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The United States and the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah

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THE UNITED STATES AND THE OVERTHROW
OF KWAME NKRUMAH

being

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the Fort Hays State University in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts

by

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ABSTRACT

February 24, 1966 is regarded by many Ghanaians as the Waterloo in the history of Ghana, and Ghanaians would not like it to be mentioned so as to rekindle old wounds considering the hardships the country went through from that period until accepting democratic rule in the early 1990s. On that fateful day the first Republic of Ghana was overthrown in a military coup d'état when the first President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, was on a peacemaking mission in Vietnam. Most Ghanaians and Africans continue to point accusing fingers at the United States for this unfortunate incident that brought not only the newly born nation to the brink of collapse but also brought the dream of a united Africa into jeopardy.

Ghana was the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to gain independence, and the two super powers that emerged after the Second World War—the United States and the Soviet Union—and later the People's Republic of China endeavored to have positive relations with Ghana in order to implant their ideologies not only in Ghana but in the African continent at large. Ghana after independence soon became a Cold War battle ground in the propaganda warfare between the East and the West.

In order to stand aside from the Cold War, the government of Ghana from the first days of independence took a non-aligned stand and promised to establish good relations with all countries of the world, irrespective of the political systems of their governments. Some of the policies and actions taken later by the Ghanaian government were translated by the United States to mean that Ghana had moved from its entrenched non-aligned stand to the Soviet Bloc. The perceived defection created a gulf between Ghana and the United States. The tension between the two nations and unrest at home became more

tense and fraught with grave complications and was culminated in a coup d'état that eventually toppled Nkrumah's administration.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

On February 24, 1966, Kwame Nkrumah's government was overthrown in a military coup d'état while he was on a peacemaking mission in Vietnam. The United States containment policy in Africa was aimed at tying the umbilical cords of all independent states of Africa to America to avert the infiltration of communist influence on the continent. African countries that attempted to lean towards the Soviet Union therefore became automatic enemies of the United States. In the 1950s Africa became the focal point of the anti-colonial movement, and as the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to gain independence, Ghana was in the eyes of the United States to pave the way to pursue policies that would prevent Soviet presence in Africa. After independence, the Ghanaian government pursued policies that eventually led to clashes and confrontation with the United States.

There have been various schools of thought regarding Nkrumah's overthrow. Some people, including Professor K. Arhin, director of the Institute of African Studies, Legon, Ghana, saw an American plot behind his downfall in February 1966. Others, like a Dr. Gyan, research fellow (Political Science) of the Institute of African Studies, Legon, Ghana, remained uncertain about United States involvement and preferred to cite internal and external factors to explain the military coup that overthrew the regime. There is no doubt that such a controversy arose from the fact that Nkrumah's perception of the United States was an ambivalent one. He saw the United States both as a model of liberty and unity and as the embodiment of "evil" capitalism and social injustice. The latter

developed into “anti-Americanism” which later provoked some official United States hostility towards Nkrumah and his regime. This hostility led some to infer that the United States was instrumental in his downfall.¹

In her doctoral thesis, Mary E. Montgomery explored the development of Ghana-United States relations that focused on Ghana’s first leader, Kwame Nkrumah, policy makers in Washington, D.C., and their counterparts in Great Britain. Montgomery also offered analysis on the policies of the Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson Administrations with Ghana and demonstrated the role of Great Britain in facilitating United States-Ghana interaction. Montgomery, without offering concrete proof, suggested along with others that the United States had a hand in the 1966 coup d’état in Ghana.²

This thesis examines the claim that the United States government was behind the overthrow of Nkrumah’s government. In doing so, it utilizes the declassified documents from *Foreign Relations of the United States*, CIA documents, interviews with State Department officials on the Frontline Diplomacy website and documents from the Johnson Library to search for evidence of United States involvement in the 1966 coup d’état that toppled Nkrumah’s government, and seeks reasons and justifications for such an action against a state in her early stage of independence.

¹Lalbila Yoda, “The influence of the USA on the Political Ideas of Kwame Nkrumah,” *Round Table* [Great Britain] 326 (1993), 187.

²Mary E. Montgomery, “The Eyes of the World Were Watching Ghana: Great Britain, and the United States, 1957-1966,” PhD diss., (College Park, Md.: University of Maryland, 2004), 1. <http://hdl.handle.net/1903/155>.

BACKGROUND

Before the 1950s, Africa was on the backburner of United States foreign policy. Giving the background of American's relations with Africa, historian Thomas J. Noer brings out the misconception of the United States toward Africa before the emergence of self government in Africa. "Gaining their image of Africa from Tarzan movies, missionary slide shows in church basements, and Ernst Hemingway short stories, Americans saw the continent as a land of jungle and animals, not of nations in the international system. The rapid rise of independence movements in Africa and the growth of the American civil rights struggle following the Second World War finally combined to make the „dark continent“ an area of United States diplomatic activity.”³

As late as 1943, a State Department official, Henry S. Villard, spoke of Africa as a land with a “relatively primitive native population.” By 1964, American planes were joining Belgium in air action in Stanleyville. Between those dates, for three short years, 1961-1963, there was an unfortunately brief period of hope: hope for better American-African understanding.⁴ President John F. Kennedy and his advisors viewed Africa more as an area of symbolic significance and as a battleground for international prestige than as a region of dominant economic strategic interests. Although the continent had the

³ Thomas J. Noer, “New Frontier and Old Priorities in Africa,” in *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-63*, ed. Thomas G. Paterson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 254.

⁴ Von Mitchell Smith, “Africa: The Kennedy Years, 1961-1963,” in *Essays on American Foreign Policy*, eds. Margaret F. Morris and Sandra L. Myers, The Walter Prescott Webb memorial lectures, 8. “Austin”: Published for the University of Texas (“Arlington” by the University of Texas Press, 1974), 58.

potential for major economic development, it was of only minor importance to the United States. Africa was seen as holding the potential for disorder, radicalism and major power conflict and American involvement in the region was seen as necessary for the well-being of the continent.⁵

The United States interest in Africa was undoubtedly linked to Cold War considerations and the global containment of communism. As late as 1960, Vice President Richard M. Nixon argued that “in the struggle with the Russians, Africa is the most critical area in the world,” while a few months later President-elect Kennedy claimed that Africa was the objective “of a gigantic communist offensive.” It became, therefore, gradually clear to American policymakers that instability and chaos in Africa would foster Soviet expansionism there.⁶

Throughout the Kennedy years, 1961-1963, he presented a consistent policy approach to Africa. In all, Kennedy tried the diplomacy of moderation and compromise. Kennedy sought to find a middle course between what his Western allies might prefer and what his African friends might wish. Kennedy wanted a policy that both might be persuaded to accept. He did not ask the African to align himself irrevocably with the West. Kennedy accepted nonalignment as a proper foreign policy stance for Africa, and he accepted the Africans’ desire to stand aside from the involvement in the Cold War.⁷

⁵ Noer, 258.

⁶Stephen Metz, “American Attitudes Towards Decolonization in Africa,” *Political Science Quarterly* 99:3 (1984), 518.

⁷ Smith, 80.

It needs to be emphasized that during these years when sub-Saharan Africa was getting liberated from the shackles of colonialism, the United States was not the only nation interested in Africa. The Soviet Union and later the People's Republic of China also sought influence in Africa and soon the continent became a Cold War battleground in the propaganda warfare between the East and the West.

American policy makers during the preceding Eisenhower administration saw the world as neatly divided between good and evil. America and her Western allies personified the forces of good, while the communists stood as the incarnate evil. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, the moralist, saw no difference between neutralism and nonalignment. He saw both to be dirty words. If Africa concerned him at all, it was in conjunction with the Cold War and Dulles's desire to prevent Russian penetration of Africa. Dulles sought a military solution to international problems; he sought the solution in terms of military alliances and with the concept of a massive retaliatory ability.⁸ Kennedy, on the contrary, believed that Dulles's approach of military intervention would bear less fruit than the demonstration of the virtues of democracy to the African. He abandoned the military approach of Dulles for the advocacy of a competitive presentation of democracy versus communism to Africa.⁹

Ghana's position as the first self-governing nation in sub-Saharan Africa captured the attention of the whole world so much so that aspiring nationalists, colonial rulers, and

⁸ Ibid, 58.

⁹ Ibid, 80.

Cold Warriors anticipated the impact of Ghana's experience on colonial Africa and the global balance of power. To provide longer-term support for Ghana, Britain enlisted the assistance of the United States, which coincided with an increased United States interest in Africa, especially Ghana, as the newest vulnerable front in the Cold War. The United States hoped that positive relations with Ghana would prevent a Communist or Soviet foothold in Africa.¹⁰

To show the importance the United States placed on its relations with the new country, the Eisenhower administration chose Vice President Richard Nixon to lead the American delegation to Ghana's independence celebrations.¹¹ This healthy relation between "the newly born nation" Ghana and the United States was short lived. In less than eight years after Ghana's independence, the United States and Ghana saw prolonged mutual interests as well as intervals of high tensions, culminating in the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah's regime.¹²

HISTORIANS' VIEW

Many scholars have written extensively on United States foreign policy with the Third World. Others such as Lalbila Yoda, Mary E. Montgomery, Max Addo and the like

¹⁰ Montgomery, 1.

¹¹ Kenneth W. Herger, "Race Relations in the United States and American Cultural and Informational Programs in Ghana, 1957-1966" *The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration* (Winter 1999) Vol. 31, No. 4. <http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1999/winter/> (accessed October 2, 2009)

¹² Montgomery, 10.

have written on United States foreign policy with Ghana in general. Even though some of these scholars do agree at times on the assertion that the United States was behind the overthrow of the first Republic of Ghana, they have not provided concrete evidence to support their claim. Their writings notwithstanding are useful sources of information and offer the challenge to probe into their assertion and seek for substantiated evidences of the alleged United States involvement in the 1966 coup plot in Ghana.

Declassified documents from three volumes of the *Foreign Relations of the United States* provide valuable primary and firsthand information on the topic. Volume 14 of *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960* gives a compilation of accounts on Prime Minister Nkrumah's visit to the United States, his meetings with President Eisenhower, correspondence from the two presidents and telegrams between the United States embassy in Ghana and the State Department.¹³ Volume 21 of *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963* details the correspondence leading to the approval of the Volta and Valco Project made by President Kennedy.¹⁴ On its part, Volume 24 of the 1964-1968, edition abounds with correspondence between President Nkrumah and his American counterpart President Johnson, and telegrams from the State Department to the United States embassy in Accra and from United States embassy in Accra to the State

¹³U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960*, vol. 14 (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1992), 645-669.

¹⁴U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, vol. 21 (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1995), 341-349.

Department on the events leading to the military takeover on February 24, 1966.¹⁵

Writing on the United States involvement in the coup plot, Koojo S. Lewis in *How America Toppled Nkrumah* minces no words in exposing the motive and method of the American Central Intelligence Agency in Ghana and how, in close personal collaboration with the American president himself, the CIA used the reactionary section of Ghana's army to „neo-colonize“ Ghana. According to Lewis, people who steered America's foreign policy—the State Department and the United States president, turned the CIA into an instrument of political and military interference into the internal affairs of other countries. The CIA combined in itself all the specific qualities necessary to impede the advent to power of genuinely national governments, to recruit leaders for the pro-American regimes with the support necessary to keep them in office.¹⁶

The CIA resorted to a wide variety of methods ranging from wire tapping to influencing election campaigns, from the blasting of bridges to armed intervention. Acting both openly and secretly, the CIA became a major instrument for the implementation of Washington's policy and one of the most active departments of the United States administration.¹⁷

¹⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968*, vol. 24 (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1999), 411-483.

¹⁶ Koojo S. Lewis, *How America Toppled Nkrumah* (Winneba: Victoria Press, 1967), 4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Lewis believed that the fate which befell Ghana as a result of the military coup staged in February, 1966, served as a vivid example of what the activities of the CIA in Africa could lead to and of the dire consequences this had on the country in question.¹⁸

William Blum, on his part, has contributed on the topic in his *Killing Hope: US Military and CIA intervention Since World War II*. This volume offers a concise history of the Cold War and the impetus behind, and nature of the many American interventions throughout the world. Blum gives detailed accounts on a number of Third World countries including Ghana in which America used the CIA to topple their governments.¹⁹

John Stockwell, in his book, *In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story*, writes that he was torn between his loyalty to the CIA and his responsibilities to the United States' Constitution. He insists that CIA oaths and honor codes must never take precedence over allegiance to his country. Before his resignation from the CIA, Stockwell considered the option of working within the CIA for reforms. He realized that while the CIA benevolently protected and supported officers who had been rendered ineffective by life tragedies, it had little tolerance of the outspoken individual, the reformist. Stockwell had to resign from the service after positive recommendations both verbally and in writing

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ William Blum, *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II* (Monroe, Me: Common Courage Press, 2004), 198-200.

made by him through the years for reform to his African Division bosses had proved futile.²⁰

His objective in writing this book is to give the American public a candid glimpse inside the clandestine mind, behind the last veils of secrecy and full details about the agency's activities. The book abounds with enough anecdotes to give the reader a full taste of the things the CIA did, and the people, they were. Stockwell invites his readers to choose between CIA misadventures and the fundamental right to know the truth about public servants' activities and to keep them honest.²¹

Stockwell reiterates that he cannot be bound by the oath of secrecy he signed when he joined the CIA in 1964 for four reasons. His oath was not only illegally and fraudulently obtained but his CIA recruiters lied to him about the clandestine services as he was sworn in. His recruiters insisted the CIA only functioned to gather intelligence and did not kill, use drugs, or damage people's lives. It was not until the disclosures of the Church and Pike Committees, the United States Senate Select Committee to study Governmental Operations with respect to Intelligence Activities, in 1975 that he learned the full, shocking truth about his employers.²²

The Pike Committee, according to Stockwell, was forced to rely on the testimony of reluctant witnesses and on documents the CIA electively provided which doubtless

²⁰ John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc.), 11, 12.

²¹ *Ibid*, 13, 15.

