin's years that had prevented the USSR from seeking alliances with national liberation movements on the grounds that they were bourgeois in character, whereas the Soviet Union could support only

[5] Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, 57.

[6] Elizabeth K. Valkenier, *The Soviet Union and the Third World. An Economic Bind* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1983), 8.

[7] United Kingdom National Archives (henceforth, UKNA), FO371/116655.

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truly working class organisations. Under Khrushchev a crucial ideological 'revolution' took place: influential Soviet leaders such as Boris Ponomarev, head of the International Department of the CPSU and Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee since 1961, theorised the opportunity of an anti-Western alliance with the 'nationalistic' leaders of the newly independent countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Even though leaders such as Nasser, Nehru, and Sukarno were not Marxist-Leninists, they were strongly opposed to the imperialist powers of the West, and they looked with favour at the emergence of societies founded on a closed economy largely controlled by the state – the kind of socio-economic reforms that the Soviet Union endorsed. Following this model, Ponomarev believed, the 'national democracies' of the Third World would eventually reach socialism as defined by Moscow.[8] Freed from Stalin's restrictive interpretation of Marxism-Leninism and bolstered by its economic and technological successes, the Soviet Union was thus ready to make its debut in Africa.

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Phase one: engagement, 1957–59

Sub-Saharan Africa had been largely ignored by Soviet foreign policy in the previous decades. The Soviet Union had had minimal exchanges with the independent or quasi-independent countries in the continent, while Stalin's policies never fully supported the existing communist parties and movements in Africa.[9] As a consequence, Soviet expertise about Africa was extremely limited. There were no African specialists in the party and in the state apparatus, and policymaking had to rely on academics and researchers brought in from Soviet universities and research centres. However, despite the lack of specialised knowledge, Africa seemed to offer bright prospects for the Soviet Union in the late 1950s.

Ghana

In March 1957 the British colony of the Gold Coast became an independent state – the first in sub-Saharan Africa – with the name Ghana. Kwame Nkrumah became the first Prime Minister of independent Ghana. Although not a Marxist-Leninist, Nkrumah had radical ideas. His rhetoric was uncompromising in condemning colonialism, in advocating African unity, and he made reference to the fact that socialism was the system that better fitted African traditional values.[10]

[8] Boris N. Ponomarev, 'O gosudarstve natsionalnoi demokratii,' *Kommunist* 8, no. 33–48 (1961).

[9] The only communist party in sub-Saharan Africa was the Communist Party of South Africa, which was declared illegal in 1950. However, since the late 1940s there were communist parties in most of French North Africa and in Sudan, as well as movements and trade unions of socialist inspiration in Egypt and also in French West Africa. See: Stephen Ellis and Tsepo Sechaba, *Comrades Against Apartheid. The ANC and the South African Communist Party in Exile* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992); Guy Pfeffermann, 'Trade Unions and Politics in French West Africa during the Fourth Republic,' *African Affairs* 66, no. 264 (1967); Elizabeth Schmidt, 'Cold War in Guinea: the Rassemblement Democratique Africain and the Struggle Over Communism, 1950–1958,' *Journal of African History* 48, no. 1 (2007).

[10] Nkrumah, *Axioms of Kwame Nkrumah* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1967).

Given Nkrumah's background and the recent successes that the USSR had recently enjoyed in courting newly independent states, it was predictable that Moscow looked with interest at Ghana's independence.[11] State Farms Minister Ivan Benediktov was chosen as the Soviet representative to attend Ghana's independence celebrations in March 1957. Benediktov was not a top Kremlin leader, and the contrast with the Americans, who sent Vice-President Richard Nixon to Accra, was certainly striking. Indeed, Washington opted for Nixon with the precise goal of showing great commitment to West Africa – because of the fear of possible Soviet penetration.[12]

However, sending the Minister of State Farms to Ghana followed a precise logic in Moscow's plans. Benediktov – who had briefly acted as ambassador to India in 1953 – was in fact an important figure for Soviet agricultural policy. He had been the Minister of Agriculture when the 'Virgin Lands' campaign was launched, and had actively participated in its design. At the time of his visit to Ghana, Benediktov was the head of the Soviet state farms programme, which played a crucial role in Moscow's push to boost the productivity of its agriculture. The Presidium deliberately chose an agriculture expert as the USSR envoy to the first independent state in sub-Saharan Africa: this followed from the way in which the Kremlin leadership thought about the Third World. Benediktov was meant to travel to Ghana and speak to Nkrumah about the great achievements of Soviet agriculture, which in the Soviet view were perfectly replicable in West Africa.[13] According to the Soviet discourse prevalent at the time, through projects such as the Virgin Lands campaign, previously economically and socially backward regions had been transformed into productive, modern communities that used the most up-to-date techniques of cultivation and irrigation. Khrushchev and the Presidium were convinced that what had been attained in the Central Asian Republics of the USSR would be possible in West Africa too, as long as the local leaders were ready to rely on Soviet guidance and on the same principles of state management and collective enterprise.[14]

Nkrumah seemed the ideal leader to be willing to test the possibilities of socialism in Africa. In his writings and speeches, the Ghanaian Prime Minister had often stated that political independence – independence from the European colonial masters – was just the first step on the way to full independence, which comprised economic autonomy: only through developing a modern economy that was not tied to foreign control could

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[11] UKNA, FO371/125321, A.H.F. Rumbold to F.E. Cumming-Bruce, 7 January 1957.

[12] Arkhiv Vneshnei Politiki Rosiiskoi Federatsii (henceforth, AVP RF), fond 573, opis 1, papka 1, delo 3, listy 1–3. In Apollon Davidson and Sergey Mazov, eds., *Rossiya i Afrika. Dokumenty i Materialy, XVIII v. - 1960 g.*, vol. II: 1918 – 1960 gg. (Moscow: IVI RAN, 1999), 179–81. John P. Glennon and Stanley Shaloff, eds., *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1955–1957 - Africa*, vol. XVIII (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1989), 362–65, 72–74.

[13] UKNA, FO371/125294, 'U.K. High Commission in Ghana, Fortnightly Report for the Period 6th–20th March – Part II', 26 March 1957.

[14] For a description of the Virgin Lands campaign and its meaning for the Soviet Union according to Khrushchev himself: Nikita S. Khrushchev, *Dva Tsveta Vremeni*, ed. A. N. Yakovlev, 2 vols., vol. 2, Rossiya. XX Vek Dokumenty (Moscow: Mezhdunarodniy Fond 'Demokratiya', 2009), 56.

a newly independent state really be free. Nkrumah wanted rapid modernisation; in effect a forced march to progress that would be accomplished in just one generation thus making the Third World truly independent.[15] Therefore, although the Ghanaian leader was a strong advocate of neutrality, the Soviet experience of transformation of a peasant country into a nuclear superpower in a short time could not leave Nkrumah indifferent.

