

THE DEVELOPMENT OF KWAME NKRUMAH'S POLITICAL THOUGHT IN EXILE, 1966–1972

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ABSTRACT: The focus of this article is an examination of the evolution of Nkrumah's political thought during the last years of his life. There is a discernible radicalization as Nkrumah's intellectual thought developed between 1966 and 1972. He had clearly abandoned the constitutional path to independence and begun to adopt revolutionary armed struggle as the only solution to Africa's myriad problems of capitalism, neo-colonialism and imperialism. The unfolding social and political struggles in Vietnam and Latin America and the unrest in America's black cities impacted profoundly on his thinking. The *coup d'état* which deposed Nkrumah on 24 February 1966 forced him into exile in neighbouring Guinea-Conakry. It therefore provides the political background against which Nkrumah's intellectual thinking unfolded.

KEY WORDS: Ghana, socialism, pan-Africanism, imperialism.

INTRODUCTION

THE aim of this article is to evaluate and critique the evolution of Kwame Nkrumah's political thinking during the last five years of his life, after he was deposed from power in Ghana on 24 February 1966. There has been little written on the significance of this period of his life with the exception of the important collection of Nkrumah's correspondence compiled by his literary executrix, June Milne, and published in 1990.¹ An interpretation of these letters demonstrates that the last years of his life were intellectually engaging, productive and fascinating in terms of the radical strengthening of Nkrumah's thinking on lesser-known but nonetheless significant aspects of his ideology. Before examining the trajectory of his political thought as reflected in his letters and the books he published whilst in Guinea-Conakry, I explore the nature and causes of the coup which toppled him from power and forced him to take up exile in Guinea. But the broader argument made in the context of this essay is that, despite Nkrumah's exile, his intellectual life and career as a politician and statesman were relentlessly driven by his single-minded ideological commitment to Africa's development in the interests of African people and people of African descent.

THE 1966 COUP D'ETAT

The leading conspirators in the overthrow of Nkrumah were in the top echelons of the Ghanaian police and army. Among the key figures were J. W. K. Harlley, Commissioner of Police; B. A. Yakubu, Deputy Commissioner; A. K. Deku, head of Ghana's Police Criminal Investigation

¹ J. Milne, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Conakry Years. His Life and Letters* (London, 1990).

Department (CID); General J. A. Ankrah; Lieutenant Colonel E. K. Kotoka; and Captain A. A. Afrifa.² The decision to carry out the coup, known as 'Operation Cold Chop', was made during the period from September 1965 to February 1966 by Harley, Deku and Lieutenant Colonels Ocran and Kotoka.³ On 15 February 1966 the police chiefs met to fix the date.⁴ Harley was the single most important figure in the execution of the plan. As Baynham observes, he was in a position of trust and was 'an expert in the protection of the regime'.⁵ He had at his disposal intimate knowledge of Nkrumah's security apparatus and he had developed a skilful communications system between himself and the army.

The coup plotters had several motives. Primarily, the regular army considered the establishment of the Presidential Own Guard Regiment (POGR) and the Presidential Detail Department (PDD) with its alternative security apparatus, all run from the president's office, as a direct threat to their existence.⁶ The army also resented the reorganization of the police force following the January 1964 assassination attempt on Nkrumah, and the dismissal of senior officers. Added to this was the introduction of the Police Service Act in April 1965, which gave Nkrumah the sole authority to appoint and dismiss staff within the police force.⁷

Adding to this deep-seated disenchantment with Nkrumah, in December 1965 the president had ordered an enquiry into diamond smuggling operations involving a European diamond dealer and a number of Ghanaians. Both Harley and Deku were implicated in the scandal.⁸ It was rumoured – days before the coup – that on Nkrumah's return from Vietnam, he would have arrested his police chiefs for complicity in the scandal. The execution of the coup enabled Harley and Deku to evade exposure and possible incarceration.⁹ In the months immediately after the coup there were a number of significant and rapid promotions in the army to assuage the bruised military ego which had developed in the latter years of Nkrumah's period in office. Alongside this were promotions in the police, air force and navy, as well as increased salaries, new uniforms, tax concessions, visits abroad and attractive contracts for army officers.¹⁰

Nkrumah's own personal and political analysis of the coup was presented in his book *Dark Days in Ghana*, published in 1968. He contextualized the coup within what he considered as the disturbing emergence of 15 armed mutinies and military takeovers that had taken place on the African continent between 1962 and March 1967. He saw the *coup d'état* in Ghana as the product of an alliance between neo-colonial forces in the army and the police

² For a detailed discussion of the close relationship between the army and the police in executing the coup, see Simon Baynham, *The Military and Politics* (London, 1988), 153–76.

³ Baynham, *The Military and Politics*, 199; see J. W. K. Harley, 'The decisive role of the police', PRAAD/ADM5/4/381 (Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Accra, Ghana).

⁴ Baynham, *The Military and Politics*, 199.

⁵ *Ibid.* 201.