²² *Ibid*, 9.

indicated complete fidelity to National Security Council direction. However, what the Pike Committee was unable to penetrate was the gray area of CIA operations, where its operatives take action without leaving written traces of what they do. For example the CIA station in Ghana played a major role in the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah in 1966. This was in violation of a directive of the 40 Committee, a division of the United States government whose mandate was to review proposed major covert action decisions. However, CIA cables and dispatches infer that all contacts with the plotters were undertaken solely to obtain intelligence on what they were doing. Similarly, CIA written records became mysteriously vague about the Patrice Lumumba of the Congo assassination plot, the Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic assassination plot, and the Rene Schneider of Chile assassination plot. In each case there are documents which place CIA officers in supportive contact with the eventual assassins but the link seems to break before the final deed.²³

In *Kwame Nkrumah: Vision and Tragedy*, David Rooney sets out to show how Nkrumah's hopes and dreams for Ghana and for Africa are once again coming to be seen as relevant to Africa's problems. According to Rooney, Nkrumah saw all the visions, dreamt all the dreams, and made all the mistakes. These mistakes cost Ghana dearly, but the mistakes he made are, in their way, as valuable as his vision to an Africa still grappling with the problems of poverty, exploitation, and debt. Learning from Nkrumah's mistakes Rooney believes could still save Africa's leaders from future blunders, while the

²³ Ibid, 160.

inspiration of his idealism still impels them towards the elusive goal of a prosperous and united Africa.²⁴

Talking about the role played by the CIA in the 1966 coup plot, Rooney after weighing a lot of evidence, reasonably concludes that the CIA were closely in touch with the coup leaders, they were very well briefed, and that they were satisfied with the information they obtained; but they did not actually set the coup in motion or take part in its execution.²⁵

In *Legacy of Ashes*, Tim Weiner draws his information from the words, the ideas, and the deeds set forth in the files of the American national-security establishment. They record what the leaders really said, really wanted, and really did when they projected power abroad. This book is based on Weiner's reading of more than fifty thousand documents, primarily from the archives of the CIA, the White House, and the State Department; more than two thousand oral histories of American intelligence officers, soldiers, and diplomats; and more than three hundred interviews conducted since 1987 with the CIA officers and veterans, including ten directors of central intelligence.²⁶ Weiner presents graphic accounts on the assassination of the Congolese Prime Minister

²⁴ David Rooney, *Kwame Nkrumah; Vision and Tragedy* (Legon-Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2007), 13.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 342.

²⁶ Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA*, (New York: Doubleday, 2007), xvii.

Patrice Lumumba.²⁷ The assassination of Lumumba definitely had dramatic effect on Nkrumah considering the fact that he had narrowly escaped three of these assassination attempts. It was no wonder Nkrumah intensified his attack on the United States after the sudden death of Lumumba for as the Ghanaian proverb goes, “It is better to get nearer to the source of water when one finds the beard of his neighbor on fire.”

Most of these scholars agree that the United States, in an attempt to contain communism employed all means at her disposal to destabilize governments seen to be communist oriented. Ghana, under Nkrumah, was seen by the United States as flirting with communist China and the Soviets and this possibly made these scholars argue that his downfall might have been orchestrated by the United States.

²⁷ Ibid, 162.

CHAPTER TWO

KWAME NKRUMAH AND HIS IDEOLOGIES

Osagyefo (warrior chief who defeated the enemy and saved the nation) Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, as he was popularly called, was born to Nwia Kofi, a goldsmith, and Madam Nyanebah in 1909 in the small town of Nkroful in the Western region of Ghana. After a successful elementary school education, he taught at the Axim Catholic School and continued his education at the Accra training college with the ambition of returning to teaching after five years in order to save money to pay his way to the United States. Unlike most of his contemporaries among his countrymen whose dream was to graduate from a British university, Nkrumah's dream was to pursue his higher education in the United States.¹

His choice of the United States perhaps had been influenced by Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey, a fellow Ghanaian and the assistant vice-principal of the Accra Teacher Training College that Nkrumah attended who had graduated from an American university. Nkrumah finally made his way to his dreamland, the United States, through the help of an uncle living in Lagos, Nigeria, who helped to pay for his trip to Britain and from Britain to the United States in 1935.²

While in the United States, in 1942, Nkrumah earned a Master of Science degree in education from the University of Pennsylvania, and a Master of Arts degree in philosophy from the same school the following year. At Lincoln University, one of

¹ Yoda, 188.

² Ibid.

America's premier historically black educational institutions, while lecturing in political science, he was elected president of the African Student Organization of America and Canada. During his time in the United States, he preached at black Presbyterian churches in Philadelphia and New York City, read books about politics and divinity, and tutored students in philosophy. In 1945 Nkrumah left the United States for Britain to study law and to complete his doctoral thesis in philosophy. It was in Britain where he met with George Padmore, the veteran Pan African leader and helped in organizing the Fifth Pan African Congress in Manchester.³

In London, Nkrumah aimed to read law and complete a doctoral thesis. He therefore enrolled at Gray's Inn and also at the London School of Economics. Nkrumah became deeply involved in the political and welfare activities of the West African Students Union, and when Padmore asked him to help with the preparations for the Pan African Conference, he readily neglected his academic studies.⁴ Nkrumah made this clear in his autobiography that:

By this time I had ceased my law studies, primarily because I had no money but also because I had become so deeply engrossed in socio-political activities that I had no time to do any serious study. My thesis, too, second destined to be an unfinished work, but at that time such matters seemed trivial compared with the need for arousing African nationalism, for only by prompt and concerted action could we ever hope to achieve even a small part of the program we had set ourselves.⁵

³ Ahmad A. Rahman, *The Regime Change of Kwame Nkrumah: Epic Heroism in Africa and the Diaspora* (New York, NY.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), ix, x.

⁴ Rooney, 41.

⁵ Kwame Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1957), 60.

After a ten-year stint in the United States and two and a half years in Britain, Nkrumah returned home to the then Gold Coast at the invitation of the United Gold Coast Convention Party (UGCC), the first political party of the country, to become its general secretary. In 1949 he split from the UGCC to form the Convention Peoples Party (CPP). From then on Nkrumah thought of nothing else than to redeem the Gold Coast from the shackles of colonialism and as historian Lalbila Yoda explains that he became the main architect and artisan of Ghana's independence, one of the founding fathers of the Ghanaian nation and also one of the most outstanding politicians that Africa ever had.⁶

In a general election of 1956 the CPP won an outright majority, gaining 71 seats out of 104. In the number of votes cast, the CPP had nearly 400,000 compared to 300,000 for the National Liberation Movement (NLM). After the 1956 election, the Governor invited Nkrumah to form his government. Facing his hour of triumph, he appointed many of his original CPP supporters to the new Cabinet. In Britain, press and political circles expressed general agreement that, as a result of the election, the British government should go ahead with the program of independence.⁷

The Gold Coast, as it was formerly called, became independent of British colonial rule on March 6, 1957. On becoming independent, the Gold Coast assumed the name of

⁶ Yoda, 178.

⁷ Rooney, 168, 169.

Ghana, which has a historical link with the ancient Empire of Ghana which flourished in the Sudan and lasted from the fourth to the thirteenth century.⁸

Even though it can be argued that Nkrumah's years in Britain were taken up with political activities, one will as well be right to say that he became intellectually mature in the United States. Not only did the United States shape his intellect, it also strongly influenced his political ideas. He might have taken a clue from America's rebellion to become free from British rule. Among the reasons that resulted in the Revolutionary War (1775-83) in the British American colonies was American resentment of their idea of subordination to Britain. Americans became aware of their existence as a different entity from Britain, as Americans rather than British subjects. This awareness of self-government and the basis of nationalism also became the watchword for Nkrumah.⁹

As Nkrumah was leaving the United States for Britain his thought about the Statue of Liberty echoed in his statement, "you have opened my eyes to the true meaning of liberty. I shall never rest until I have carried your message to Africa." The statue, which is the symbol of freedom and the American dream, became for Nkrumah an incentive in his struggle to free his country and Africa from colonial domination.¹⁰

However, although Nkrumah drew inspiration from the United States' historical resistance to colonialism, Ghana's independence was not obtained after a war of

⁸ Max Addo, *Ghana's Foreign Policy in Retrospect* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967), 9.

⁹ Yoda, 190.

¹⁰ Ibid.

independence; rather, it was granted gradually through negotiations with Britain. Nkrumah's political objective was to liberate and to unify the entire African continent (the United States of Africa) again making the United States of America his model.¹¹ On the eve of Ghana's independence, March 6, 1957, Nkrumah declared that the independence of Ghana would be meaningless until it was linked up with the total liberation of the African continent.

Ghana's independence in 1957 was the most untroubled and completely successful moment in the brilliant, dramatic and tragic life of Kwame Nkrumah. He gave pride and self-respect not only to Ghana, but to the whole of Africa and to the Black people the world over. Ghana's move toward independence seemed to many like Africa's first attempt to claw back some of the power and dignity which had been lost to Europeans during the decades of colonial rule and economic exploitation. The revolution that took place in Africa in the ten years after 1957, in which over thirty countries gained their independence, stemmed directly from Ghana's example and from Nkrumah's achievement.¹²

When he became the first President of Ghana in 1957, Nkrumah profited from the fact that the United States government hoped to use his American education and connections and his prestige to enhance United States credibility with Black Africans.¹³

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Rooney, 21.

¹³ Gerald E. Thomas, "The Black Revolt: The United States and Africa in the 1960s," in *The Diplomacy of the Crucial Decade: American Foreign Relations During the 1960s*, ed. Diane Kunz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 335.

Vice President Richard M. Nixon on his return from Ghana's independence celebration began to move for a more active United States foreign policy in Africa. He was convinced that America's neglect of the emerging nations was hurting its battle with communism and therefore lobbied for a separate Bureau for African Affairs in the State Department, increased economic aid in Africa and improvements in civil rights at home. He realized that segregation had become a potent communist propaganda issue in Africa.¹⁴

Although Nkrumah admired the United States for having won its independence from the British, he did not embrace the liberal ideology which formed the basis of its economic prosperity. He turned to the Soviet "model" which had succeeded in lifting a backward society into a powerful political and economic force in a very short period of time. Nkrumah believed that Africa had to develop quickly and that socialism was the key to guiding the continent along that path. The relationships between Nkrumah's regime and the United States were soured by this ideological bias.¹⁵

From a predominantly Marxist standpoint, Nkrumah saw the power of the Western industrial countries and their multinational companies as the main threat to the economic prosperity of the Third World countries then moving towards independence. He therefore proclaimed an ideology in which the government would take over the means of production and distribution, and use the expected profits to provide for better industrial

¹⁴ Thomas J. Noer, "New Frontier and Old Priorities in Africa," 255.

¹⁵ Yoda, 193.

and social development.¹⁶ From the assumption of office as the first president of Ghana, Nkrumah publicly declared to the entire world his new ideologies; non-alignment, positive socialism and his unflinching support to see Africa united. He vowed to have them implemented to the letter and not to have them compromised in any way.

Non-alignment as practiced by Ghana under Nkrumah was based on co-operation with all states no matter what their ideologies might be whether they be capitalist, socialist or have a mixed economy. Such a policy, therefore, according to Nkrumah, involved foreign investments from capitalist countries, but they must be invested in accordance with a national plan drawn up by the government of the non-aligned state with its own interest in mind. The issue was not what return the foreign investor received on his investments.¹⁷

In a speech to the United States Senate on July 24, 1958, Nkrumah denied categorically that he wanted any “gifts” from America, but only investments that would “repay the original capital with reasonable interest.” He also defended his foreign policy of “positive neutralism” in the Cold War and pledged never to nationalize foreign holdings in Ghana.¹⁸

In a letter to President Lyndon B. Johnson dated February 26, 1964, Nkrumah reiterated his government’s policy of non-alignment that Ghana had pursued unflaggingly

¹⁶ Rooney, 10.

¹⁷ Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (New York: International Publishers, 1966), x.

¹⁸ Thomas J. Noer, “The New Frontier and African Neutralism: Kennedy, Nkrumah and the Volta Project,” *Diplomatic History* 8 (Winter 1984), 63.

from the very first days of independence. He explained how dangerous it was for the emerging states of Africa to take sides in the diplomatic maneuvers and political disputes among the great powers. He hinted that one of the principal aims of his government was to protect itself from the dangers of involvements in these maneuvers and disputes. The implication of this was that Ghana was to establish good relations with all countries of the world, irrespective of the political systems of their governments. To support his socialist stand, Nkrumah argued that anyone who had followed the history of African development impartially would agree that a planned economy and rapid industrial and agricultural development could be best achieved through a socialist course.¹⁹

The ravages of colonialism and its effects on the territories emerging from colonialism, according to Nkrumah, made it difficult for Africa to follow the traditional path of capitalist development. It was therefore imperative for the public sector of the productive economy to expand at the maximum possible rate. It was therefore the ambition of Nkrumah to secure and maintain the economic independence of Ghana in such a manner as to forestall the danger of the growth of those social antagonisms which can result from the unequal distribution of economic power among the people of Ghana. Nkrumah, in effect, wanted independent African states to be left alone to pursue policies and courses that could be best in the interest of the people of Africa and conducive to the maintenance of a good relationship to other governments of the world.²⁰

¹⁹U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968*, vol. 24, 426, 427.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

A speech made by President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia as quoted by Max Addo in *Ghana's Foreign Policy in Retrospect* can be used to drive home the point on the views of some African leaders on the question of non-alignment. "Zambia stands like the other non-aligned nations, for the abolition of colonialism and neo-colonialism in all forms; and for the right to accept help from East or West without committing our people to accepting their political beliefs. Or will purchase economic development at the cost of a new type of colonialism. [sic] Too often, sometimes unknowingly, technical assistance and aid have contained tendencies towards new type of dependence (neo-colonialism) just as difficult to throw off as the old (political domination). It is our view that bargains have no part to play in technical assistance. Therefore we ask that countries which offer us their aid should not exploit our need in order to infringe our sovereignty, for this is something which we shall guard jealously."²¹

In an article entitled „The Loneliness of Nkrumah” published in the *New York Times Magazine* of June 27, 1965, J. Kirk Sale stated that Nkrumah’s ideology holds that “capitalism is but the gentleman’s method of slavery” which uses “the cajolement, the wheedling, the seduction and the Trojan horses of neo-colonialism” in underdeveloped countries “to subordinate their interests to those of a foreign power.” Hence Ghana turned away as much as possible from the capitalist nations on which it would logically depend for foreign trade and economic assistance. The United States was continually depicted as putting bombs in the hands of Nkrumah’s enemies, Britain was assailed for every real and imagined ill affecting its former colony, West Germany was castigated as a “running

²¹ Addo, 29, 30.

dog of imperialism.” It was no wonder that when Ghana went round in May 1965 secretly soliciting desperately needed funds from these countries it was given the coldest shoulder at every stop. Yet there was no suggestion that Ghana had any intention of giving up its ideological barrage in order to get economic sustenance.²²

The State Department saw a leftward trend in Ghana and found the non-alignment being preached by Nkrumah as fake. In a special report from the Central Intelligence Agency Office of Current Intelligence it was noted that at least the pace of Ghana’s leftward movement appeared directly affected by the consuming ambition of Nkrumah to be the head man in a politically united Africa and a recognized world leader. In this quest Nkrumah encountered a long succession of unsettling frustrations which he believed to be the work of Western “neo-colonialists.”²³

He was seen as increasingly thinking that the West was so implacably hostile to his aspirations and that it was constantly conspiring to bring about his physical liquidation. He saw the United States as the chief villain in this fancied conspiracy against him. Communist countries on the other hand, according to the intelligent reports were regarded by Nkrumah as dependable allies and reliable sources of support for his grand design. He was flattered by and pleased by the many attentions of these countries,

²²J. Kirk Sale, “The Loneliness of Kwame Nkrumah,” *New York Times Magazine*, 27 June 1965, 4.