Nevertheless, in spite of the encouraging signs, Benediktov's stay in Accra was not particularly successful. The Soviet envoy formally requested the opening of Soviet diplomatic representation in Ghana, and he also proposed that a 'goodwill' delegation from Ghana visit the USSR in the near future. Benediktov directly invited the Ghanaian Minister of Agriculture to take part in the visit – a confirmation that his main task was to show off Soviet progress in agriculture.[16] Furthermore, according to American 'unverified intelligence', he put forward the proposal to increase Soviet purchases of Ghanaian cocoa.[17] However, nearly all of Benediktov's proposals were postponed to an undefined date: the Ghanaians seemed in principle interested in building up relations with Moscow, but when it came to concrete agreements they gave very vague assurances about future exchanges. Western and Ghanaian documents show how both Britain and the US exercised considerable pressure on Nkrumah and his government to try to keep the USSR out of Ghana for as long as possible. London and Washington sent the clear message that the West was ready to provide aid to Ghana, but only as long as Accra resisted any temptation to create closer links to the socialist bloc.[18]

The situation did not significantly improve over the next two years, despite continuous Soviet efforts to obtain a breakthrough in establishing formal relations with newly independent Ghana. The USSR kept insisting on establishing a Soviet embassy in Ghana and initiating trade relations and some degree of economic cooperation, especially in the field of agriculture and small-scale industry. Ghanaian replies were courteous, but mostly aimed at gaining time. Nkrumah and his officials never expressly ruled out the official exchange of diplomatic representatives, and never denied their interest in cooperating with the USSR, but they always tried to be as vague and generic as possible when discussing a potential timeframe for specific agreements.[19]

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[15] Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (Endinburgh: T. Nelson, 1957), x.

[16] UKNA, FO371/125294, 'U.K. High Commission in Ghana, Fortnightly Report for the Period 6th–20th March – Part II', 26 March 1957. AVP RF, f. 573, op. 1, p. 1, d. 3, l. 9. Ghanaian Public Records and Archive Administration (PRAAD), ADM/13/2/44, 14 January 1958.

[17] Glennon and Shaloff, *FRUS, 1955–1957 - Africa*, 373.

[18] *FRUS, 1955–1957 - Africa*, 373, 378.

[19] AVP RF, f. 573, op. 1, p. 1, d. 3, l. 9–14; f. 573, op. 1, p. 1, d. 4, l. 1–15; f. 573, op. 2, p. 1, d. 3, l. 1–10. PRAAD, ADM/13/1/26, 30 August 1957; ADM/13/2/40, 30 August 1957; ADM/13/1/27, 14 January 1958. UKNA, FO371/131187, M.E. Allen to H.F.T. Smith, 25 June 1958; FO371/131188, J.R.A. Bottomley to J.H. Ellis, 22 August 1958. Harriet D. Schwar and Stanley Shaloff, eds., *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1958–1960 - Africa*, vol. XIV (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1992), 652.

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Washington and London meanwhile exercised continuous pressure on the Ghanaian government to delay the establishment of relations with the USSR, and this played a pivotal role in obstructing Soviet plans.[20] Even when Mikhail Sytenko was finally authorised to become the first Soviet ambassador to Ghana on 10 April 1959, the Accra government imposed a strict quantitative limit on Soviet personnel in the embassy, as Britain and the USA had advocated.[21] Furthermore, the roots of Ghana's reliance on the West went even deeper than simple Western diplomatic pressure. Several Soviet observers reported to Moscow how Ghana's independence was far from complete. The ruling Convention People's Party (CPP) and its leader Nkrumah were hugely popular in the country, and generally had an anti-colonial stance. However, London's influence in Ghana was still very strong: Ghanaian institutions were in fact modelled on their British equivalents and a large part of the ruling class was British-educated. Moreover, a British general commanded the army, the police were largely British-trained and all the local media received information from British sources. Moreover, the situation of Ghana's economy deeply concerned Moscow. In the Soviet assessment, Ghana was a 'typically colonial' economy based on the production and export of a single commodity: cocoa beans. The cocoa trade was dominated by a monopolistic company – the Cocoa Marketing Company, based in London – that managed the sale of the whole of Ghanaian production, mainly to British businesses. This made Ghana largely dependent on Britain, which was the main source of its foreign revenue and virtually the only source of precious foreign currency. Furthermore, Ghana hoped to receive development aid from Britain and the United States, in order to build a hydroelectric complex on the Volta River. The Accra government was therefore unwilling to risk alienating London and Washington by openly developing closer relations with the Soviet Union.[22]

The USSR tried to break the British monopoly on cocoa trade in 1959, when Moscow proposed to the Accra government the exchange of Soviet machinery and technology for Ghanaian cocoa beans. The Soviet Union had already signed several barter agreements of the same kind, which were usually looked at with favour by newly independent countries, for they could obtain technology without the need to deplete their limited reserves of foreign currency. However, Ghana did not accept the terms of the agreement that the Soviet Union proposed. In the end, Moscow had to purchase Ghanaian cocoa using hard currency rather than by barter, and Ghana could afford to buy only a limited quantity of Soviet goods. The main reason behind Accra's rejection of Moscow's offer was British opposition. The terms initially brought forward by the

[20] Glennon and Shaloff, *FRUS, 1955–1957 – Africa*, 383. UKNA, FO371/131187, 'From Foreign Office to Khartoum', 28 February 1958; FO371/135273, M.E. Allen to P. Hayman, 25 March 1958;

[21] Rossiskiy Gosudartvenniy Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii (henceforth, RGANI), fond 5, opis 30, delo 336, list 69. Extracts in Apollon B. Davidson, Sergey Mazov, and Georgiy Tsypkin, eds., *SSSR i Afrika, 1918–1960: dokumentirovannaia istoriia vzaimootnoshenii* (Moscow: IVI RAN, 2002), 176.

[22] AVP RF, f. 573, op. 2, p. 1, d. 6, l. 2–29, 49–51; f. 573, op. 2, p. 1, d. 8, l. 3–8. Last document in Davidson and Mazov, *Rossiya i Afrika, Tom II*, 181–85.

USSR had to be reviewed by the Cocoa Marketing Company, which had no objection to Ghana selling its cocoa to the Soviet Union – as long as the price was not agreed in advance, but set by the Company instead, which made bartering virtually impossible.[23]

Competing with the West in Ghana proved to be much more difficult than Moscow had hoped when the country became independent. Ghana's economic dependence on the West, which prevented its government from seeking potentially advantageous agreements with the USSR, could be overcome only with great political willingness from Accra, and at the likely risk, which Nkrumah was not ready to run, of losing Western economic support. Nonetheless, the situation in Ghana still offered prospects of improvement from the Soviet point of view. Nkrumah and a large part of the CPP aimed to reduce progressively the influence of British advisers and lobbies. In particular, Nkrumah made no mystery that he desired to increase his personal power – even at the expense of political freedom – so to be able to implement his ideas for the development of Ghana.[24] Whilst waiting for a more promising internal situation in Ghana, Moscow's hopes in West Africa were becoming increasingly more focused on another newly independent state: Ahmed Sékou Touré's Guinea.

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Guinea

Compared to Ghana, the development of relations between Guinea and the Soviet Union was considerably more rapid and smoother. Guinea became fully independent on 2 October 1958, having rejected in a referendum President Charles De Gaulle's proposal to stay in the French Community. Sekou Touré, leader of the *Parti Démocratique de Guinée* (PDG), became president of the newly founded Republic of Guinea.