⁶ *Ibid.* 198; see Harley, 'Decisive role of the police'; A. K. Ocran, *A Myth is Broken* (London, 1968).

⁷ Baynham, *The Military and Politics*, 198.

⁸ Kwame Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana* (London, 1968), 42–3.

⁹ Baynham, *The Military and Politics*, 199.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 235–9.

force, in collusion with imperialist interests.¹¹ Nkrumah believed that the higher echelons of the police service and the army were politically hostile to the new Ghana and in these circumstances he had considered it necessary to establish a new security service, which would be independent of the police force.¹² He acknowledged awareness of the personal hostility towards him with the sacking of Police Chief Madjitey in 1964 and the dismissals of Generals Otu and Ankrah in July 1965.¹³

Baynham argues that Nkrumah had made a number of fundamental mistakes. Firstly, whilst in power, 'he failed to penetrate the army significantly'; secondly, 'he underestimated the alienation from the regime of his regular officers' and 'most important, he failed to develop the Presidential Guard rapidly enough to neutralise the army'.¹⁴ These miscalculations on the part of Nkrumah stemmed not only from the trust and loyalty he demanded from those within his new security apparatus and from the POGR, which undermined his thinking, but also from his overconfidence in their capacity. Also, by the end of 1965 he had become far removed from political and economic realities in the country. He had grievously underestimated the alienation of the police and army. He was also convinced of the necessity to visit Ho Chi Minh. These two issues profoundly clouded his judgement and determined his course of action. Furthermore, Nkrumah's most serious misjudgement was his belief that 'in a larger sense the coup d'état has made it plain that the CPP can no longer follow the path of the old line. It must develop a new and reformed revolutionary leadership which must come from the broad mass of the Party'.¹⁵ He went on to write: 'There is now a genuinely revolutionary situation in Ghana'. He was of the opinion that 'while the present is dark, the future is bright'¹⁶ (that is, had he returned to Ghana after the coup).

Nkrumah's optimism and analysis were fundamentally imprudent and were to continue to mislead him. It was his failure to act on his promises to root out corruption within the party, civil service and wider society, after his famous 'Dawn Broadcast' of 8 April 1961, that was a critical factor contributing to the 'beginning of Nkrumah's end'.¹⁷ However, it could be argued that the origins of the moribund nature of the CPP (Convention People's Party) had occurred as far back as the 1956 Jibowu Commission of Enquiry into the affairs of the Cocoa Purchasing Company (CPC), which led to the dismissal of its managing director, A. Y. K. Djin, who was found to be using the CPC for corrupt purposes.

Nkrumah believed Western imperialist interests were responsible for what he termed the 'economic squeeze' imposed on Ghana by the artificial forcing down of the price of cocoa.¹⁸ The IMF refusal to grant credit guarantees in 1965 was also part of a strategy to destroy his government. He concluded that, if Africa was to survive, the waging of a socialist revolution there and the establishment of an All African Union Government were paramount.

Dark Days in Ghana is an insufficiently critical self-reflection by Nkrumah. He failed to engage in a searching self-analysis, or to examine the

¹¹ Nkrumah, *Dark Days*, 36.

¹² *Ibid.* 38.

¹³ *Ibid.* 40.

¹⁴ Baynham, *The Military and Politics*, 148.

¹⁵ Nkrumah, *Dark Days*, 74.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ A. B. Assensoh, *Kwame Nkrumah: Six Years in Exile, 1966–1972* (London, 1978), 52.

¹⁸ Nkrumah, *Dark Days*, 94.

policies and actions he pursued whilst in power, and the consequences they unleashed. Such an analysis is lacking in a critique of internal conditions and factors that generated the coup. Nkrumah's only regret is that he did not abolish the Special Branch at independence, for he considered it a typically British creation. Nevertheless, it is difficult to see how the abolition of the Special Branch would have prevented the February coup. Overall, there is no doubt that the causes of the *coup d'état* lie in the balance of internal and external factors. The indiscriminate use of the Preventative Detention Act (PDA) introduced in July 1958 to detain individuals considered to be a threat to the internal security of the state by the Cabinet; the imposition of single-party rule in 1964; hurried economic planning and overspending on projects, which often led to the government resorting to heavy borrowing from abroad whilst unscrupulous individuals engaged in malpractice and corruption; crippling internal taxation; Nkrumah's alienation from a disenfranchised electorate; the neglect of the army, as well as Nkrumah's sporadic interference with the army's internal affairs, including sacking senior police officials and pushing through promotions – these formed the salient constellation of factors that brought about Nkrumah's demise.