²³Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Current Intelligence, No. 0314/64C, January 17, 1964, 1.

whose short term aims, were at least well served by Nkrumah's militant nationalist line and increasing willingness to propagate Marxist-Leninist analysis at home and abroad.²⁴

After attaining independence for Ghana, Nkrumah did not think of enabling Ghana to concern herself, first and foremost with her internal problems and consolidating Ghana's independence, but joined forces with other African countries to fight for their political independence. Nkrumah saw Ghana's independence as not complete unless it was linked up with the total liberation of the African continent. He therefore embarked on what he called "Active African Policy." This active African policy was translated to mean Ghana's desire to see that all the countries of Africa became free from colonial domination and see to the unification of the African continent.

The achievement of Ghana's independence in 1957 gave hope to leaders of independence movements all over Africa and inspiration to the civil rights leaders in the United States as illustrated by the enthusiastic reception Nkrumah received from the black communities during his visits to America and his correspondence with Martin Luther King until his assassination in 1968. In the decade after 1957, while many African countries moved towards their own independence, Kwame Nkrumah, almost alone among African leaders, saw the continent's future in a global perspective.²⁵

Like Martin Luther King, Nkrumah also had a dream of a United Africa, strong enough to prevent petty military dictatorship, and able to resist the multinationals and

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Rooney, 9.

other neocolonialist forces and to create prosperity for all its peoples.²⁶ Nkrumah envisaged a Union of West Africa, but he later realized that unity must be extended to a Union of African States which was to constitute a nucleus of a United States of Africa. Nkrumah's pan-Africanism was to be extended later on to Blacks all over the world. When Ghana became independent, he wasted no time in joining action to words. While Nkrumah was in power, his country was a home away from home for countless African exiles and liberation fighters. He invited black Americans who wished to come and stay in Ghana to do so. Among the many black Americans who responded to this homecoming call was W.E.B. Du Bois who settled and died there in 1963. Today his house has turned into the "Du Bois Centre for Pan-African Culture."²⁷

According to Max Addo, the active policy professed by Nkrumah was a self conceived unilateral move that was imposed by Ghana on the continent. To him, it would have been a positive idea if the move was a concerted action by all the independent states of Africa and leaders of African countries who were then struggling to be free. A concerted action to Addo would have allayed any suspicion that Ghana was assuming African leadership, thereby creating a healthy atmosphere within the context of the African liberation struggle. On the contrary, it sowed the seed of suspicion and distrust making the rest of Africa look to Ghana with misgivings.²⁸

²⁶ Ibid, 10.

²⁷ Yoda, 191.

²⁸ Addo, 12.

Nkrumah identified and somewhat proclaimed himself as the leader of Pan-Africanism. To make this possible, he used Ghana as the starting point of the Pan-Africanism Movement. Ghana became the pay-master general of Africa, to such an extent that she was the supplier of the manpower when Ghanaians were sent to other African countries to undertake what later turned out to be unspecified assignments. Ghana provided, where necessary, the military personnel in the form of training experts, and the supply of what has now been described as “subversive elements” to bring about African unity.²⁹

VOLTA RIVER PROJECT AND NKRUMAH'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES BETWEEN 1957 AND 1966

As part of her industrialization drive, the government of Ghana proposed the building of a dam on the Volta River to generate electricity for the processing of aluminum. Nkrumah believed that the realization of this project would demonstrate his ability to deal with major powers and complete a necessary step in the industrialization of Ghana.

The British colonial government of the Gold Coast initiated the first enquiries into the possibility of a major hydro-electric scheme based on the River Volta, the aim of which was to provide electricity for the whole country, irrigation in the dry Accra plain, and large scale fisheries from a huge man-made lake. The scheme envisaged the construction of a new town and artificial harbor at Tema, fifteen miles east of Accra,

²⁹ Ibid.

which would have modern dock facilities to deal with imports and exports for the eastern half of the country.³⁰

Behind these far-reaching schemes was the World Bank forecast that the demand for aluminum would increase fourfold in the twenty years after 1950, and therefore a smelter and local bauxite could provide Ghana with a permanent and valuable manufactured export which would bolster revenue when the cocoa price fluctuated. Many of these schemes proved sound and successful, but the plans did not work out entirely as predicted.³¹ Through the Volta River Project, Nkrumah set out to make Ghana the nucleus of an industrial base for the whole of Africa, and to save the continent from the debt-creating attentions of the capitalist world.³²

Nkrumah unsuccessfully approached Britain, the World Bank and the Aluminum Company of Canada (ALCAN) for financial assistance on the Volta Project but had a sigh of relief when America finally promised coming to the aid of Ghana in her quest for industrialization. One of the few specific examples cited in support of Kennedy's flexible policies in Africa is the decision to grant Ghana a large amount of aid for construction of the hydroelectric dam and aluminum smelter on the Volta River. His willingness to fund the project, despite the fact that Ghana's leader Kwame Nkrumah was one of the most militant exponents of African nationalism and a vocal critic of United States foreign policy, has been used to show his commitment to meeting economic need without

³⁰ Rooney, 216.

³¹ Ibid.

³² David Rooney, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Political Kingdom in the Third World* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1988), 2.

demanding allegiance to American ideology.³³ It can however, be viewed that while Nkrumah used the Volta project as a tool to play off America and Russia against each other to extract the most economic aid, the United States used the project to put pressure on Nkrumah to tone down his anti-American press campaign and change both his domestic and foreign policies.

Reports from the Central Intelligence Agency attest to the fact the United States used the Volta Dam project to pull Nkrumah towards the West. The Central Intelligence Agency's Office of National Estimates in a staff memorandum of December 19, 1963 believed that the West was in for a dreary time in the months ahead, and that its position in Ghana would deteriorate markedly. Nevertheless it was well to recall that there was something of a cyclical character to Nkrumah's virulent anti- West campaigns. The Agency did not believe that Nkrumah planned to eliminate United States or Western influence in Ghana, because of the Volta Dam project, since he continued to believe that he could obtain assistance on comparatively easy terms and without substantial concessions.³⁴

The memorandum added that there was an even chance that further tightening of Ghanaian-Soviet economic ties would unhinge United States plans for the construction of the major dam on the Volta River. A consortium of United States industrial concerns were deeply disturbed by the looming financial and political crisis in Ghana, as well as

³³ Noer, "The New Frontier and African Neutralism: Kennedy, Nkrumah, and the Volta River Project," 61, 62.

³⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, Office of National Estimates, Staff Memorandum No.85-63, December, 19, 1963, 10.

the country's anti-Western orientation. Any sudden lurch by Nkrumah in a more clearly defined pro-Soviet direction could lead the United States group to further delay or drop its plans for the Volta project. There was at least an even chance such action would lead Ghana to emulate Nasser's conduct in similar circumstances and pursue the major project with Soviet Bloc aid. The Soviet Union had clearly indicated its interest in providing such support.³⁵

Ghana before independence had good diplomatic relations with quite a number of countries including the United States, France and the State of Israel, just to mention a few. Immediately after the attainment of independence, Ghana wisely strengthened the already established diplomatic relations with Britain, France, India, Liberia, and the State of Israel and sought admission into the world body, the United Nations Organization. In spite of the tensions with the United States, Ghana after independence still wanted to maintain a diplomatic relationship with her. Perhaps this was to attest to the fact that the "devil you know is always better than the angel you do not know."³⁶

Although Nkrumah gave speeches in support of private enterprise, by the late 1960s American officials increasingly viewed him as a dangerous radical. Despite his promise of positive neutralism, he seemed to many in Washington to be dedicated to a socialist dictatorship opposed to American foreign policy. He had steadily tightened his personal control of Ghana since independence. By 1960 he had eliminated nearly all

³⁵ Ibid, 7.

³⁶ Noer, 10.

formal opposition and severely restricted the press and free speech. More alarming to Americans was his vocal opposition to European colonialism and United States efforts in the Cold War. Ghana was a leader of Afro-Asian criticism of the United States in the United Nations and voted with the Soviet Union on major issues. Nkrumah welcomed Soviet aid, negotiated special agreements for Russian purchases of Ghanaian cocoa and arranged for the U.S.S.R. to finance construction of a small hydroelectric project on the Black Volta.³⁷

Secretary of State Christian Herter concluded from a speech made by Nkrumah at the United Nations in the fall of 1960 that the Ghanaian leader was definitely in the Communist camp and Nkrumah was therefore refused a visit to Washington to discuss the Congo and the Volta project by Eisenhower and State Department officials.³⁸

Several actions taken by Nkrumah in 1961 and beyond made the Kennedy administration have reservations about the positive neutralism that he loudly professed. Congress and the American press branded Nkrumah as Communist and even the president's father reportedly demanded of his son: "What in the hell are you doing with that communist Nkrumah."³⁹ In July 1961, Nkrumah embarked on an eight-week tour of Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and China, where he praised the Soviet Union for

³⁷ Ibid, 68.

³⁸ Ibid, 64.

³⁹ Ibid, 72.

supporting African independence, called for diplomatic recognition of China, and denounced the United States and Europe for imperialism in the Congo.⁴⁰

In late 1962 there was a massive new surge of anti-Western attacks in the leftist-managed party press, continuing almost without letup until well into 1963. All major Western governments were in turn accused of complicity in the Kulungugu affair, (assassination attempt on Nkrumah) but the main brunt of the sustained campaign was directed against the United States and several of its agencies. Nkrumah demanded the removal of two United States Embassy officers who he had apparently been persuaded to believe were subversive agents in league with his domestic enemies.⁴¹

Nkrumah angered the United States the more when he announced sending 400 Ghanaians to the Soviet Union for training. General H. T. Alexander, the British head of Ghana's armed forces, was summarily dismissed when he objected to Nkrumah's plan and two strongly pro-Western cabinet members were also dismissed for criticizing his East European tour.⁴² Despite Lyndon Johnson's firm stand on improving civil rights in the United States, Nkrumah felt that the new president's position on Africa was not as friendly as Kennedy's. This caused a gulf to open between the two leaders. The Ghanaian government expelled four American professors from their posts at the University of Ghana on the grounds that the academics were involved in subversive activities.⁴³

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Central Intelligence Agency Report, OCI No. 0314/64C, January, 17, 1964, 5.

⁴² Noer, 10.

⁴³ Herger, n. p.

Parallel signs of new involvement with the USSR in critical areas also began to appear. Soviet security agents were again reported serving as advisers at Flagstaff House, the official residence of the president, as they had for several months after the Kulungugu incident. Ghana's intelligence chiefs said that they were forced to send trainees to Moscow. In late October, 1965 a Soviet delegation reportedly composed of high-ranking military officers paid a brief, surreptitious visit to Accra. Intermittent military discussions were held between the two countries since late 1960 when Russia offered broad assistance in this field.⁴⁴

Following Nkrumah's actions, outbursts and criticisms against American policies, President Kennedy hinted about withdrawing America's support from the Volta project but Nkrumah threatened to publish Kennedy's broken promise as one more example of America's duplicity and non-support for African aspirations. Kennedy, who had earlier in June 1961 sent a warm personal letter announcing his approval to fund the project, found himself in an untenable position, and was therefore forced reluctantly to agree to a \$96 million loan guarantee to support the Volta Dam project.⁴⁵ Kennedy's endorsement of the Volta project was partly based on the fact that he was trying to prevent another Aswan, where the United States after agreeing to build a similar project on the Nile River in Egypt backed out for the Soviet Union to take over.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Central Intelligence Agency Report, OCI No. 0314/64C, 10.

⁴⁵ Thomas, 336.

⁴⁶ Noer, "New Frontier and Old Priorities in Africa," 279.

Nkrumah's writing of *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, might have been the last straw that worsened his relations with the United States and that might have led to his doom. In this book, Nkrumah portrayed the United States as the primary neo-colonial power playing the leading role in an international financial monopoly. Nkrumah saw the world as divided into two blocs, the socialist world moving towards communism, and the capitalist world, which he saw being led by the United States, and which was extending imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism.⁴⁷

Nkrumah rejected the commonly accepted division of the world into developed or industrialized and third world nations and minced no words in castigating the United States in his book. "Foremost among the neo-colonialists is the United States, which has long exercised its power in Latin America. Fumblingly at first she turned towards Europe, and then with more certainty after World War II when most countries of that continent were indebted to her. Since then with methodical thoroughness and touching attention to detail, the Pentagon set about consolidating its ascendancy, evidence of which can be seen all round the world."⁴⁸

He went ahead to define neo-colonialism as the system based on the principle of breaking up former large united colonial territories into a number of small non-viable states which are incapable of independent development and must rely upon the former

⁴⁷ Nkrumah, 239.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

imperial power for defense and even internal security. Their economic and financial systems are linked, as in colonial days, with those of the former colonial ruler.⁴⁹

In an article published in the *Washington Post and Times Herald* of November 3, 1965, Donald H. Louchheim elaborated more on Nkrumah's book, *Neo-colonialism, The Last Stage of Imperialism.* Louchheim reported that in this book Nkrumah blamed the Central Intelligence Agency for virtually every setback in the underdeveloped or "socialist" world during 1950s. It denounced the Peace Corps and the United States Information Agency as CIA's most overworked tools in Africa. It called the Western Aid Programs, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund "Neocolonialist traps" to loot Africa or retards its development.⁵⁰

Behind the whole lurid conspiracy, Louchheim said that Nkrumah found American big business monopolies and their Western European satellites, bent on plundering the fabulous wealth of Africa. The book was put on sale for the first time in Accra to coincide with the annual summit meeting of the Organization of African Unity in the Ghanaian capital. On the Peace Corps Nkrumah said that "Acts of subversion or prejudice have led to incidents throughout African, Middle Eastern and Asian countries". He links it to the CIA through its director, Sargent Shriver "a millionaire who made his pile in land speculation in Chicago."⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ibid, xiii.