Touré was certainly a very radical leader. He deeply resented colonialism and pushed for a complete breach from France, contrary to Ghana that maintained close links to Britain after independence. Touré, moreover, was definitely left-leaning and was regarded positively by the French Communist Party, which judged him very close to Marxism.[25] It was therefore no surprise that the USSR rapidly extended formal recognition to the new state.[26] The PDG government soon manifested a strong interest

[23] AVP RF, f. 573, op. 3, p. 1, d. 10, l. 1–7; RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 336, l. 69. In Davidson, Mazov, and Tsypkin, *SSSR i Afrika*, 176–77. 'Vneshnyaya Torgovlya SSSR za 1959–1963 gody,' ed. Ministerstvo Vneshnei Torgovli SSSR (Moscow: Vneshtorgnzdat, 1965), 430–33. PRAAD, ADM/13/1/28, 5 June 1959; 9 June 1959; ADM/13/2/61, 5 June 1959.

[24] AVP RF, f. 573, op. 3, p. 2, d. 3, l. 1–16; d. 4, l. 1–6; f. 573 d. 5, l. 2–41, 100–103; f. 573, op. 3-a, p. 3, d. 4, l. 1–46; f. 573, op. 3-a, p. 3, d. 6, l. 4–6; f. 573, op. 3-a, p. 3, d. 7, l. 1–7.

[25] AVP RF, f. 575, op. 1, p. 1, d. 2, l. 19. In Davidson, Mazov, and Tsypkin, *SSSR i Afrika*, 200.

[26] V.A. Brykin, ed. *SSSR i Strany Afriki, 1946–1962 gg. Dokumenty i Materialy*, 2 vols., vol. 1: 1946 g.–Sentyabr 1960 g. (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatelstvo Politicheskoi Literatury 1963), 383. AVP RF, f. 575, op. 1, p. 1, d. 2, l. 1–2. In Davidson and Mazov, *Rossiya i Afrika, Tom II*, 198–99.

in building political and economic ties with the Soviet Union, and in April 1959 a Soviet embassy was opened in Conakry, when Ambassador Pavel Gerasimov was received by Touré with full state honours.[27]

The prime reason behind Touré's great interest in the Soviet Union lay primarily in Guinea's difficult situation after independence. When its offer to stay in the Community was rejected, Paris opted for a policy of retaliation against Guinea: the French administration and the majority of the French population quickly withdrew from the former colony, taking with them everything they could and even destroying some existing infrastructure. Moreover, French businesses – easily the colony's major economic partners – stopped importing from and exporting to Guinea. Therefore, straight after independence the PDG government found itself needing foreign support, both in economic and political terms, given the country's almost total isolation. Initially, Touré wanted to pursue a policy of neutralism, keeping Guinea equidistant from either bloc – and ideally receiving help from both. Thus, parallel to Conakry's overtures towards Moscow, Touré was at the same time pressing to obtain formal recognition for his government from Washington, for he hoped to secure American development aid in the near future. However, the US was slow to react. The French, who did not want US officials to make any concession to Guinea, persistently lobbied the Americans – an effort that slowed up US policy-making.[28] Washington's hesitations convinced Touré that an alliance with the East was preferable at this stage. In March 1959 Guinea received two shiploads of arms – free of charge – and 18 advisers from Czechoslovakia, thus signalling a decision to rely on the socialist bloc.[29]

Between February and August 1959, the Soviet Union and Guinea signed a comprehensive commercial treaty and an economic cooperation agreement that would grant Guinea a credit of 140 million roubles, repayable in 12 years at an interest rate of 2.5% interest rate. Trade and development aid were intertwined, meaning that the credits were meant to obtain Soviet equipment and technology, which could be paid back with Guinean goods. However, what made the Soviet-Guinean agreement different from other ones the USSR had subscribed with other Third World nations was the degree of involvement of Soviet personnel in the projects to be undertaken under the cooperative framework. The terms of the agreement specified that Soviet specialists would visit Guinea in the near future in order to draw up a 'list of objectives' – the concrete projects to be financed with Moscow's money and realised under Soviet supervision. For the first time the USSR had found a Third World leadership that was interested in basing the country's whole development strategy on

[27] AVP RF, f. 575, op. 1, p. 1, d. 2, l. 22–39. In *Rossiya i Afrika, Tom II*, 200–04. RGANI, f. 4, op. 16, d. 583, l. 91; AVP RF, f. 575, op. 2, p. 1, d. 6, l. 3–5; d. 10, l. 1–6. Extracts in Davidson, Mazov, and Tsypkin, *SSSR i Afrika*, 204–07.

[28] Schwar and Shaloff, *FRUS, 1958–1960 - Africa*, 670–83.

[29] AVP RF, f. 575, op. 1, p. 1, d. 2, l. 22–39, in Davidson and Mazov, *Rossiya i Afrika, Tom II*, 200–04. Schwar and Shaloff, *FRUS, 1958–1960 - Africa*, 687–706.

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socialist principles, rather than just relying on the Soviet Union as a lender or trade partner. As Moscow's envoys to Conakry reported, Touré and his government were fascinated by the USSR and wanted to study and learn from its experience in the most disparate fields, from the mechanisation of agriculture to the eradication of illiteracy, and from the creation of cooperatives to the organisation of the party and the army. Guinea was looking for a path to progress, and the Soviet Union was ready to offer its own modernity as a model to follow.[30]

Parallel to this growing relationship with Guinea, the idea of a 'socialist model of development' took shape in Moscow. In late 1958 the CPSU Ideology Commission – which acted as the main party body for contacts with foreign parties and movements, including in the Third World – organised a conference with the principal Soviet experts on the developing world (both academics and CPSU officials) in order to review Moscow's existing policy towards the Third World and guide its future evolution. The participants broadly agreed on a key principle: an alliance between the Soviet Union and the emerging national-bourgeois leaders of the Third World was judged opportune and advisable – even if this was only a temporary 'tactical compromise'. By building closer links with radical newly independent countries it would be possible to shape their path to development according to socialist principles, thus eventually expanding the Soviet way of life in the world without the risk of war. This was considered to be a primary goal for the USSR.[31]

The State Committee for Foreign Economics Contacts (*Gosudarstvenny Komitet po Vneshnim Ekonomicheskim Svyazyam*, GKES) subsequently defined what 'socialist development' meant. The concept derived directly from the experience of modernisation in the Soviet Central Asian and Caucasian Republics. As defined by the GKES, development could be achieved by applying three basic principles. First of all, striving to create a modern, mechanised agriculture based on collective and state farms, followed by investments directed at the creation of infrastructure and industrial plants. Finally, in the Third World the nascent industry had to be protected by strictly limiting the presence of foreign capital and by nationalising existing enterprises: the state was to be the only engine of growth.[32]

The 'socialist model of development' was clearly at odds with what the West was preaching in the same area. British economist William Arthur Lewis, a future Nobel prize-winner and Nkrumah's chief economic advisor until 1959, in his proposed industrial plan for Ghana envisaged development by granting unrestricted access to foreign investors for at least five to ten years, in order to foster industry directed at exports.[33] Lewis was far from being a precursor of the 'Washington consensus', but his work was grounded in classical economics, and he saw both free trade and private enterprise as the main drivers

[30] Brykin, *SSSR i Strany Afriki, Tom 1*, 460–62. RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 305, l. 289. In Davidson, Mazov, and Tsypkin, *SSSR i Afrika*, 208.