⁵⁰ Donald H. Louchheim, "Nkrumah calls U.S. Archenemy of Africa," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, November 3, 1965. (paper requested from CIA office)

⁵¹ Ibid.

Louchheim repeated that Nkrumah said Shriver was a confidant and coworker of Allan Dulles in the CIA. It was for USIA, however, that Nkrumah reserved his sharpest criticism. Among the activities he attributed to the Agency were: recruiting informers from government offices; collecting secret information with special reference to defense and economy; bribing public figures; financing, directing and often supplying with arms all anti-neutralist forces in the developing world.⁵²

Whereas the book praised the comparatively insignificant aid from “socialist countries” as “swift and flexible,” few American institutions escaped President Nkrumah’s ire. He particularly deplored Hollywood, where “the revolutionary or the man of dark skin is generally cast as villain, while policemen, the gumshoe or CIA-type is ever the hero. The book’s conclusion was in itself very controversial. “The danger to world peace springs not from the action of those who seek to end neocolonialism, but from the inaction of those who allow it to continue.”⁵³

These and other charges in President Nkrumah’s new book proved a little too much for the State Department to stomach. A spokesman called them “completely unwarranted.” He added that Ghana’s request for 100 million United States dollars in United States Food for Peace aid was no longer under consideration. “No comment,” was the spokesman’s reply when asked whether the aid request had been turned down because

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ “When Nkrumah Bit the Hand That Fed Him,” *U.S. News and World Report*, Vol.59, December 6, 1965, 19.

of the book, but other sources indicated it was indeed a reprisal—and virtually unprecedented in United States handling of foreign aid.⁵⁴

Reporter William S. White, on his part, believed that even though the country involved is little and unimportant and so, relatively, was the amount of money at issue, nevertheless, the implications of the blunt rejection by the United States of the request of Ghana for \$100 million worth of American surplus food were large. The incident according to him cast a long shadow which recipients of American foreign aid everywhere would do well to heed. For the decision not to go on giving handouts to the dictator of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, while he continued to abuse the United States—as so long he did without effective rebuke from Washington, broke previous precedents of American foreign aid policy. It meant that while the United States would indeed tolerate much ingratitude there was, after all, a limit.⁵⁵

White admitted that while the United States needed to show at all costs that there were no strings on foreign aids, he as well recognized the fact that Nkrumah finally passed the extreme limits of tolerance by writing a book—a book on “neo-colonialism” so ugly, so malicious, so savagely false and so bitterly hostile to the United States as sadly to convince his apologists in the United States that he could no longer be regarded as a responsible head of state. To White, Nkrumah’s mistake was to go quite beyond

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ William S. White, “U.S. „NO“ to Ghana . . . : A Hint of A New Aid Policy,” *Washington Post and Times Herald*, November 29, 1965. (paper requested from CIA office)

automatic attacks upon the American Central Intelligence Agency, the universal whipping boy of every foreign interest that wanted to play the communist game while eagerly accepting United States economic assistance. Not only did he offer the usual and routine slanders of the CIA; he hit the most gentle and pacific of the United States instrumentalities, the Peace Corps, no less.⁵⁶

An interview with former US State Department Official Robert P. Smith reveals the fact that Nkrumah's book might also have contributed in a material way to his overthrow shortly afterward. When asked by Charles Stuart Kennedy, Director of the Foreign Affairs Oral History Program, whether the feeling of the United States was one of passivity during that period or tried to say enough was enough because Nkrumah was attacking the United States, at least verbally, all the time, Smith had this comment to make:

He certainly was. We tried for years to get along with Nkrumah. We would turn the other cheek at times and do everything we could to assuage his anger. Nothing worked with him, however. And, again, while I was on the Desk, [sic] I think Nkrumah dropped the straw that broke the camel's back, so to speak, in that he published a new book called *Neo-Colonialism*. I've forgotten the subtitle, which was simply outrageous. It accused the United States of every sin imaginable to man. We were blamed for everything in the world. The book was so bad that I remember the then Assistant Secretary, G. Mennen Williams, called me up and gave me that book and said, "Bob, I know this is bad. I don't know how bad. I want you to take it home tonight and read it. You're not going to get any sleep and I apologize for that, but on my desk, by eight o'clock tomorrow morning, I've got to have a written summary of this because I have called the Ghanaian ambassador in at ten o'clock tomorrow morning. We're going to protest this book." There had already been advanced publicity so we knew it was bad, but we hadn't had our hands on a copy. And it was everything we feared it would be. It was awful. And the next morning

⁵⁶ Ibid.

...he had me in the meeting as the note taker. Never have I ever heard an ambassador get a tongue lashing like Michael Ribiero got from Assistant Secretary Williams that morning. He unfortunately, tried a couple times to interrupt the governor when he was making a point. Secretary Williams had my notes in front of him. And at one point when Ribiero interrupted him, he said, "Just a minute, Mr. Ambassador, don't interrupt me. I'm not through." And he continued to go on. He was raising his voice. He was shaking his finger in the ambassador's face. And it was very painful, [sic] hour-long interview. To put it mildly, he protested vigorously the contents and publication of this book.⁵⁷

In a circular telegram from the Department of State to embassies in Africa on November 23, 1965, Nkrumah's book was condemned in no uncertain terms by Washington, arguing that the book contained unmistakably hostile charges against United States government motives, actions, and intentions and labeling Nkrumah anti-Western and anti-United States. The Assistant Secretary of State summoned the Ghanaian ambassador to the United States on November 18 and lodged a stern oral protest against the book. Ghana's ambassador to the United States was handed an aide-memoire stating that the United States government viewed Nkrumah's attacks with profound concern and informing the government of Ghana that the book's hostility and its provocative and anti-American tone were "deeply disturbing and offensive" to the United States government.⁵⁸

In response to the United States government Aide Memoire of November 18, 1965, the government of Ghana stood its ground to state that in its view the book did not

⁵⁷ Interview with Ambassador Robert P. Smith, *The Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training*, February 28, 1989. <http://hdl.loc.mss/mfdip.2004smi09> (accessed September 30, 2010)

⁵⁸U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-68*, vol.24, 451.

contain any attack upon the United States government as such. What it did was to criticize the fashion in which certain agencies and organizations of the United States had functioned in Africa. The government of Ghana's response added that:

It seems to the government of Ghana that what Dr. Kwame Nkrumah has done was to comment on these organizations and agencies while criticizing the world monopoly capitalism operating in Africa. A glance at the chapter heads in Dr. Nkrumah's book reveals the fact that Dr. Nkrumah is exposing the workings of monopoly capitalism as it is seen throughout the world today. Dr. Nkrumah does not attack governments. Governments are only mentioned in Dr. Nkrumah's argument because at times one way or another by their deeds and actions they are involved in neo-colonialist practices. In essence Dr. Nkrumah's book is a plea for African Unity. It is not intended to be, nor is it, an attack on any particular government.⁵⁹

The government of Ghana concluded that:

The government of Ghana believes that it has by word and deed shown repeatedly over the years its desire to maintain friendly relations with the people and government of the United States. The government of Ghana therefore considers it particularly unfortunate that the United States government should regard Dr. Nkrumah's book as "Anti-American in tone." The government of Ghana takes this opportunity to state that its friendly relations with the government of the United States remain unchanged and that so far as Ghana is concerned, there is no reason for any alteration of the cordial regard which its government holds for the President and the administration of the United States, and would still wish to co-operate with the government of the United States on mutually acceptable projects.⁶⁰

After attaining independence for Ghana, Nkrumah insisted on maintaining a non-aligned stand and promised to relate with all governments regardless of the ideologies they preached. This stand taken by Nkrumah was later seen by the United States as fake.

⁵⁹LJB Library, Aide Memoire from the Government of Ghana to the State Department, November 26, 1965.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

His trips to Eastern Europe, the training of Ghanaian soldiers in Eastern Europe and more importantly Ghana voting on the side of the Soviet Union on important issues at the United Nations were all translated by the United States to mean that Ghana was leaning towards the Soviet Bloc. The publication of Nkrumah's book, *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* added more fuel unto the existing tension between the United States and Ghana caused by her alleged Eastern orientation.

CHAPTER THREE

GHANA IN THE 1960'S

With the publication of Nkrumah's book, *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, Ghana's relations with the United States deteriorated considerably. Even though the Ghanaian government in an Aide Memoire to the State Department declared its desire to maintain friendly relations with the people and government of the United States the tension between the two nations became more tense and fraught with grave complication. The Congo crisis in which Patrice Lumumba was assassinated coupled with the various assassination attempts on Nkrumah alienated the Ghanaian government the more from the United States. The ensuing tensions between the two nations and the unrest at home culminated in the coup d'état that eventually saw to the end of Nkrumah's regime.

THE CONGO CRISIS AND ITS IMPACT ON GHANA—UNITED STATES RELATIONS

Events in the Congo fed the fires of Nkrumah's distrust of the United States. Clearly his interpretation of developments in Viet Nam, Cambodia, and the Congo was unfavorable to the United States. He also probably believed that the United States was chiefly responsible for the collapse of cocoa negotiations, which was especially important to Ghana at that juncture. Finally, the death of President Kennedy—with whom Nkrumah felt a sense of personal relationship, removed an important element of restraint.¹

The Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba had been freely elected, and he appealed to the United States for assistance as his nation shook off Belgium's brutal

¹ Central Intelligence Agency, Office of National Estimates, Staff Memorandum No. 85-63 (Revised) December 19, 1963, 5.

colonial rule and declared its independence in the summer of 1960. American help never came, for the CIA regarded Lumumba as a dope-addled communist dupe. So when Belgian paratroopers flew to reassert control in the capital, Lumumba accepted Soviet planes, trucks, and “technicians” to bolster his barely functioning government. The week that the Belgian soldiers arrived, Dulles sent Larry Devlin, the station chief in Brussels, to take charge of the CIA post in the capital of the Congo and assess Lumumba as a target for covert action. On August 18, after six weeks in the country, Devlin cabled CIA headquarters:

Congo experiencing classic communist effort takeover . . . whether or not Lumumba actual commie or playing commie game . . . there may be little time left in which to take action to avoid another Cuba.²

Allen Dulles delivered the gist of this message at the National Security (NSC) meeting that same day. According to secret Senate testimony delivered years later by the NSC’s notetaker, Robert Johnson, President Eisenhower then turned to Dulles and said flatly that Lumumba should be eliminated. After a dead silence of fifteen seconds or so, the meeting went on. Dulles cabled eight days later saying:

In high quarters here it is the clear-cut conclusion that if LLL [Lumumba] continues to hold high office, the inevitable result will at best be chaos and at worst pave the way to communist takeover of the Congo . . . we conclude that his removal must be an urgent and prime objective and that under existing conditions this would be a high priority of our covert action. Hence we wish to give you wider authority.³

² Weiner, 162.

³ Ibid, 163.

Sidney Gottlieb, the CIA's clubfooted master chemist, brought an airbag carry-on containing vials of lethal toxins to the Congo and handed it to the station chief. It held a hypodermic syringe to inject the lethal drops into food, drink, or tube of toothpaste. It was Devlin's job to deliver the death of Lumumba. The two men held a nervous conversation on or about the night of September 10. "I asked on whose orders these instructions were issued," Devlin said under oath in secret testimony declassified in 1998. The answer was "the President." Devlin testified that he locked the toxins in his office safe and agonized over what to do. He remembered thinking that he would be damned if he left the toxin lying around. In time, he took the poison vials out to the banks of the Congo River and buried them. He said he was ashamed of the order to kill Lumumba. He knew there were other means at the CIA's disposal.⁴

The agency had already selected the Congo's next leader: Joseph Mobutu, "the only man in the Congo able to act with firmness," as Dulles told the President at the NSC meeting on September 21. The CIA delivered \$250,000 to him in early October, following the shipments of arms and ammunition in November. Mobutu captured Lumumba and, in Devlin's word delivered him into the hands of a "sworn enemy." The CIA base in Elizabethville, deep in the heart of the Congo, reported that "a Belgian officer of Flemish origin executed Lumumba with a burst of a submachine gun fire." With the unwavering support of the CIA, Mobutu finally gained control of the Congo after a five-year power struggle.⁵

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

Probably no one factor contributed more to Nkrumah's growing sense of frustration than the Congo episode. It largely triggered and fuelled his deep estrangement from the West. He early became convinced that Western financial interests in general and the United States in particular were responsible for the collapse of the regime of his protégé, Patrice Lumumba. In December 1960, after the successor regime expelled Nkrumah's representative from Leopoldville and a moderate Congolese delegation was seated in the UN over Ghana's protests, Ghanaian media launched their first sustained anti-United States propaganda campaign. In a November 1963 speech before a conference of African journalists in Accra Nkrumah bluntly depicted the Congo as a land being despoiled by "American and Belgian capitalists" ruling through "neocolonialist puppets." The impact on Nkrumah of his failure in the Congo became greater because of the conviction he apparently developed on the eve of that country's independence in June 1960 that the Lumumba regime was prepared to support his project for African Unity.⁶

Nkrumah's attack on American policy in the Congo further jeopardized his dream of having the Volta Project realized. Being a fervent supporter of Patrice Lumumba in the struggle for control in the Congo following its independence from Belgium in 1960, Nkrumah demanded that all foreign powers stay out of the conflict brewing in the Congo. He charged that Washington was working with the European colonialists and the independent state of Katanga under pro-Belgian Moïse Tshombe. He became more virulent in his attack on the United States following the murder of Patrice Lumumba, on

⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, *Special Report*, "The Leftward Trend in Ghana," OCI No. 0314/64C, 4.