[31] RGANI, f. 5, op. 35, d. 79, l. 79–137.

[32] RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 305, l. 116–288.

[33] PRAAD, ADM/13/1/27, 27 June 1958.

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of development.[34] In a simplified way, the competition in West Africa between the interventionist and protectionist Soviet Union and the liberal capitalist West anticipated the debate between 'export-led' and 'import substitution' development strategies.

Soviet policy towards Guinea – and Ghana, once this was possible – was intended to show newly independent countries in Africa and in the rest of the Third World what the socialist model had to offer, and how their countries could benefit from it. When a high-level Guinean delegation visited the USSR prior to the signing of the main economic agreement in August 1959, they were taken to visit the Azerbaijani SSR – largely Muslim like Guinea – with the stated purpose of showing the PDG leaders how their homeland could look if it adopted Moscow's recipe for modernity.[35] As 1959 drew to a close, Soviet and East European advisers, specialists and technicians were flocking into Guinea, identifying projects to be financed, supervising their execution and taking many posts once occupied by the French in defence, industry and communication.[36] As a CPSU delegation reported back to Moscow, Guinean society was changing, with the Soviet Union as the main inspiration. Cooperatives and collective farms were rapidly spreading, government-appointed administrators were substituting tribal chiefs as regional authorities, and the ruling PDG's structures were being modelled on their CPSU equivalents.[37]

Thus, the USSR was overwhelmingly Guinea's main economic partner, and its best international ally.[38] To complete the picture, Touré was also the first head of state from sub-Saharan Africa to visit the Soviet Union in November 1959, and Danil Solod replaced Gerasimov as ambassador to Guinea in December. It was a clear indication of how much importance Moscow attached to its West African ally, for Solod had significant experience in the Third World, having been the Soviet ambassador to Egypt when the arms deal with Nasser was signed in 1955.[39] The 'Guinean dream' – the hope to make Guinea a showpiece of Soviet modernity in Africa – was thus officially born.

Phase two: crisis and reassessment, 1960–61

The years 1960–61 were a crucial period for Soviet policy in West Africa. Two sets of factors, connected to the local and global context, contributed to alter significantly the

[34] See W. Arthur Lewis, 'Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour,' *Manchester School of Economic and Social Studies* 22(1954). Gustav Ranis, 'Arthur Lewis' Contribution to Development Thinking and Policy,' in *The Lewis Model after 50 years: Assessing Sir Arthur Lewis' Contribution to Development Economics and Policy* (Manchester School, 2004).

[35] RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 305, l. 289-293; d. 309, l. 86–90. In Davidson and Mazov, *Rossiya i Afrika, Tom II*, 208–11, 22–25.

[36] Sergey Mazov, *Politika SSSR v Zapadnoi Afrike, 1956–1964: Neizvestnye Stranizy Kholodnoy Voiny*, ed. Apollon Davidson (Moscow: Nauka, 2008). 75.

[37] AVP RF, f. 575, op. 2, p. 2, d. 18, l. 2–11. In Davidson and Mazov, *Rossiya i Afrika, Tom II*, 213–20.

[38] 'Vneshnyaya Torgovlya SSSR za 1959-1963 gody,' 432–35.

[39] See Guy Laron, 'Cutting the Gordian Knot: The Egyptian Quest for Arms and the Czechoslovak Arms Deal,' in *Cold War International History Project Working Paper 55* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2007).

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course of the USSR's relations with Guinea and Ghana. Doubts on the reliability of the African leaders, together with the negative impact of the Congo crisis, delivered an irreparable blow to Moscow's confidence in the 'socialist model of development', causing a reassessment of the advantages of continuing with the same policies in West Africa.

Until early 1961 Soviet relations with Conakry continued on a relatively positive track. Indeed, Guinea's reliance on the Soviet bloc became even more marked as it embarked on a troublesome financial reform in March 1960, leaving the franc zone completely and printing its own currency. The result of the reform was to strain further Guinea's already poor economy, for the new money was technically not convertible, making trade with other countries impossible. Although Moscow was sceptical of Touré's monetary policy, it decided to help Conakry nonetheless. The existing barter agreements with the socialist countries were the only source of much-needed primary goods for Guinea, and the USSR considerably expanded both its purchases of Guinean coffee and fruit, and the export on credit of Soviet commodities. Moreover, the economic agreement signed in 1959 was modified, so to increase the total sum of Soviet credits to finance projects in industry and agriculture. Moscow would basically foot the whole bill for Touré's development plan.[40]

During 1960 the situation for the USSR became more positive in Ghana as well. Following a referendum in April, Ghana became a republic, and Nkrumah was elected president. Thanks to the increased personal power that the new position granted him, Nkrumah was now ready to step up cooperation with the Eastern bloc. A Ghanaian embassy was established in Moscow in March and, between April and August 1960, a bilateral economic and trade agreement was first drafted and then approved. The terms were favourable for Ghana, which would receive a credit of 160 million roubles repayable at a 2.5% interest rate, to be used for development projects in agriculture and industry. Moreover, as in the case of the agreement with Guinea, the Soviet Union was going to export large quantities of technological products and machinery receiving in exchange agricultural goods (cocoa beans) with an estimated value artificially set above the market price.[41]

Similarly to Guinea, following the signing of the cooperation agreement the Accra government showed a growing level of interest for Soviet modernity.[42] Nkrumah

[40] AVP RF, f. 575, op. 3, p. 3, d. 7, l. 8, 23; f. 575, op. 3, p. 4, d. 17, l. 15–19; f. 575, op. 4, p. 6, d. 6, l. 15. Extracts in Davidson, Mazov, and Tsypkin, *SSSR i Afrika*, 212–14. AVP RF, f. 575, op. 3, p. 5, d. 23, l. 54–56. In Davidson and Mazov, *Rossiya i Afrika, Tom II*, 227–28. Brykin, *SSSR i Strany Afriki, Tom 1*, 622–29. 'Vneshnyaya Torgovlya SSSR za 1959-1963 gody,' 432–35.

[41] PRAAD, MFA/4/83, 'Agreement for Economic and Technical Cooperation between the Republic of Ghana and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics', 4 August 1960.

[42] AVP RF, f. 573, op. 4, p. 4, d. 12, l. 26–31; f. 573, op. 4, p. 5, d. 16, l. 12–15; f. 573, op. 4, p. 5, d. 21, l. 1–3; p. 6, f. 573, op. 4, p. 5, d. 28, l. 1–10. AVP RF, f. 573, op. 4, p. 5, d. 25 (whole 'delo'). RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 336, l. 32–39, 56–57, 96–107. AVP RF, f. 573, op. 4, p. 3, d. 12, l. 51–53; f. 573, op. 4, p. 4, d. 15, l. 5–17, 20–21. In Davidson and Mazov, *Rossiya i Afrika, Tom II*, 192–96. AVP RF, f. 573, op. 4, p. 3, d. 12, l. 48–81. In Davidson, Mazov, and Tsypkin, *SSSR i Afrika*, 182–84. PRAAD, ADM/13/1/29, 16 August 1960, 30 August 1960, 1 November 1960, 30 December 1960; ADM/13/2/74, 30 August 1960. 'Vneshnyaya Torgovlya SSSR za 1959-1963 gody,' 430–33.

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broadly agreed with the 'socialist model of development'. 'My objective', the Ghanaian president wrote to Moscow, 'is the rapid industrialisation and electrification of the country, but also accelerated development and mechanisation of the agriculture'.[43] Several Ghanaian delegations were received in the USSR in 1960, and they were always taken on official visits to factories and state farms in Central Asia and the Caucasus. According to the British High Commissioner in Accra, the Ghanaians returned home 'starry-eyed' about what they saw in the Soviet Union.[44] Although a significant degree of economic cooperation with the West was still in place, the 'socialist model of development' had finally found a point of entry into Ghana.

The Congo crisis

By 1960 the USSR had successfully managed to build relations with both Guinea and Ghana, and to begin economic cooperation with them with ambitious goals. Despite difficulties and delays, the Soviet leadership was still willing to invest in West Africa, bearing onerous terms. However, the Congo crisis significantly challenged Soviet convictions, and triggered a reassessment of Soviet aims.

Congo became independent in June 1960, under the leadership of Patrice Lumumba, who was already known to Moscow as a radical, interested in cooperation with the socialist bloc.[45] The Soviet leadership was ready to 'invest' in Lumumba: after the progress achieved in Guinea and Ghana over the past few years; obtaining a new ally in independent Congo – a much larger country, with a particularly painful history of Western colonialism – would mean the definitive confirmation of the USSR's growing role in Africa. Relations between Moscow and the independent Leopoldville government began in the best fashion: a Soviet delegation – headed by the chairman of the Tajikistani SSR's Supreme Soviet – attended the independence celebrations in Congo's capital and immediately reached an agreement about the rapid establishment of diplomatic relations. Never before had the start of the bilateral relationship between the Soviet Union and a newly independent African state been so smooth.[46]

However, the situation inside Congo rapidly degenerated. In early July, the mineral-rich southern province of Katanga seceded from the rest of Congo, and declared independence. Katanga's leader, Moishe Tshombe, was actively supported by the Belgian mining companies that operated in the province, and could count on the military assistance of Belgian troops and European mercenaries. Lumumba's government – supported by several African independent states, including Ghana and Guinea – appealed to the United Nations, on the grounds that Congo's sovereignty was

[43] UKNA, AVP RF, f. 573, op. 4, p. 5, d. 21, l. 1–3.

[44] UKNA, FO371/146801, A.W. Snelling 'Ghana: Relations with the Soviet Union', 18 August 1960.

[45] Ambassador Gerasimov had met Lumumba in Conakry in 1959, and remained positively impressed. AVP RF, f. 590, op. 1, p. 1, d. 1, l. 4–5. In Davidson and Mazov, *Rossiya i Afrika, Tom II*, 232–33. RGANI, f. 11, op. 1, d. 372, l. 30–32. In Davidson, Mazov, and Tsypkin, *SSSR i Afrika*, 258–59.

[46] Brykin, *SSSR i Strany Afriki, Tom 1*, 549–50, 52.

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being violated by an unrequested foreign intervention, and the central government needed military support to subdue Katanga's secessionists. The UN established a mission in Congo (*Operation des Nations Unies au Congo*, ONUC) and called for the withdrawal of foreign troops from the country. However, UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld refused to authorise the UN soldiers to use force against Katanga's secessionists, as Lumumba strongly requested.

In the early stages of the crisis, Soviet policy was consistently pro-Lumumba. Moscow issued a few official declarations, fully supporting Lumumba's views about the events in Congo and broadly condemning the Western imperialists and their 'monopolies' for an act of neo-colonial aggression. Khrushchev worded the communiqués in such a way that they hinted at the fact that the USSR was ready to offer military support to the Leopoldville government, without expressly stating it. In his characteristic style, the First Secretary's game in Congo was a gamble: being confident of having conquered the 'moral high ground' by supporting Lumumba, Khrushchev's bet was that the UN resolutions would in the end compel Belgium to withdraw from Katanga in what the Soviet leader anticipated as a humiliating defeat for the neo-colonial West in Africa. In this way the USSR would obtain the definitive consecration as the champion of the oppressed peoples of the Third World – by just talking threateningly and without the need to fire a single Soviet shot.[47]

Yet, as with many of Khrushchev's gambles, it did not work out. He did not foresee that the situation in Congo might worsen to the point that Soviet military assistance was actually requested. Utterly frustrated by the UN's lack of initiative, both Lumumba and Nkrumah turned to Moscow and asked for military support. However, the Soviet Union could do very little in practice, due to a severe lack of capacity: the Soviet armed forces at the time did not possess either the logistical capabilities, or the expertise to embark on any military operation that required projecting power some 4000 miles away from the USSR. Moscow did not have any base outside of Eastern Europe, its navy was not yet operational in blue-sea, and airlifting capacities were still very limited.[48] This was a basic but crucial flaw in the overall Soviet strategy for the region.

Western analysts rapidly concluded that a Soviet intervention in Congo was virtually impossible.[49] All the help Moscow could provide, beyond shipping small arms to Lumumba's forces, was to air-lift Leopoldville's troops to fight the secessionists and, following Nkrumah's request, to transport Ghanaian 'peacekeepers' and equipment to Congo.[50] However, even this limited support was easily stopped when the Americans obtained from Hammarskjöld authority for UN forces to close down all

[47] Ibid., 553–63. AVP RF, f. 590, op. 4, p. 6, d. 16, l. 10. In Davidson, Mazov, and Tsypkin, *SSSR i Afrika*, 269.

[48] Bruce D. Porter, *The USSR in Third World Conflicts. Soviet Arms and Diplomacy in local wars, 1945-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). 19–20, 36–59.

[49] UKNA, CAB159/34, JIC(60)55, 22 July 1960. *FRUS, 1958–1960 - Africa*, 315–16, 347.

[50] PRAAD, SC/BAA/149, 30 July 1960, 4 August 1960.

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Congo's airports. The blockade ended any Soviet chance of using its military influence in the conflict.[51]

Moreover, the US supported the organisation of a coup in Leopoldville, which ousted Lumumba from power.[52] Lumumba was first arrested, and then in early 1961 he was brutally murdered. Khrushchev held the West and the UN directly responsible for his death.[53] Although Moscow continued to support half-heartedly the remaining Lumumba supporters against new Congolese leader Colonel Joseph Mobutu until their defeat in January 1962, the Soviet Union's ambition to gain another radical ally in Africa died with Lumumba in early 1961.[54] Even CIA Director Allen Dulles was 'surprised at the ease with which the Soviets were forced out of the Congo'.[55]

The impact of the crisis on Soviet relations with Ghana and Guinea

The USSR's inability to affect the degenerating situation in Congo had far-reaching consequences both in Moscow and in Africa. The crisis changed the Soviet belief that competition with the West had shifted from the military to the economic plane. American intervention in Congo showed that the West was ready and able to deploy force to prevent the extension of Soviet influence in Africa, whereas the USSR lacked the military and logistical capabilities to react. Thus, confidence in the 'socialist model of development' as the sole tool of Moscow's growing influence in Africa was strongly shaken.