January 18, 1961, accusing Washington of cooperating in the death of Lumumba in an attempt to aid puppet regimes in the Congo. There was a mass demonstration of over five hundred people who marched on the American Embassy in Accra after the death of Lumumba, shouting “down with United States imperialism in Africa” and “America murdered Lumumba.”⁷

The *Baltimore Sun* wrote that Richard L. Philips, chief State Department press officer, confirmed that the government controlled press stepped up its anti-American campaign, echoing the charges shouted by an estimated 1,000 organized workers and civilian demonstrators. Vilification of the United States as an “aggressor” in Korea, Panama, Cuba, the Congo and elsewhere was joined with accusations that the United States was spreading rumors with the intent of toppling the Nkrumah regime. Philips continued that G. Mennen Williams, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, called in Miguel Ribero, Nkrumah’s ambassador to the United States, “to protest that the Ghanaian Government might have instigated, inspired or countenanced the anti-American demonstrations. Philips added that this action was followed by United States ambassador to Ghana William P. Mahoney’s oral and written protest to the Ghanaian foreign minister Kojo Botsio.”⁸

Philips concluded that the editor of a government owned daily at Accra, T. D. Baffoe, responded that Ghanaians were fed up with imperialist American dollars as he

⁷ Noer, 68.

⁸ Paul W. Ward, “U. S. Officials Worried by Ghana Action,” *Baltimore Sun*, February 6, 1964, 1, Morning edition.

incited demonstrators outside the American embassy at Accra. Using a Government sound truck's loud speakers Baffoe shouted: "We will massacre you (Americans) as you massacred people in Korea and Germany, in Cuba and Panama...You want to murder Nkrumah...You cannot kill Kwame Nkrumah." The first wave of demonstrators was joined successively by three others, according to reports from Accra. Lashed on by the editor of Ghana's official daily, the *Ghanaian Times*, some of the demonstrators hauled down the American flag in front of the embassy but A. Emerson Player, a 31-year-old American Negro assistant attaché in the political section of the American embassy in Accra dashed out and hoisted it anew.⁹

The *Ghanaian Times* attacked Player as a "Judas" for defending the American flag but Player received a personal message from President Johnson, commending him for "his bravery in protecting the American flag." The *Ghanaian Times* denounced all American Negro diplomats as "skunks and Judases," and said: "We in Africa are prepared to fix them proper."¹⁰

Denouncing suggestions that Player be awarded a medal for his deed, the *Ghanaian Times* said: "One would be the last one to perform such a disgraceful and shameful act. For no people have suffered more under the yoke of Yankee arrogance and racialism than Afro-Americans." The United States embassy protested to the Ghanaian government over the newspaper article and called it "scurrilous." The newspaper charged

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ "Ghana Hints More Yanks Must Get Out: Calls Negro Defender of Flag Judas," *Tribune*, February 11, 1964. (paper requested from CIA office)

that “American agents infiltrated into important institutions of foreign countries and set about their sinister activities at the pull of strings by the CIA insane big business tycoons who manipulate hollow politicians with bribes and threats.”¹¹

The editorial continued: “We know also the dirty job of poisoning the minds of our loyal students and corrupting local lecturers that has been carried out with unprecedented treachery and wile by many spurious American „scholars,“ „experts,“ and what have you now scrawling all over the body of mother Ghana. One by one they must go.”¹² Neither Philips nor any of the department’s specialists in West African affairs was prepared to offer even speculative answers to such questions as: “Why are the „other Western“ or „imperialist,“ powers being spared and only the United States excoriated at Accra?”¹³

*THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN GHANA DURING THE 60S AND THE
ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS ON NKRUMAH*

While Nkrumah was having strained relations with the United States, the situation at home became very critical with tension mounting in all parts of the country. Nkrumah’s popularity declined substantially in mid 1961 when he instituted a wage freeze, tax increases, and a compulsory savings system in an effort to halt a serious drain on foreign exchange reserves without reducing development and prestige expenditures.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ward, 1.

That September, rail and dock workers, and some civil servants struck in protest, a demonstration unprecedented since the country's independence. Some strikers demanded release of political prisoners and the holding of new elections, as well as satisfaction of their economic grievances.¹⁴ A week-long strike action was embarked upon by Ghanaian workers in the three main towns of Accra, Kumasi and Takoradi in protest against the government's compulsory saving scheme and reflected the growing discontent of the Ghanaian public.¹⁵

Numerous assassination attempts traceable to outside intervention dotted Nkrumah's years in power. In one instance, by unintentionally arriving a few minutes late for a dedication ceremony at Kulungugu, he avoided being killed by a time-bomb planted in a bouquet of flowers that had been given to a small child to present to him.¹⁶

The aftermath of this assassination attempt against Nkrumah in August 1962 at Kulungugu, a town he was visiting on the Upper Volta border, rekindled opposition at his center of power. In the following months, a series of bombing attacks in Accra killed at least 20 persons and injured nearly 400 more. The bombers and planners of the attempted assassination at Kulungugu are unknown but were probably part of a small terrorist group with little following. Their objective appears to have been the creation of civil disturbances which would force Nkrumah to step down. In any event, Nkrumah's

¹⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, *Special Report*, "Domestic Opposition to Ghana's Nkrumah," OCI No. 0281/63B, 1.

¹⁵ Thomas, 336.

¹⁶ William Worthy, "Nkrumah: Pan-Africanist Fighter," *The Guardian*, May 24, 1972. (paper requested from CIA office)

response to the violence caused a further drop in his personal popularity. Security measures were tightened, and for five months the frightened president almost completely cut himself off from public contact.¹⁷

Nkrumah tended to withdraw from Flagstaff House, the official residence of the president, and seek refuge in Christiansburg Castle. Here another attempt was made on his life. On New Year's Day 1964, one of his guards, Seth Ametewee, fired several shots at Nkrumah before he was eventually overpowered. This incident, which was never satisfactorily explained, was according to Rooney, used by Nkrumah's propaganda machine. An obviously posed photograph of Nkrumah overpowering his attacker was widely publicized to illustrate his moral, spiritual and physical strength over his enemies, and to support the myth that he was indestructible.¹⁸

Ambassador Mahoney and President Johnson sent immediate expressions of regret and concern— partly to allay the expected allegations from Ghanaian sources that the CIA was behind the attack. Nkrumah promptly sacked the top police commanders; by alienating the police he made his own position precarious. Mahoney, in a dispatch to President Johnson, stated that Nkrumah's regime was in greater jeopardy than ever before, and thought that the military might well stage a coup. Shortly afterwards, it

¹⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, *Special Report*, "Domestic Opposition to Ghana's Nkrumah," OCI No. 0281/63B, 4.

¹⁸ Rooney, *Kwame Nkrumah: Vision and Tragedy*, 326.

became known that the Russian Ambassador Rodionov had suggested at a Cuban embassy reception that the British were behind the assassination attempt.¹⁹

Nkrumah himself survived three assassination attempts, and he blamed the CIA and western imperialists for masterminding those attacks on his life. Internal tensions were heightened during this period and by 1965 Nkrumah had turned Ghana into a one-party state with his agents throughout Ghana reporting those who were possibly disloyal to him. He used Ghana's Preventive Detention Act of 1958 to imprison opponents of his regime for as long as five years without trial.²⁰

A Special Report from the Central Intelligence Agency indicated that recent developments in Ghana climaxed by the January 2, 1964 attempt on President Nkrumah's life accelerated the country's long prevailing leftward trend. A referendum was held from January 24-31, 1964 to formally convert Ghana into a one-party state and to provide a constitutional base for a pervasive party totalitarianism consciously modeled on that of communist countries. A coterie of extremists, including doctrinaire pro-Communists who had increasingly gained Nkrumah's ear, already was agitating for a thorough purge of all remaining moderate elements. At the same time, Nkrumah was continuing to broaden his direct involvement with the Communist world—now even publicly mouthing its idiom—and to deflect Ghana even further from its once exclusively Western orientation. The

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Thomas, 336.

report added that barring a successful coup against his regime, it would probably be increasingly difficult for the West to maintain an effective presence in Ghana.²¹

Ghana's economy was further aggravated when her creditors began to turn down her requests for loans. The American government despite its promise turned down Ghana's request to grant her food products. The elements which were waging a propaganda campaign against Ghanaian socialism and personally against Nkrumah took advantage of this state of affairs and accused Nkrumah of having led the country's economy up a blind alley and claimed that the country was heading towards inevitable economic catastrophe.²²

In Ambassador William P. Mahoney's year-end assessment of January 10, 1964, he presented a graphic description on the events in Ghana and opted for a new blueprint to ensure Western presence in Ghana. The ambassador disclosed that what many feared might happen in Ghana edged closer to reality during the last two months of 1963. He indicated the situation in Ghana deteriorated in the last two months of 1963 by free-world standards and especially by United States' standard and that no prospect for stopping the decline could be in sight as long as Nkrumah remained the head of state. Connected with this deterioration, and in a sense because of it, Nkrumah drifted further toward and relied more upon the Soviet Bloc. The ambassador continued arguing that:

²¹ Central Intelligence Agency, *Special Report*, "The Leftward Trend in Ghana," OCI No. 0314/64C, 1.

²² Koojo S. Lewis, *How America Toppled Nkrumah* (Winneba: Victoria Press, 1967), 7.

Vain and easily bruised by “lack of understanding,” he finds that the West he resents, mistrusts and admires misunderstands him more often than not. More than half convinced that a conspiracy of monopoly capital controls all aspects of American life, he sees a common pattern of implacable opposition in Time, CIA and the international bankers of the West. President Kennedy, a possible exception, has been destroyed by the vast forces of evil. We shouldn’t be surprised, therefore, that he has been moving politically eastward. He now feels probably that this is his only source of support.²³

Mahoney felt that there was little to be done to correct or moderate Nkrumah’s notions, though the United States might be able to influence his actions if it were prepared to bring sufficient pressure on him. He contended that although a few temporary results were produced in early 1963 without being forced to press their case to extreme, strong measures designed to force specific changes in Nkrumah’s actions might not be readily successful.²⁴

The condition became volatile and precarious such that the internal situation alone might have been enough for a change in policies and obviously in government. It did not, therefore, come as surprise to most Ghanaians to hear on the fateful day of February 24, 1966 that Nkrumah’s regime was no more, for they sensed it and saw it coming. Nkrumah’s government was toppled and was succeeded by General Joseph Ankrah and the National Liberation Council.

²³ Ambassador’s Year-end Assessment to Department of State, January 10, 1964, LBJ Library.

²⁴ Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR

NKRUMAH'S OUSTER AND THE UNITED STATES' INVOLVEMENT

After the widespread talk of a coup when Nkrumah was leaving for Hanoi, it was not a great surprise to the people of Ghana when at 6 a.m. on February 24, 1966 Colonel E.K. Kotoka announced on Ghana radio that "The myth surrounding Nkrumah has been broken." Three figures masterminded the military action leading to the coup: Colonel Kotoka, Major A.A. Afrifa and Police Commissioner John Harley. Their plans were helped by the general belief that large-scale military exercises were taking place in preparation for a Rhodesian expedition.¹

A battalion moved south from Tamale, joined up with forces in Kumasi, and moved on Accra without arousing any suspicion. They moved into position on the night of February 23, and in the early hours of February 24 attacked Flagstaff House, the radio station and other key points in Accra. The coup was almost bloodless except for the killing of a General Barwah, who was shot while resisting arrest, and some casualties in the area of Flagstaff House where a Colonel Zanlerigu and the President's own guard regiment put up some fierce but brief resistance.²

Willard De Pree, who was the chief of the political section in American embassy in Ghana at the time of the coup, throws more light on events leading to the coup and what actually happened on the day of the coup itself. Asked about when the coup did happen, De Pree stated that the coup took place in 1966 while Nkrumah was in China on his way to Vietnam. He had approached the United States before the trip asking if the

¹ Rooney, *Kwame Nkrumah: Vision and Tragedy*, 340.

² Ibid.

United States would support his efforts to negotiate a cease fire or settlement in Vietnam. The Johnson administration was convinced that nothing good would come of Nkrumah's efforts, but the United States did not want to publicly discourage him. The United States indicated that it would be interested in whatever he could find out, without encouraging him in any way. It was while he was in China the police and the army moved against him and toppled him.³

Questioned about whether the embassy got wind of the coup plot, De Pree again answered that the embassy reported what they were hearing in Ghana. The CIA was sharing information with the embassy. The unhappiness with Nkrumah and rumors of some plotting were reported back to Washington and so a coup was not unexpected, although when it occurred it came as a surprise and caught a lot of people unaware. The army and police obviously took advantage of his being out of the country to stage and carry out the coup. There was some fighting around Flagstaff House, but for the most part resistance was short-lived.⁴ On the question regarding the coup itself, De Pree had this to offer:

The coup certainly sends adrenaline through one's veins. I can remember the night of the coup I woke up and I could hear the shooting. We lived in the outskirts of the town near the airport and from our roof I could see the tracer bullets. I decided I had better get into the mission. I decided that on the way I would drive by the Flagstaff House to see what was going on. As I got close to Flagstaff House a car about a hundred yards in front of me blew up and I knew that wasn't the place for me. A soldier came out of the bushes and told me to get the hell out of there. I didn't have to be told,

³Interview with Willard De Pree, *The Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training*, February 16, 1994. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mfdip.2004dep02> (accessed September 30, 2010)

⁴ Ibid.

and I high tailed it to the mission by way of a back road. My adrenaline was high at that time.⁵

EVIDENCES OF WESTERN INVOLVEMENT IN THE MILITARY TAKEOVER

Knowing how eagerly the West sought his ouster because of his strong anti colonialism, journalist William Worthy thinks Nkrumah was naïve to absent himself from home and thereby to make a coup that much easier to stage. From reports at the time, British intelligence seemed to have played the major outside role in the coup with the CIA lending active support. According to him those two closely meshed agencies might well have instigated the naïve and futile Vietnam “peace mission” that Nkrumah allowed the British prime minister and other Commonwealth leaders to talk him into undertaking. As long ago as 1966, both Hanoi and the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam had already made clear the basic terms on which the war could be settled and there was no role for the London-dominated British Commonwealth to play reaching such settlement.⁶

Recently declassified documents in *Foreign Relations of the United States* attest to the fact that the State Department had prior information as to when and how the February 24, 1966 coup was planned and as to the identities of the coup plotters as well. Robert W. Komer, of the National Security Staff, in a memorandum to the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs on May 27, 1965 hinted that there might be a pro-Western coup in Ghana and that certain key military and police figures had been planning one for some time, and Ghana’s deteriorating economic condition might provide

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Worthy, n. p. (paper requested from CIA office)

the spark. He continued that the plotters were keeping the State Department briefed and he held the belief that State was more on the inside than the British.⁷

In another development, a memorandum for the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence Richard Helms outlined a number of underground activities leading to the overthrow of Nkrumah's regime. Unfortunately names of principal sources in this memorandum have all been withheld. Before February 24, Office of Current Intelligence (OCI) reporting noted persistent military dissatisfaction with the regime and pointed to a group of army and police officers who were plotting against Nkrumah. Because of government countermeasures and indecisiveness on the part of the plotters, the coup was apparently postponed several times.⁸

An OCI publication has pointed out that the officers involved favored making their move either while Nkrumah was out of the country or when they could take advantage of an outburst of popular discontent. On February 10, 1965 it was noted "plotting is actively underway to oust Nkrumah in the very near future. Plans are incomplete, and this, like previous plots, may collapse before execution." On May 1, 1965 it was established "Some of the steam appears to have gone out of the group of senior military and police officers plotting Nkrumah's overthrow. They are now said to have only vague plans to act sometime in June or July. Public resentment against Nkrumah's domestic policies remains high, however."⁹

⁷U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-68*, vol. 24, 447.