Yet, the development of the Congo crisis had initially contributed to drawing the USSR closer to its West African allies, particularly Ghana. Lumumba was viewed with favour by both Touré and Nkrumah, who hoped that Congo would follow them on the way to a complete rejection of the colonial legacy and the adoption of radical policies. Nkrumah in particular was very concerned by Congo's rapid descent into chaos after independence and by the intervention of foreign countries on African soil, which he saw as a sign of the West's imperialist ambitions. He also believed that, if Accra managed to assume a leading role in ONUC, this would hugely contribute to Ghana's bid to become the guiding force of African independence and unity. Nkrumah soon grew dissatisfied with the 'conservative' interpretation of the UN resolution that forbad its troops from engaging the Katanga forces, and became convinced that the only solution to the crisis was letting the independent African states provide the necessary military support to the Leopoldville government. In order to enable Ghanaian troops to fight alongside Lumumba's forces, Nkrumah wrote to Khrushchev in July, asking him to

[51] *FRUS, 1958–1960 – Africa,* 443–46, 56–57, 65.

[52] Ibid., 460–62.

[53] V.A. Brykin, ed. *SSSR i Strany Afriki, 1946-1962 gg. Dokumenty i Materialy*, 2 vols., vol. 2: Sentyabr 1960 g. – 1962 g. (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatelstvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1963), 194–98.

[54] For an overview of Soviet policy towards Congo after Lumumba's death, see: Sergey Mazov, 'Soviet Aid to the Gizenga Movement in the Former Belgian Congo (1960–61) as Reflected in Russian Archives,' *Cold War History* 7, no. 3 (2007).

[55] *FRUS, 1958–1960 – Africa*, 497.

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provide Ghana with Soviet aircraft, and to airlift Ghanaian troops to Congo. The Presidium agreed, and shortly thereafter the two countries signed an agreement on the provision of transport and military equipment, which nonetheless soon became meaningless due to the closure of Congo's airports by the UN troops.[56]

During the turbulent twentieth session of the UN General Assembly in September 1960, Khrushchev and Nkrumah criticised the West for the events in Congo, and demanded a strong UN stand about the crisis. A new understanding between Accra and Moscow was born: both Khrushchev and Nkrumah regarded the Congo crisis as the result of coordinated Western aggression, but at the same time they believed it represented an occasion to inflict a resounding defeat against the imperialist powers. The two leaders became increasingly dissatisfied with the United Nations, which seemed incapable of enforcing its decisions and unable to rid itself of the colonialists' influence. Finally, Nkrumah's trust in the United States was being eroded by Washington's policies in Congo, where the Americans were supporting forces that the Ghanaian president identified with imperialism and the repression of Africa's legitimate aspirations.[57]

Even though American diplomatic pressure prevented Ghana from assuming an excessively radical stance in international affairs,[58] relations between Moscow and Accra continued on a relatively positive course for the rest of 1961. Nkrumah now was openly courting the USSR, hoping to increase trade and economic cooperation with the Soviet bloc.[59] In February, Leonid Brezhnev, at the time Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, travelled to Guinea and Ghana, and Nkrumah visited the Soviet Union between July and September, stressing the importance of the alliance with the USSR for Ghana. Moscow increased military cooperation with Accra, and even briefly considered training African 'freedom fighters' through Ghana.[60]

In November, the two governments signed a new trade agreement, and extended the existing treaty on economic and technical cooperation. However, Moscow was not ready to accept the unfavourable trade conditions of the previous treaty, and its envoys

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[56] PRAAD, ADM/13/1/29, 28 July 1960; SC/BAA/149, 30 July 1960, 4 August 1960. AVP RF, f. 573, op. 4, p. 2, d. 9, l. 1–3; f. 601, op. 1, p. 1, d. 6, l. 1. In Davidson and Mazov, *Rossiya i Afrika, Tom II*, 196–97, 246–47.

[57] United Nations General Assembly, *Official Records, Fifteenth Session* (New York, 1960). 68–84. PRAAD, SC/BAA/403. RGANI, f. 3, op. 12, d. 1011, l. 24–27. In Aleksandr A. Fursenko, ed. *Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954–1964: Chernovye Protokolnye Zapisi Zasedanii Stenogrammy Postanovleniya*, 3 vols., vol. 1, Arkhivy Kremlya (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), 445, 1078–79. Kwame Nkrumah, *Challenge of the Congo: A Case Study of Foreign Pressures in an Independent State* (New York, NY: Independent Publishers, 1967).

[58] Schwar and Shaloff, *FRUS, 1958–1960 - Africa*, 654–69. PRAAD, SC/BAA/490, 22 February 1961; SC/BAA/79, 14 December 1961.

[59] UKNA, CAB158/41, JIC(61)73, 5 January 1961. Nina Davis Howland, ed. *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1961–1963 - Africa*, vol. XXI (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1995), 354, 59.

[60] Brykin, *SSSR i Strany Afriki, Tom 2*, 358. AVP RF, f. 573, op. 5, p. 7, d. 16, l. 72–73, 127; f. 573, op. 5, p. 8, d. 10, l. 31. PRAAD, ADM/13/1/30, 31 January 1961, 15 February 1961, 12 September 1961, 19 December 1961; ADM/13/2/78, 31 January 1961; ADM/13/2/80, 18 April 1961; ADM/13/2/85, 12 September 1961; SC/BAA/381, 26 September 1960, 20 July 1962.

negotiated harder than usual to ensure that the proportion of cocoa purchased in hard currency would decrease over time.[61] Moreover, the amount of money the USSR was ready to grant Ghana for development projects was much smaller than in the past – 38 million roubles in 1961 as opposed to 160 million roubles in 1960.[62] Following the Congo crisis, Moscow was still willing to invest in Ghana, but not at the same cost as before.

Moreover, contemporary developments in Guinea further reduced the USSR's resolve to continue with the same policies in West Africa. Moscow's recent investments were not paying off, and Soviet observers blamed the Guineans' lack of initiative and expertise for the rising costs of economic cooperation and the delays in completing the development projects. In particular, Moscow resented Touré's insistence on using Soviet funds to realise 'prestige' projects – such as the construction of a large stadium, a presidential palace and the refurbishment of Conakry airport – which were expensive, but had a very limited impact on the economy of the country.[63] In 1961, Guinea was still in economic dire straits, and Touré hoped that the USSR would provide additional aid. The Soviet leadership, however, was extremely unsatisfied with how the Guineans managed their economy and how Soviet funds were wasted on useless projects, and in the end Moscow did not commit significant additional resources. Touré immediately understood that he could not rely any longer on the Soviet Union, and began to look to the Americans and the French for economic help.[64] The situation deteriorated badly in December, when Ambassador Solod was accused of being part of a plot against Touré, and was precipitously expelled from the country.[65] The Soviet leadership showed that it was no longer interested in large investments in Guinea, and the Conakry government reacted by shifting allegiances towards the West.

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Phase three: disengagement, 1962–64

From Moscow's point of view, the lessons of the 1960–61 period were twofold. On one side, Touré's behaviour showed the Kremlin that economic cooperation with newly independent countries was difficult, and required costly investments. On the other, the Congo crisis demonstrated that the West would not allow the further expansion of the 'socialist model' in Africa without resorting to intervention, which the USSR could not counter due to lack of capacity. Because of both considerations, the idea to pour resources into Ghana and Guinea to make them examples of socialist modernity in order to attract other newly independent states lost most of its power in Moscow.

[61] *SSSR I Strany Afriki, Tom 2,* 443–48. PRAAD, ADM/13/1/30, 29 March 1961, 11 April 1961; ADM/13/2/80, 29 March 1961, 11 April 1961. PRAAD, MFA/4/153, 4 November 1961. "Vneshnyaya Torgovlya SSSR za 1959–1963 gody," 432–33.

[62] *SSSR I Strany Afriki, Tom 2*, 441–43. PRAAD, MFA/4/154, 4 November 1961.

[63] RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 371, l. 162–163, 221–226.

[64] Howland, *FRUS, 1961–1963 - Africa*, 392–98.

[65] Legvold, *Soviet Policy in West Africa*: 125–29.

The 'socialist model of development' was not put aside overnight, but the Soviet drive to modernise African societies progressively lost momentum, until it finally exhausted itself by the time of Khrushchev's fall from power in 1964.

Ghana

As mentioned above, following the Congo crisis Nkrumah became very suspicious of the West, and tried to shift Ghana towards the USSR. He believed that development for Ghana rested on expanding the role of the state in the national economy, and on building solid institutions to oversee most areas of public life. The Ghanaian president hoped that the Soviet Union would provide the necessary aid to reach his goals.[66]

Moscow, however, was now generally unresponsive to Ghanaian openings. In spite of the 1961 'expansion' of the economic and technical cooperation treaty, the Soviet Union was actually reducing its commitment to Ghana's development. In practice, Moscow's main contribution was reduced to two areas: the creation of state farms in Ghana, and the building of a fishing complex in the newly built port town of Tema. However, even the realisation of these two projects presented serious problems. In early 1962 the Soviet experts' report on how to collectivise Ghanaian agriculture was unveiled – much to the discomfort of the Accra government, which judged the USSR's estimations of the costs involved excessively onerous, and the level of Soviet involvement in the project too limited. Following negotiations, Moscow agreed to cut the expenses, but refused to guarantee Soviet managers for all the farms, as the Ghanaians had requested.[67] Furthermore, Nkrumah's cabinet complained in late 1963 about the state of the Tema project, which not only was nowhere near completion, but its costs had not even been precisely outlined.[68] Moscow cut down on military cooperation too: the number of Ghanaian officers to be trained in the USSR was reduced, while the requirements for receiving Soviet equipment became stricter. The USSR was only willing to send a limited quantity of gear that could be manned uniquely by the narrow group of Moscow-trained officers.[69]

The USSR continued to buy cocoa from Ghana, in part using technology and machinery to pay for it, but there was no aid component in these exchanges. Moscow was no longer willing to accept unfavourable trade conditions for political reasons, and obtained better commercial deals compared to the recent past.[70] The dream to turn Ghana into an example of the effectiveness of socialism in Africa had practically disappeared by 1964, when Moscow refused to participate in the creation of Ghana's

[66] AVP RF, f. 573, op. 6, p. 10, d. 16, l. 3, 25–26, 50, 68–70; f. 573, op. 6, p. 10, d. 22, l. 1–5, 6–28, 38–40, 135–136; f. 573, op. 6, p. 10, d. 15, l. 1–13. PRAAD, SC/BAA/66, 28 July 1962.

[67] PRAAD, ADM/13/1/31, 14 February 1962, 17 April 1962; ADM/13/2/89, 14 February 1962; ADM/13/2/91, 17 April 1962.

[68] PRAAD, ADM/13/1/32, 15 October 1963; ADM/13/2/109, 15 October 1963.

[69] PRAAD, SC/BAA/381, 20 July 1962.

[70] 'Vneshnyaya Torgovlya SSSR za 1959-1963 gody,' 430–33. and 'Vneshnyaya Torgovlya SSSR za 1964 god'.

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Investment Bank following Nkrumah's request.[71] Even in the face of some moderately positive results in economic cooperation with Ghana – a richer and generally better-organised state than Guinea – the Soviet leadership did not show willingness to invest in Accra.[72] After the negative experience in Guinea and the debacle in Congo, Khrushchev and the Presidium were sceptical of Nkrumah's reliability as a leader, especially the Ghanaian President's insistence on describing his policies as 'Nkrumaism', a specifically 'African form of socialism'. Moscow regarded Nkrumaism with suspicion, if not open hostility.[73]

Guinea

The USSR's relations with Guinea worsened even more rapidly than with Ghana. Even though Moscow played down the rift with Touré following Solod's expulsion, the Soviet Union sharply decreased the scope of its economic aid activities in Guinea, which in 1962 were reduced to a few building projects of limited impact.[74] Following Touré's decision in October 1962 not to let Soviet aircraft on route to Cuba land in Guinea – which angered Khrushchev – the USSR gave no more aid to Guinea.[75] The Guinean government now looked increasingly to the West and China as sources of economic cooperation and political inspiration. Furthermore, trade with the USSR markedly decreased. Unlike Ghana, Guinea had no commodities which Moscow was interested in buying outside of the cooperation agreements, and the USSR saw little reason to continue the vastly disadvantageous commercial exchanges with Guinea.[76]

By the time of Khrushchev's demise as First Secretary of the CPSU in October 1964, the Soviet presence in Guinea and Ghana was reduced to some advisers and a few uncompleted projects. The rhetoric of development and modernisation virtually disappeared from Moscow's official statements on Africa. The idea of a 'socialist model of development', superior to anything the West had to offer, faded away, never to reappear with the same confidence and the same force as in the early Khrushchev era.

The reasons for the decline of Soviet influence in West Africa

As this article has shown, the Soviet project of modernisation in West Africa failed because of two factors, related to the local context and to global trends. First, economic cooperation with Ghana and Guinea proved to be more difficult than initially expected in Moscow. Second, the negative outcome of the Congo crisis due to Western intervention dispelled Moscow's belief that building influence in Africa thanks to economic cooperation alone was possible.

[71] AVP RF, f. 573, op. 8, p. 13-A, d. 7, l. 1–2.
[72] AVP RF, f. 573, op. 6, p. 10, d. 22, l. 6–28.
[73] RGANI, f. 5, op. 33, d. 181, l. 93–125. PRAAD, SC/BAA/90.
[74] Brykin, *SSSR i Strany Afriki, Tom 2*, 534–35.
[75] RGANI, f. 3, op. 16, d. 941, l. 1–44. In Fursenko, *Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954–1964, Vol 1*, 753–54.
[76] 'Vneshnyaya Torgovlya SSSR za 1959–1963 Gody,' 432–435.