⁸ Ibid, 453, 454.

The CIB (Combined Intelligence Board) on June 19, 1965 stated –Disaffected military and police leaders could well move against the regime soon, possibly during Nkrumah’s current trip abroad. Many military leaders have long been unhappy over Nkrumah’s leadership. A conviction that their personal interests are now at stake could finally overcome their reluctance to move. . . . The Otus (two brothers who held high military posts) have also recently been in close touch with pro-Western Police Commissioner Harley, who is said to be thoroughly fed up with the regime and to have aligned himself with them.”¹⁰

On July 28, 1965 it was discovered that –Nkrumah’s sudden move today in retiring Ghana’s defense chief (Otu) and his deputy (Ankrah) effectively neutralizes the two as potential coup leaders. Both have been involved in coup plotting for several months but vacillated too long and gave Nkrumah the chance to act first.”¹¹

On January 15, 1966 it was revealed –The rash army coup in western Africa has sparked new plotting against Nkrumah. Last spring and summer, restless military officers were reportedly set to move, but they procrastinated too long and Nkrumah was able to defuse the plot.” On February 17, 1966 it was reported –There is another coup plot afoot to kill Nkrumah and take over the government. A clandestine source reports that a number of important military and police officers were involved.” On February 23, the day before the coup, it was reported that the commanders of the army’s two brigades and

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

the commissioner of police might be engineering a move to oust Nkrumah during the Asian tour. The reporter's name was withheld.¹²

Robert Komer, the Acting Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, in a memorandum on March 12, 1966 sent a congratulatory message on the coup to President Lyndon B. Johnson and advised that food aid made up of a few thousand tons of surplus wheat and rice be given to Ghana even though Nkrumah had earlier been refused when he approached the United States with the same demand. Such a gesture was no more than bait as Komer rightly declared, ~~—~~indeed giving them a little only whets their appetite and enables us to use the prospects for more as leverage.”¹³ Komer suggested to President Johnson that in expressing his pleasure to the Secretary of State and others over the Indonesia and Ghana coups, he should make clear that the State Department ought to exploit such successes as quickly and as skillfully as possible.¹⁴

Koojo S. Lewis boldly and openly confirmed Americans' involvement in the 1966 coup by presenting a couple of arguments and evidences to drive home his point. He mentioned Fletcher P. Martin the Senior USIS official attached to the American embassy who was regarded as the CIA Station Chief in Ghana as the one who played an important role in the preparation of the coup. Lewis reveals that Martin was seen off immediately after the coup by top ranking members of the National Liberation Council although his official standing did not call for such honors. He did so in conformity with

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 457.

¹⁴ Ibid.

CIA officials who after fulfilling their missions try to leave the trouble spot so as not to leave any traces of their clandestine activities.¹⁵

Lewis goes ahead to accuse President Lyndon B. Johnson of being the chief conspirator in the Ghanaian coup plot. He argues that to ensure the success of the coup the United States President convinced Nkrumah to leave the country for the Asian tour promising Nkrumah his safety in North Vietnam. In a personal letter to Nkrumah, President Johnson assured him that not a single bomb would explode whilst on his mediation mission in Vietnam. Having dispatched this message Johnson ordered the CIA to set up the preparation of the coup. Lewis sees Washington's decision to turn down Ghana's request for a food grant despite the American government's earlier promise as a calculated plan to thwart the efforts of Nkrumah's government which was then in serious economic difficulties.¹⁶

A close look at the correspondence between President Nkrumah and his United States counterpart Johnson, and the discussion between Nkrumah's foreign minister, Alex Quayson Sackey and President Johnson in Washington discloses something sinister for one to side with Lewis in claiming that Nkrumah was lured into the Vietnam trip by Johnson. In his letter to Johnson dated August 12, 1965, Nkrumah wrote that:

Many thanks for your letter of August 6, which has been delivered to me by my foreign minister Mr. Alex Quayson Sackey. My special envoys brought me some information from Hanoi which I did not divulge to my foreign minister before he left for Washington, because I wanted time to reflect on the main issues raised. At the same time, I was hurriedly making

¹⁵ Lewis, 7.

¹⁶ Ibid.

arrangements to go to Hanoi in spite of the fact that President Ho Chi Minh intimated that he could not guarantee my personal safety. After careful study of the Hanoi report I am satisfied that something good might come out of the information from President Ho Chi Minh.

You will recall that in my letter of August 4, I requested the cessation of air attacks on Vietnam to enable me to visit Hanoi. I made this request to you through my foreign minister because, in the light of information brought to me from Hanoi, I considered that it must be useful for me personally to seek clarification on certain points from President Ho Chi Minh, if I went to Hanoi. Since it is not possible for me to go to Hanoi immediately, because President Ho Chi Minh is not in the position to guarantee my safety, I am now writing to inform you of some impressions I have gained from studying the report which my envoys brought to me from Hanoi. It is necessary for me to discuss these impressions and certain other matters with you personally at your convenience. I am certain that a discussion with you would be of immense help in my peace talks when eventually it is made possible for me to go to Hanoi.

From what I gather from the observation and the discussions of my envoys with the authorities in Hanoi, and, particular, with President Ho Chi Minh, it is clear that after 21 years of continuous fighting the Vietnamese want peace as much as the people of the United States. But they say they want a peace that will guarantee the independence, unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Vietnam. The Vietnamese emphasized that any settlement of the Vietnamese problem will have to be on the basis of the 1954 Geneva Agreement.

It is now clear that President Ho Chi Minh himself and the Vietnamese people have no intention of humiliating the United States which is a great power and entitled to great respect. President Ho Chi Minh pointed out, however, that the Vietnamese are determined to fight to the end to preserve the independence and unity of their country in accordance with the 1954 Geneva Agreement.

I have also got to know from the report of my envoys that the current view that the Chinese are encouraging the Vietnamese to adopt an intransigent attitude is incorrect. It is clear from the report from my envoys that the Vietnamese have taken their own decisions and are determined to see them through. It may be true that they receive a lot of material assistance from China and Russia, but the will to fight to the end is their own, and needs no prompting from outside.

Mr. President, I am informed that the National Liberation Front in South Vietnam also make the Geneva Agreement the basis of any settlement in Vietnam. They also consider that some kind of a national coalition government in the initial stages might help to achieve a solution. With regard to the unification of Vietnam, they are prepared to establish normal relations between the two zones and to advance towards the peaceful

unification of Vietnam. They are prepared, further, to carry out a foreign policy of peace and neutrality and to establish diplomatic relations with all countries which respect the independence and the sovereignty of Vietnam. I know that you and your government are also prepared to accept a settlement of the conflict in Vietnam on the basis of the Geneva Agreement, the neutralization of the area and the unity of two parts of the country by the exercise of the free will of the people of Vietnam through elections. It is appropriate that you, Mr. President, should have taken this stand. Mr. President it is clear to me that the gap which divides the parties to the conflict in Vietnam is very narrow. I believe that with goodwill and patient effort it will be possible to bridge this gap in order to lead to a negotiated settlement and thereby ensure world peace.¹⁷

As soon as he finished reading the letter the President gave the Foreign Minister a categorical assurance that no United States military operations would interfere with any visit to Hanoi by President Nkrumah. The President declared that United States was not bombing Hanoi and had not intensified its bombing of North Vietnam, and that no one should be kidding for Nkrumah was in no danger. He added that a peaceful settlement would never be blocked because of any actions of the United States. United States resistance was to cease if the aggression ceased. He reiterated that nobody wanted peace more than the United States, and if the efforts of Ghana could get the aggressors to stop, the United States would stop resistance to the aggression. He repeated that no one needed to be worried about getting hurt in Hanoi for there was no danger in a visit to Hanoi in search of peace.¹⁸

¹⁷ U.S. Department of State, Incoming Telegram from President Nkrumah, August 12, 1965, LBJ Library.

¹⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-68*, vol. 24, 448.

The Foreign Minister explained that the reason for the letter was the report of the Ghanaian mission to Hanoi which had experienced some difficulties. It had been given military escort from Peking to Hanoi in a flight which gave rise to some concern. It had heard the sounds of guns on many occasions in Hanoi, and it had advised President Nkrumah not to go to Hanoi at this time. But President Nkrumah wanted very much to go, and he therefore asked whether bombings could not cease for three or four days. Then perhaps he could work for cessation of all hostilities during peace talks. President Nkrumah felt that he must do all he could for a cease-fire and this was the explanation for what the Foreign Minister had come to call “the fever-heat diplomacy” of his sudden visit to Washington.¹⁹

President Johnson replied that he was happy to see the Foreign Minister and repeated that he should return to his President and tell him that the United States had not bombed Hanoi and that he needed not to be frightened, and that if he could get the aggression stopped, there would be peace overnight. President Johnson in closing made it clear that he himself thought the North Vietnamese suggestion that President Nkrumah would be in danger was a fraud, and the friendly chuckles of his guests made it appear that they personally did not disagree.²⁰

Writing on the 1966 coup in Ghana, William Blum has provided a chilling revelation of a story that broke out in 1978 in the United States regarding the military takeover in Ghana. He has disclosed that former CIA officer John Stockwell, who had

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

spent most of his career in Africa, published a book in which he revealed the Agency's complicity. Shortly afterwards the *New York Times*, quoting "first hand intelligence sources," corroborated that the CIA had advised and supported the dissident Ghanaian army officers. To make his claims more convincing Blum disclosed the payment of "at least \$100,000" by the CIA to the new Ghanaian regime for a confiscated Soviet cigarette lighter that also functioned as a camera.²¹

The New York Times of May 9, 1978 has it that first-hand intelligence sources confirmed that the CIA advised and supported a group of dissident army officers who overthrew Nkrumah's regime in February 1966. The paper made it clear that the agency's role in the coup d'état was carried out without prior approval from the high-level interagency group in Washington that monitors CIA clandestine activities. These sources said that group, known in 1966 as the 303 Committee, had specifically rejected a previous CIA request seeking authority to plot against Nkrumah, who had angered the United States by maintaining close ties to the Soviet Union and China.²²

The paper continued that although the CIA had often been investigated in the 12 years since Nkrumah was overthrown, there had never been any public disclosure of an agency role in the coup until that time. At one stage before the overthrow of Nkrumah, the sources said, the CIA's station chief in Accra, Ghana's capital, requested approval

²¹ William Blum, *Killing Hope: US Military and C.I.A Intervention since World War II* (Monroe, Me.: Common Courage Press, 2004), 199.

²² Seymour M. Hersh, "C.I.A. Said to Have Aided Plotters in Who Overthrew Nkrumah in Ghana," *The New York Times*, May 9, 1978, 6.

from higher headquarters for the deployment of a small squad of paramilitary experts, members of the agency's Special Operations Group. Those men, the sources said, were to wear blackface and attack the Chinese Embassy during the coup, killing everyone there and destroying the building. The men also were to steal as much material as possible from the Embassy's code room. After some hesitation, the sources said, high-level CIA officials in Washington decided against this operation.²³

Details of the agency's purported role in the overthrow of Nkrumah became available after John Stockwell, a former CIA operative, briefly described it in a footnote to his newly published book, *In Search of Enemies*. The Stockwell book, a highly critical inside account of the CIA's secret involvement in the Angolan civil war in 1975 and 1976, was published in secrecy.²⁴

Stockwell, who served three tours as a clandestine operative in Africa during his 12-year CIA career, cited the Ghanaian incident in an attempt to buttress his contention that many CIA "problems" were solved in the field, and that "nothing in the CIA records prove how it happened." In Ghana, Stockwell wrote, after the CIA was told by higher authorities not to try to oust Nkrumah, the station in Accra was "nevertheless encouraged by headquarters to maintain contact with dissidents of the Ghanaian army for the purpose of maintaining intelligence on their activities. The account continued that "it was given a generous budget and maintained intimate contact with plotters as a coup was hatched. So

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

close was the station's involvement that it was able to coordinate the recovery of some classified Soviet military equipment by the United States as the coup took place."²⁵

The station even proposed to headquarters that a squad be on hand at the moment of the coup to storm the Chinese Embassy, kill everyone inside, steal their secret records, and blow up the building to cover the fact. Although that proposal was disapproved, Stockwell wrote that inside CIA headquarters the Accra station was given full credit for the eventual coup. None of this was adequately reflected in the agency's written records. Nkrumah's overthrow was met with widespread approval by the citizens of Accra, according to press reports at the time. There were Soviet press reports that the CIA had played a role in the coup.²⁶

The *Times* sources said that, nonetheless, many CIA operatives in Africa considered the agency's role in the overthrow of Nkrumah to have been pivotal. At least some officials in the Washington headquarters apparently agreed, the sources said, because Howard T. Banes, the station chief in Accra at the time, was quickly promoted to a senior position in the agency. Banes was eventually transferred from Ghana to Washington, the sources said, where he became chief of operations for the African desk.²⁷

At the height of the operation, the sources said, the CIA station in Accra grew to include as many as 10 officers, some of them on temporary duty, and all operating under

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

cover. In his book, Stockwell specifically charged that the CIA used the 40 Committee, the high-level review group set up in Nixon Administration, ~~to~~ authenticate some of its more sensitive operations, but has by no means brought all of its covert actions to the attentions of the 40 committee.” He again referred to the operations in Ghana, noting that the CIA was ordered not involve itself in the coup, but ~~played~~ a major role in the overthrow” nonetheless.²⁸

The *Times* sources also said that the CIA group led by Banes received permission to purchase some Soviet intelligence materials that had been confiscated by Ghanaian army troops during the coup. After payment of at least \$100,000, the sources said, a special secret airplane flight was arranged and the Soviet material including a cigarette lighter that also functioned as a camera were transferred to CIA headquarters. Banes and other agents in the Accra CIA station were said by *the Times*’ sources to have been enraged by the agency’s high-level decision not to permit a raid on the Chinese Embassy. At the time it was the Peking Government’s only embassy in Africa.²⁹

At a news conference arranged by his publisher at the Baltimore Hotel, Stockwell acknowledged that some classified materials had been published in his book, but contended that he did not disclose anything of national security value. He said he disclosed a past operation, adding that none of the materials in his book in his opinion would adversely affect current CIA operations or personnel.³⁰

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

The extent of American complicity in Nkrumah's overthrow, if any, cannot be assessed until State Department archives are fully opened to the public, but a comment appearing in a *New York Times* obituary the day after his death was announced is however significant and worth noting:

Nkrumah suggested that the "criminal insurrection" was the work of the imperialists, specifically the United States Central Intelligence Agency. Although neutral observers did not discount his allegation in view of his increasingly warm relations with the Soviet Union and China, they also noted that Nkrumah had permitted power to go to his head and had become a despot who had alienated thousands of his once fervent supporters.³¹

The implication is that the Americans might have moved against him, but the success of the coup was to be explained in terms of internal discontent. Another hint that power had gone to his head may be found in *Newsweek's* comment that "Typically enough he was on his way to Hanoi to seek an African solution to the end of the Vietnam war when, during a stopover in Peking, he learned that he had been overthrown."³²

The American press was jubilant when the military and the police seized power in Ghana. A widely disseminated picture accompanying the news showed a statue of Nkrumah lying on the ground, presumably toppled by an irate people fed up with his arrogance and tyranny. The statue had stood in Accra since the early 1950s, a modest, life

³¹ St. Clair Drake, "Nkrumah: The Real Tragedy," *The Nation*, vol. 214 (23), June 5, 1972, 721.

³² *Ibid.*

size creation in front of the legislative assembly. Two of Nkrumah's maxims were carved on its base: "Seek ye First the Political Kingdom and all Other Things Shall Be Added Unto Thee," and: "The Liberation of Ghana Is Meaningless to Me Without the Liberation of All Africa." The statue seemed to symbolize to journalists what they referred to as Nkrumah's "megalomania," "narcissism" and "despotism." Rumor multiplied the number and size of such monuments, allegedly erected at Nkrumah's insistence between 1960 and 1966. Psychoanalytic jargon was used to explain these acts.³³

In addition to a fixation on statues, existent or non-existent, Western journalists added "blasphemy" to whatever political sins they attributed to Nkrumah by distorting and misinterpreting historical events. When Ghana adopted a new constitution in 1960 to transform the country from a British dominion with the Queen as head of state into a republic with an African President elected for five years, the legislative assembly was redecorated in African style. The traditional staff of office carried by a chief linguist was substituted for the British mace in ceremonials, and the role of the President was invested with chiefly attributes. So the title "Osagyefo," was added to "President."³⁴

This word means in the Akan languages "Warrior Chief Who Defeated the Enemy and Saved the Nation." *Time*, however, like other magazines and newspapers, insisted upon translating it as "Savior" and "Redeemer," thereby giving it overtones of divinity. Insofar as the term "Redeemer" was ever associated with the title "Osagyefo" it would only have been in the sense that southern anti-Republicans during the Reconstruction

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid, 721, 722.

called themselves “Redeemers,” or Marcus Garvey spoke of the “redemption of Africa” from colonialism. Yet in commenting on Nkrumah’s death, *Time*, in addition to presenting a very unflattering photograph, captioned its article “Death of a Deity.” This was echoed by other publications – thus the San Francisco Sunday *Examiner and Chronicle* headed its obituary “The Redeemer Dies.”³⁵

Time’s “Death of a Deity” article referred to Nkrumah’s “despotic ruling style,” describing it as “devious, ruthless and thoroughly effective.”³⁶ The *New York Times* diagnosed him as being afflicted with “galloping megalomania.”³⁷ *Newsweek* commented that “several attempts on his life only drove him to new levels of megalomaniacal excesses.” St. Clair Drake attested to the fact that some of those who lived and worked in Ghana between 1958 and 1965 did not recognize Nkrumah in these characterizations or in the *New York Times*’ charge that Nkrumah instituted “one man rule clothed in sycophancy.”³⁸

The descriptions according to Drake are much more applicable to certain conservative leaders who have never been belabored as Nkrumah has: the late William V.S. Tubman of Liberia, Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, or Houphouet Boigny of the Ivory Coast. It is true, however, that the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) of Ghana did

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ “Death of a Deity,” *Time*, vol. 99 (19), May 18, 1972, 40.

³⁷ Alden Whiteman, “Nkrumah, 62, Dead; Ghana’s Ex-Leader,” *New York Times*, April 28, 1972, 1.

³⁸ Drake, 722.

attempt to build up Nkrumah as a personal symbol of the nation. The country was also slowly drifting into a one-party state, long after most other African nations, including Kenya and Tanzania, had frankly declared themselves as such. The government was exerting an increasing monopoly over press, film, radio and TV, and trade unions were rigidly supervised. The Ghana Government also used “preventive detention” of some individuals suspected of “subversion,” as did Kenyatta’s Kenya, Senghor’s Senegal, Kaunda’s Zambia, and Nyerere’s Tanzania. Ghana was not a Western-style democracy, but neither was it a tyrannical despotism.³⁹

Nkrumah’s alleged tyranny was not “discovered” by Washington officialdom until 1960 when the Eisenhower-Herter administration denounced him as a communist because he supported Patrice Lumumba’s militant stance in the Congo. *The New York Times* charged Nkrumah with a “drift to the left,” beginning in 1961. There was a trip to the USSR and mainland China that year, as well as the institution of “Socialist” measures at home and a crackdown on the opposition that tried to overthrow the government. What the articles do not mention is that this was also the year when Nkrumah visited with Kennedy, the United States put \$160 million into loans and grants for a hydroelectric project and fifty-one Peace Corps teachers were welcomed to Ghana. It was a year of a visit from Queen Elizabeth. From Nkrumah’s perspective, the policy of “positive non-alignment” was working very successfully. He had denied being a communist while calling himself “a Marxist Socialist” as early as 1951.⁴⁰

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 274.

In a Special Report by the Central Intelligence Agency it was made explicit that recent development in Ghana climaxed by the abortive January 2, 1964, attempt on President Nkrumah's life accelerated the country's long prevailing leftward trend. The Central Intelligence Agency was apprehensive of a referendum which was to be held from January 24 to 31, 1964 that the Agency felt would formerly convert Ghana into a one-party state and would provide a constitutional base for pervasive party totalitarianism consciously modeled on that of communist countries. At the same time, Nkrumah was seen as continuing to broaden his direct involvement with the communist world, now even mouthing its idioms and to deflect Ghana even further from its once exclusively Western orientation. The Central Intelligence Agency thought it wise that something be done to Nkrumah's regime before things got out of hand. The Report stated emphatically that "barring a successful coup against his regime, it will probably be increasingly difficult for the West to maintain an effective presence in Ghana."⁴¹

While exiled in Guinea, Nkrumah made periodic radio broadcasts to the people of Ghana between March and December, 1966 on Radio Guinea's "Voice of the Revolution." Their purpose was first, to expose the true nature of the so-called coup carried out on February 24, 1966 by traitors among the Army and Police inspired and aided by local reactionaries, imperialists and neo-colonialists; and secondly, to encourage resistance. Nkrumah believed that the traitors were supported by their imperialist and neo-colonialist masters to terrorize Ghanaians into subjugation, with rifles, bayonets, and

⁴¹ Central Intelligence Agency, *Special Report*, "The Leftward Trend in Ghana," OCI No. 0314/64C, 1.

force anarchy on them. They chose Nkrumah's absence as the most opportune time for their treachery because they dared not do so during his presence.⁴²

In one of his Radio broadcasts, Nkrumah tried to explain to the Ghanaian public the reason why he was deposed by the military. He made it clear that:

Not long ago, I had investigations made into the rampant wave of diamond racketeering. It was revealed that certain high-ranking officers in the Police Service were directly implicated in this diamond racketeering. But current world problems forced me to desist from immediate drastic action apart from throwing their expatriate collaborators out of the country. In order to cover and protect themselves from public shame they instigated this rebellion when I was away on the invitation of President Ho Chi Minh to visit Hanoi. They cleverly got certain army officers of weak moral character like Ankrah, Kotoka and Afrifa roped into the deal. Then acting under the advice and instructions of their neo-colonialist masters deceptively lied to some of my soldiers that I was going to send them to Vietnam to fight a war that is not their cause. . . . Since the February 24, rebellion, these corrupt traitors have brought back their collaborators in diamond racketeering in order to continue their nefarious traffic.⁴³

In a similar Radio broadcast made while in exile, Nkrumah continued by emphasizing that:

Ghana has always been feared and hated by the imperialists and the neo-colonialists. Immediately after independence I declared that Ghana's independence was meaningless unless it was linked up with the total liberation of Africa. Today, no less than 36 African states have also won their political independence. I have also pointed out that political independence could hardly be maintained without economic freedom and independence. The imperialists, colonialists and neo-colonialists, the racialists and settler regimes in Africa know this. That is why they ruthlessly seek to continue their exploiting control of the economy and natural resources of the "emerging" African states. In Ghana, our several state-owned factories and industries, state and co-operative farms and enterprises and our gigantic Volta River Complex have placed us in a

⁴² Kwame Nkrumah, *Voice from Conakry [broadcasts to people of Ghana made in Conakry between March and December 1966 on Radio Guinea's "Voice of the Revolution"]* (London: Panaf Publications, 1967), 5.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 30.

position to industrialize and revolutionize our agriculture. This is the sure way we set about to achieve our economic independence. That is why—to the imperialists and the neo-colonialists—Ghana had become too dangerous an example to the rest of Africa to be allowed to continue under socialist leadership.

Since our independence, our enemies have spared no effort or money in persistently and continuously undermining and sabotaging our progress and developments. They have planned by bribery and corruption and intrigues to capture and destroy Ghana's economy. They have consistently tried to find the stooges and lackeys to do their dirty job for them. In this they have found their perfect tool in the so-called National Liberation Council. No less than six attempts have been made on my life through their puppets and quislings. In this vendetta against Ghana, the imperialists and their bought agents did not stop at anything even murder and assassination. By inhuman bombings, many Party members and activists, innocent men, women and children were wounded and maimed and some killed at Party rallies and meetings.⁴⁴

Nkrumah was shocked about comments made by Ambassador Franklin H. Williams, United States Ambassador to Ghana at the time of the coup d'état that toppled Nkrumah's government. Nkrumah lamented that:

Indeed the people of Ghana will be shocked when they come to know the number of people, men, women and children, whom the traitorous Harley-Kotoka-Ankrah clique have murdered in Ghana since their treasonable rebellion. It is interesting to note that the American Ambassador in Ghana is reliably reported to have described that dastardly rebellion as being—and I quote—the most civilized coup” in living memory, meaning that the rebellion was bloodless. During the late February incidents in Ghana, that American Ambassador was present in Accra, and if he had been even a little more observant and sincere, he could have seen the many lorry-loads of dead bodies of those killed by the Ankrah-Kotoka-Harley so called National Liberation Council and buried in Achimota forests and on the Accra beaches. Even the most “blind” observer is aware of the cold-blooded murder of Major-General Bawah. How can such a cold-blooded and ruthless massacre be described as a “most civilized coup”? It is unfortunate that the originator of this

⁴⁴ Ibid, 49, 50.

dishonest statement should have been an Afro-American. But perhaps he is either a corrupt hypocrite or an Uncle-Tom race-seller.⁴⁵

By the end of 1970 Nkrumah was seriously ill, and in August 1971 when he flew to Bucharest for medical treatment he was too ill to walk to the aircraft. Cancer had been diagnosed, but it was too far advanced to respond to treatment. After grievous suffering he died on April 27, 1972 in Bucharest. On April 30, his body was flown to Conakry, where President Sekou Toure of Guinea paid him a generous tribute:

Kwame Nkrumah was one of those men who mark the destiny of mankind fighting for freedom and dignity. Kwame Nkrumah lives and will live for ever, because Africa which is grateful to him will live for ever.⁴⁶

Sekou Toure tried to negotiate with the Ghana Government, then under General Acheampong, for suitably dignified ceremonial for the return of Nkrumah's body to Ghana. He also pleaded for an amnesty for Nkrumah's supporters who were still imprisoned, but this amnesty was refused. Eventually, on July 7, 1972 his coffin was flown to Accra where it lay in state before burial at Nkroful.⁴⁷

The final tribute to Kwame Nkrumah came from Amilcar Cabral, the great patriot and freedom fighter from Guinea-Bissau, whom the Portuguese later murdered. In a deeply moving speech he coined several particularly memorable phrases. "Nobody can tell us that Nkrumah died of cancer of the throat or some other illness. No, Nkrumah was killed by the cancer of betrayal." Then, warning that no-one should belittle the

⁴⁵ Ibid, 68.

⁴⁶ Rooney, 346.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 346, 347.

achievements of Nkrumah, he said, –For us, the best homage we Africans can render to the immortal memory of Kwame Nkrumah is to strengthen vigilance at all levels of the struggle, to intensify it, and to liberate the whole of Africa.⁴⁸

CONCLUSION

The saying that there is sometimes an iota of truth in rumors is not necessarily convincing but events leading to the overthrow of the first Republic of Ghana offer a good opportunity for reexamination of that dictum. It has been an open secret and many scholars including Lewis and Blum, just to mention two, have come out publicly to expose America’s involvement in the 1966 coup. Information from declassified documents from the State Department attests to the fact that the CIA and for that matter the State Department were aware of the coup plot and had prior knowledge of who and when the conspirators of the coup were going to strike.