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The local context

The Soviet push for modernisation in Africa was, initially, successful. The USSR quickly established itself as the main economic and diplomatic partner of newly independent Guinea and, more slowly, became an important point of reference for Nkrumah's Ghana. Moscow exported machines, goods and advisers to West Africa in order to foster a 'forced march' to progress – and obtained in return very little material gain: aid programmes were expensive, trade unprofitable and raw materials of little value. Guinea and Ghana were to represent the vanguard of socialist development, showing other Third World countries what could be achieved by abandoning the capitalist path to development.

However, the large Soviet investments in 1959–60 yielded poorer than expected results. Moscow's analyses blamed the lack of preparedness and competence of the Ghanaian and, especially, the Guinean government. Soviet funds were conveyed towards projects that were both expensive and of little use for the countries' development. Despite cooperation with the USSR, both Ghana and Guinea remained poor and their economies were still utterly dependent on imports of primary commodities from abroad. Modernisation, contrary to Soviet hopes, required more investment over a long period of time.[77]

Moreover, Moscow discovered that the local elites could be capricious and unreliable. Nkrumah and Touré showed no real willingness to follow the USSR's example to the letter, and they pursued instead 'personalistic' policies – as the CPSU dubbed them. The conclusion in Moscow was that it was the local leaders' poor understanding of socialism that had ruined Soviet plans.[78] This interpretation would have important consequences for future Soviet policy towards the Third World.

The global context

The Kremlin leadership never had a specific strategy for Africa – let alone a strategy for each single country. Khrushchev and the Presidium always thought globally: Ghana and Guinea had value as long as they were seen as the first step towards the establishment of the 'socialist model of development' in other countries too. When Moscow ceased to believe in this, Ghana and Guinea lost all importance. The Congo crisis played a pivotal role in shattering Moscow's confidence in its model of development as a tool to build influence in the Third World.

The radical leadership of the newly independent Republic of Congo – which had shown considerable interest in socialism and the Soviet Union – was overthrown by a foreign military intervention that the Kremlin leadership saw as the result of a Western counteroffensive in Africa. When asked by both the Ghanaian and Congolese governments for material help to fight back the 'imperialists', the USSR was unable to

[77] RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 371, l. 162–163, 221–226.
[78] RGANI, f. 5, op. 33, d. 181, l.100.

offer significant military or logistical assistance. The terms of the struggle with the West thus changed: no longer economic competition – as envisaged by Khrushchev's notion of 'peaceful coexistence' – but conventional warfare, where the West still had a clear advantage over the USSR.

Lack of access to Soviet sources makes it impossible to reconstruct the evolution of thinking in the Kremlin with absolute precision, but the consequences of the debacle in Congo were certainly far-reaching. After 1961, Moscow reduced its involvement in Ghana and Guinea. There was no point in wasting resources in Accra or Conakry, since their example of socialist modernity could not be imitated by other newly independent countries, as long as the West was ready to intervene to prevent it. Yet, the USSR was not capable of matching the Western military effort. Thus, the Kremlin leadership lost the belief that the 'socialist model of development' was enough to win over Africa 'Hard power' mattered more.

Western intervention in the Congo crisis was linked by Moscow to a general change of policy determined by the new American administration, which took office in January 1961. In March 1963 the KGB reported to the Presidium about US activities in the Third World. The Soviet security agency was particularly concerned by the Kennedy administration's new aggressive strategy for the Third World, which combined military resources with a novel approach to development. The KGB reported about the significant progress made by the Americans in recent years in developing flexible military resources that could be deployed in the Third World in order to tilt the balance in favour of the USA. Moreover, the KGB suggested that the new 'stage development theory' designed by Walt Rostow signalled renewed American willingness to engage with the crucial problem of development in the Third World, and to pour in considerable American resources.[79] All these elements indicated to the Soviet leadership that competition in the Third World had become riskier and required additional resources, which the USSR could not easily afford to commit. Withdrawal was then judged preferable.

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Conclusions

Between 1957 and 1964 the Soviet Union had developed relations with a number of newly independent states in Africa and Asia. Ideology was the prime reason behind this new interest in the Third World. The cases of Ghana and Guinea show how the Soviet leadership became interested in West Africa not with the aim of favouring the birth of communist governments – an objective that was left for an unspecified future by Moscow's 'ideologues' – but instead with the clear willingness to export to Africa those ideas and techniques that had transformed the USSR – and particularly its Central Asian and Caucasian republics – into a modern, industrial society. Soviet policy in West Africa was therefore driven not by 'traditional' Marxism-Leninism, but by a form of 'economic

[79] RGANI, f. 5, op. 55, d. 56, l. 92–118. The Americans were indeed considering a military buildup in Africa. See Howland, *FRUS, 1961–1963 - Africa*, 310–14.

ideology', bolstered by the initial successes of the Virgin Lands campaign, of *Sputnik*, and of Soviet modernity. The vision was grandiose: shaping the emerging world according to a 'socialist model of development' that by producing a faster and better modernity would allow for the final victory of Soviet socialism over Western capitalism.

This project, however, failed because of a combination of local and global factors. Poor coordination with the West African governments, together with the 'ideological unreliability' of their leaders, drove up the costs of Soviet economic cooperation with Ghana and Guinea. Moreover, the US's renewed determination to compete with the Soviet Union in the Third World, as demonstrated by intervention in the Congo crisis, showed Moscow that the West would not tolerate any significant expansion of Soviet influence in the Third World. In the face of growing expenses and increased risk of open conflict with the West, the Soviet Union chose to back down.

The Soviet leadership drew two key lessons from the experience of engagement with West Africa and Congo. First, local allies in the Third World had to be, in principle at least, Marxists. 'Simple' radical anti-Western leaders – as Nkrumah and Touré – were not reliable enough, as their 'bourgeois' convictions prevented them from following Moscow's instructions. This did not mean, however, that part of the Soviet leadership would not in the future delude itself in thinking that some nationalist leaders were actually 'real' communists.

Second, Moscow now understood the crucial role of conventional military strength as a means of gaining influence in the Third World. If the Soviet Union aspired to become a global superpower, nuclear weapons alone were not sufficient. The Soviet armed forces needed to develop power projection capabilities comparable to the US ones, so to be able to intervene in support of Moscow's allies. Khrushchev himself said that 'the Americans often send squadrons of their ships to other countries. It wouldn't be bad if we also had such a navy that could be sent to those countries where in the circumstances it could be of use, for example, in Cuba, in the countries of Africa, etc.'[80]

These principles guided the policies of the new leadership that ousted Khrushchev at the end of 1964, and which was far less inclined to place confidence in the Soviet economy and way of life. When the USSR again became majorly engaged in Africa, approximately one decade after the end of the Khrushchev era, it did so by providing effective military support to national liberation movements and leaders who were Marxist sympathisers. The 'socialist model of development' was relegated to a secondary role. Gone with Khrushchev was the dream of shaping the future of the emerging world, of creating a new society that would dwarf the achievements of liberal capitalism, and thereby consecrate socialism as the best possible system of life in the Third World.

[80] In N.S. Simonov, *Voenno-promyshlennyi Kompleks SSSR v 1920–1950-e gody: tempy ekonomicheskogo rosta, struktura, organizatsiya proizvodstva i upravlenie* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1996). 299. Cited in Jonathan Haslam, *Russia's Cold War: from the October Revolution to the fall of the wall* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 200.

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