Ambassador William P. Mahoney’s revelation in a memorandum of a conversation of March 11, 1965 amply demonstrates the State Department’s prior knowledge of the coup plot. The memorandum of the conversation confirmed that:

While Ambassador Mahoney felt that popular opinion was running strongly against Nkrumah and the economy of the country was in a precarious state, he was not convinced that the coup d’état, now being planned by the Acting Police Commissioner Harley and Generals Otu and Ankrah, would necessarily take place. He did feel, however, one way or another Nkrumah would be out within a year. . . . referred to a recent report which mentioned that the top coup conspirators were scheduled to meet on March 10, at which time they would determine the timing of the coup; however, because of a tendency to procrastinate, any specific date they set should be accepted with reservations. In response to the Director’s

⁴⁸ Ibid, 347.

queries as to who would most likely succeed Nkrumah in the event of a coup, Ambassador Mahoney stated that initially, at least, a military junta would take over, headed by perhaps Acting Police Commissioner Harley.⁴⁹

There is however, a very big difference between ~~knowing~~ “about a coup plot” and ~~having~~ “a hand in the plot” but perhaps some of the overt actions taken by America before and after the coup might have made people think of the United States as directly involved in the coup. Nkrumah’s attacks on America were seen as a worry to the United States and the State Department had on several occasions warned the Ghanaian president to tone down his anti-American comments in order not to have the Volta project abandoned. As Noer puts it, “America used the Volta project as a weapon to force Nkrumah to alter his policies.”⁵⁰

The congratulatory assessment of the coup written to President Johnson on March 12, 1966 by the Acting Special Assistant for Security Affairs Komer adds more impetus to the claim of United States involvement.⁵¹ It would be unheard of for the United States, the country that was seen as the champion of democracy throughout the world to openly or clandestinely congratulate the actions of people who have thrown out of power a democratic government. Again Blum has it that three weeks after the overthrow of the Ghanaian government, Washington approved substantial emergency

⁴⁹U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968*, vol. 24, 443.

⁵⁰ Noer, “New Frontier and Old priorities in Africa,” 227.

⁵¹ U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968*, vol. 24, 457.

food assistance in response to an urgent request from Ghana. A food request from Nkrumah four months earlier had been turned down.⁵²

Sources also reveal that soon after the coup Fletcher P. Martin the Senior USIS official attached to the American embassy who was regarded as the CIA Station Chief was seen off by top ranking members of the coup after accomplishing his task of destabilizing Nkrumah's regime. The mere fact that names of principal reporters on the events leading to the coup as made available in *The Foreign Relations of the United States* are withheld implies that the State Department has something to hide from the general public.

In spite of these chilling revelations one must not lose sight of the fact that internal factors at home played a role in the undoing of Nkrumah. Even if the perpetrators of the coup were influenced by external forces they might have lost confidence in their government and that was why they were easily bought. The growing discontent on the home front seen in the form of assassination attempts on the president, strikes and demonstrations in the principal towns of the country as a result of food shortages, the acute economic hardship and the Preventive Detention Act which made it possible for the president to imprison his opponents without trial might have played a significant role in prompting a section of the population to look elsewhere for immediate assistance.

Notwithstanding these developments at the home front, it still remains obvious that the United States might have listened to the cry of the suffering masses to help them change what appeared to be a dictatorial regime. The crucial question that can be asked if

⁵² Blum, 199.

it is established that the United States really had a hand in the coup plot is whether or not the action of the United States was justified. Whatever the answer to the question may be, it still remains a fact that the people who took over from Nkrumah did nothing to move the country from the economic difficulties.

Instead of the promised democracy and freedom, the National Liberation Council established a military and police dictatorship, the country's economic situation deteriorated and unemployment soared due to the policy of denationalizing big corporations and enterprises. Thirty thousand out of thirty-eight thousand workers of the building corporation were dismissed. In September, 1968, it was announced that 68 out of the 103 state farms were to be closed down rendering nine thousand out of the twenty thousand workers employed at these farms redundant. The dissatisfaction of the workers at the government policy aimed at curtailing the state owned enterprises and farms found expressions in demonstrations and strikes throughout the country.⁵³

The influx of American food products did not alleviate the situation because these goods fell into the hands of profiteers and retailers who resold them at exorbitant prices. Ghana's "first lady," the wife of NLC chairman Ankrah, was exposed as a profiteer who received American goods without paying custom duties on them.⁵⁴

The National Libration Council, under General Joseph Ankrah, the military men who took power in the February 24, 1966 coup d'état, failed in their promise of settling the foreign debt and gaining solvency for the Ghanaian economy. Their successor Dr.

⁵³ Lewis, 14.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Kofi Busia had as well no answer to the economic troubles of the country. Unemployment deepened and the slide in Ghana's balance of payments continued in a downward trend. Successive military regimes all fell by the roadside without having the least ability to rectify the economic troubles of the country.⁵⁵ This was a good lesson to be learnt by the growing African nations.

After six years, the right wing generals of Ghana and their civilian supporters showed they had no socio-political economic program to meet the many problems of a new nation. The policy of reopening Ghana to unlimited western investment and exploitation worsened the economy and the condition of the people. Discontent was massive. Corruption was everywhere. Universities were closed because the students were in active rebellion. As with Indonesia after Sukarno's overthrow in 1965 by his army and the CIA, as with Cambodia after the military-CIA coup in 1970 that disposed Prince Sihanouk, as with all the former colonies that enjoyed a brief respite of self-respect before being re-colonized, Ghana lost a leader respected throughout Africa, whatever his shortcomings, as a true patriot.⁵⁶

When Robert P. Smith was questioned about CIA involvement in the coup he responded that America was accused of that all along but there was nothing to it. He said America was not among the legions of Nkrumah's supporters, but neither was America involved because there was no reason to be involved. The Ghanaian military were quite capable of dealing with that on their own, as they did. He, however, confessed that

⁵⁵ Thomas, 336.

⁵⁶ Worthy, n. p. (paper requested from CIA office)

unfortunately, the government that followed was, in its own way, almost as bad as Nkrumah's. America had high hopes for it but it did not materialize. In just a few years that civilian, truly democratic government, elected in a free election, was itself overthrown by the military because they had not been able to correct the economic imbalances and so forth, and there was corruption, which just seemed to be endemic.⁵⁷

Smith's revelation, however, on the way Secretary Dean Rusk reacted when news of the coup was received make it explicit that the Secretary and for that matter the State Department had a vested interest in the long awaited coup d'état. Smith's words echoed clearly that:

I also remember, the morning of the coup, I got the call about 2 a.m. here at the house and went into the Department and immediately set up a little task force in Operation Center. Later in the same morning, about 8 or 8:30, Secretary Rusk wandered down the hall and came in and said, "I've seen the early reports, but I just want to hear it firsthand. What's going on in Ghana?" When I related how Nkrumah had landed in Peking and had been informed by his Chinese hosts of what had happened in Ghana, Dean Rusk broke into a earsplitting grin. I've never seen him so happy.⁵⁸

According to De Pree, many people saw the removal of Nkrumah as an advantage or plus for the West. However, a military takeover was not something the embassy was trying to promote throughout Africa. The embassy perceived it to be in the United States interest to persuade the people who took over the National Liberation Council, the military and the police, to schedule elections and return to civilian rule. In his own words, "we pressed hard as a mission to get them to commit themselves to do that, and they did it. Again in retrospect some people think they probably moved too quickly because the

⁵⁷ Interview with Ambassador Robert P. Smith.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

government that came in after the National Liberation Council proved to be ineffective. The country started to go down the hill.”⁵⁹

This is surely never going to be a strange development because after helping the Ghanaian military in their coup efforts there was no way they would not dance to the tune of their American masters knowing very well that he who pays the piper calls the tune. As De Pree rightly points out, the mission pressed the coup leaders to return the country to a civilian rule at a time when it was not ready and the result was total failure. According to De Pree the mission was in constant touch with the ring leaders of the coup; Harley, Ankrah and Deku, and dictated to them what they were to do. De Pree continued by saying that:

We had access to Nkrumah and the government of the day, but they didn't listen to us. In Harley, Ankrah, and Deku, we had three leaders who were close to the West. They listened. They had no experience in running the government. They looked to the West, the United States and Britain, for advice on what to do. Both the British and we urged them to schedule early elections, to get on with the job of transition and return to civilian rule. They were hesitant wanting to go a little slower than were urging them to do.⁶⁰

Following the adoption of a democratic constitution in 1992 and the subsequent acceptance of constitutional rule since 1993 Ghana has made great strides in her democratic dispensation to the admiration of governments the world over. This has restored Ghana's image once again and placed her in her rightful place among the committee of nations. The country now boasts of an enabling environment for foreign

⁵⁹ Interview with Willard De Pree.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

investment and stability. Ghana has remained one of the peaceful nations in Africa where the current wind of upheavals and civil wars blowing through some parts of the continent has not been recorded. Her relation with the West, especially the United States, remains solid.

Three sitting United State Presidents in a row have made personal visits to Ghana. In 1998, President Bill Clinton was received by Ghana's president Jerry John Rawlings when the Clinton administration chose Ghana as the "gateway" for a six-nation tour of Africa. Clinton's visit marked a "new" African renaissance, ushered in by the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which focuses on strengthening trade between Africa and the United States. In a similar visit in 2008, President George W. Bush pledged \$17 million to combat malaria in Ghana.⁶¹ Ghana was once again chosen by the President Barack Obama's administration for the visit of the first black American president because of its strong record as a model of good governance in sub-Saharan Africa. This trip, among other things, was intended to strengthen the United States' relationship with its most trusted and important partner in sub-Saharan Africa.⁶²

Even though internal resentments at home might have contributed in a way to the February 24, 1966 military takeover in Ghana, most Ghanaians and Africans will continue to blame America for this unfortunate incident that brought not only the newly born nation to the brink of collapse but also brought the dream of a united Africa into

⁶¹ Toby Thompkins, "The Obama Effect," *Ebony*, Vol. LXIV, No. 11, October, 2009, 76.

⁶² Toby Thompkins, "Son of Africa Talks Partnership in Ghana," *Jet Magazine*, August 3, 2009, 16.

jeopardy. Scholars such as Lewis and Blum have come out with chilling revelations to openly confirm United States involvement in the coup plot of February 1966.

Recently declassified documents in *Foreign Relations of the United States* have also added more impetus to the claim that the CIA and the State Department had prior knowledge about the coup and had a hand in it as well. The congratulatory message on the coup sent from Robert Komer, the Acting Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, to President Johnson is enough to prove to the whole world that the State Department was all this while looking for the collapse of Nkrumah's government.

After the overthrow of a civilian government by the military one would have thought that the general reaction of countries the world over would be that of apathy and total disapproval. This was not the case in Ghana after the 1966 coup d'état. The American press according to Drake was jubilant when the military took power in Ghana. Western journalists castigated Nkrumah and added "blasphemy" to whatever political sins he might have committed by captioning their articles with incredible titles such as "Redeemer Dies" and "Death of a Deity."⁶³ This is a clear indication of Western journalists' aversion towards Nkrumah and his government at the time.

It will not be surprising for one to conclude that the State Department and the CIA had a hand in the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah considering the revelation made by Smith in his interview with Charles Stuart Kennedy. For a secretary of state to fall into ecstasy and jubilation after hearing the overthrow of a democratically elected government by a military coup is something that needs to be looked into. As Smith puts it, the

⁶³ Drake, 721, 722.

secretary broke into an ear splitting grin and he had not seen him in that happy mood before.⁶⁴ This is an ample proof that the secretary knew in advance about the imminent coup and was waiting impatiently for the news. After several assassination attempts on his life without success, it was not for nothing that Lewis and others argue that Nkrumah was lured by President Johnson to attend the peace mission trip in China knowing very well that his presence in Ghana might disturb the coup plot efforts.⁶⁵

The CIA will forever be the first agency for most Ghanaians to point accusing fingers at when the question of the overthrow of the first Republic of Ghana is visited. Evidences from the Central Intelligence Agency office reveal that the agency knew about the coup and collaborated with the Ghanaian military and the police for the success of the coup. Stockwell clearly indicated that there are documents which place CIA officers in supportive contact with coup plotters and eventual assassins but the link seemed to break before the final deed.⁶⁶

In the Ghanaian situation Fletcher P. Martin, the Senior USIS official attached to the American embassy who was regarded as the CIA Station Chief in Ghana, was seen off immediately after the coup by top ranking members of the National Liberation Council even though his official standing did not call for such honors. This was

⁶⁴ Interview with Ambassador Robert P. Smith

⁶⁵ Lewis, 7.

⁶⁶ Stockwell, 160.

obviously done in conformity with CIA officials who after fulfilling their missions try to leave trouble spots so as not to leave any traces of their clandestine activities.⁶⁷

Stockwell's revelation on the CIA's involvement in the 1966 coup still remains one of the explicit evidences that could be gathered. One can infer from the Ghanaian proverb that "hardly can anyone doubt the authenticity of the message when a crab who is in the same habitat with a crocodile comes ashore to announce the death of the crocodile," to claim that the CIA had a hand in the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah. Being an insider and a member of the agency it is most likely that his revelation would be true and accurate and for the agency to have kept quiet without refuting these allegations since 1972 when the book was published makes it appear to be very credible information.

The agency's statement that barring a successful coup against Nkrumah's regime it would be increasingly difficult for the West to maintain an effective presence in Ghana in itself makes it apparent that the CIA and for that matter the State Department did all possible to get rid of Nkrumah in order to perpetuate United States' presence in Ghana as well as seeing to the elimination of all forms of communist influence from the country.⁶⁸

Ghana after February 1966 went through difficult times until the early 1990s when she accepted democratic rule. The government that came in after the National Liberation Council proved to be ineffective and was in no time booted out. There were successive coup d'états from 1966 until the early 1990s when Ghana accepted democratic

⁶⁷ Lewis, 7.

⁶⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, *Special Report*, "The Leftward Trend in Ghana," OCI No. 0314/64C, 1.

rule. Despite her strained relationship with the United States in the mid 1960s, Ghana has since the 1990s lived up to her old accolade ~~“the~~ “the black star of Africa” and has therefore won the hearts of many developed nations, more especially the United States. The visits of three sitting United State presidents in a row to Ghana attest to this fact.

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