The critical external factor was the undoubted involvement of several Western powers in the overthrow.¹⁹ In 2001, newly released American government files revealed that the USA, Britain and France were complicit in the overthrow. According to journalist Paul Lee, 'formerly classified Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), National Security Council (NSC) and State Department documents confirm long-held suspicions of US involvement in the *coup d'état* that overthrew Nkrumah's government on 24 February 1966'.²⁰ The memoranda reveal that the plans between the three Western countries went back to February 1964 when the US State Department proposed to their British counterpart a plan 'to induce a chain reaction eventually leading to Nkrumah's downfall'.²¹

In the wake of the coup the police and the army immediately set up the National Liberation Council (NLC) and quickly destroyed the old CPP. Major General Ankrah, who had been forced into retirement by Nkrumah, was reinstated and promoted to Lieutenant General.²² An economic and political committee were set up to reverse the politics and economic direction of the Nkrumah-led government. The deposed president was convinced that his demise was caused by anti-revolutionary forces and it was against these that he strategized from exile.

LIFE IN GUINEA

When the *coup d'état* took place, Nkrumah was on his way to Hanoi on a peace mission to assist in bringing an end to the Vietnam War. He had

¹⁹ Seymour Hersh, 'CIA said to have aided plotters who overthrew Nkrumah in Ghana', in E. R. W. Schaap, K. van Meter and L. Wolf (eds.), *Dirty Work: The CIA in Africa* (London, 1980), 133–6; see also John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies* (London, 1978).

²⁰ *West Africa*, 19–25 Nov. 2001.

²¹ Cited in *West Africa*, 19–25 Nov. 2001. British MI6 files have yet to be released, which may shed further light on British involvement in the *coup d'état*.

²² Richard Dowse, 'Military and police rule', in D. Austin and R. Luckham (eds.), *Politicians and Soldiers in Ghana* (London, 1975), 17.

been invited by the North Vietnamese leader, Ho Chi Minh. The *coup d'état* made Nkrumah immediately abort his planned visit. He decided to go to Guinea-Conakry. His decision was based on three factors. Firstly, there were strong bonds of unity between the two countries, based on the Ghana – Guinea – Mali Union of 1960.²³ Secondly, its geographical proximity – some 300 miles from Ghana – made it highly desirable. Lastly, Nkrumah wrote, 'from Guinea I knew I would be in a good position to carry on the African revolutionary struggle'.²⁴ However, he did not consider himself to be in exile, for he later wrote: 'Every country and town in Africa is my home'.²⁵

Nkrumah arrived in Guinea on 2 March 1966 and was given a welcoming reception in the capital.²⁶ He was accommodated at Villa Syli with his large entourage.²⁷ It was to become Nkrumah's residence for the remainder of his life. Close to the airport and the sea, it was an old-style large two-storey colonial building. Nkrumah used the ground floor of the house as a private dwelling area and the top part as an office and accommodation for his security personnel. He quickly established a daily schedule with the practical assistance of President Sékou Touré, who arranged for the equipping of his office, transportation and his domestic needs. Sana Camara, an experienced Guinean diplomat who had served in Ghana and had a good command of English, was appointed as Nkrumah's protocol officer and interpreter.²⁸

There was simplicity to Nkrumah's daily schedule. As was customary, he only needed a mere four hours' sleep, after which he would wake to perform yoga exercises for 45 minutes.²⁹ He ate a light breakfast of grapefruit and a little cereal. Nyamikeh, a relative of Nkrumah, was his personal assistant, whilst Amoah, his cook for 16 years, prepared Nkrumah's meals. 'He was not a big eater at all. He ate sparingly', remarks Lamine Janha.³⁰ He would be at his desk in his office by the early hours of the morning – his preferred time to work – whilst sipping a fruit drink to sustain him.³¹ Before lunch, he enjoyed a game of chess, which he played with his secretary, Sarfo, or at

²³ See Kwame Nkrumah, *Revolutionary Path* (London, 1973), 136–7.

²⁴ Nkrumah, *Dark Days*, 16.

²⁵ Nkrumah made this statement in his *Message to the Black People of Britain*, written in 1968; see K. Nkrumah, *The Struggle Continues* (London, 1973), 14.

²⁶ Nkrumah, *Dark Days*, 18–19.

²⁷ Nkrumah's entourage in Guinea numbered 89 in total; see Kwame Nkrumah Papers, Box 154-1, Folder 2, containing a full list of Nkrumah's entourage in Guinea-Conakry as of 20 Nov. 1966: Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington DC.

²⁸ Milne, *The Conakry Years*, 7.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 30.

³⁰ Lamine Janha was a young man of 22–3 years of age when he stayed with Nkrumah, from 1968 to 1970, at Villa Syli. He had been in Ghana from 1960 to the time of the coup as part of a Gambian youth group that visited Ghana for youth training at the Young Pioneers Institute (YPI) set up by Nkrumah, in June 1960, to orientate both Ghana's and Africa's youth towards Nkrumah's vision for Ghana. He was ideologically committed to Nkrumah and made the decision to serve him despite his own father's deep objections. Janha informed me that the 'Old Man', as he and the other young men referred to Nkrumah, treated him as a son. Telephone interview, 21 Sept. 2003. He currently lives in Washington DC.

³¹ Milne, *Conakry Years*, 16.

times with the young Lamine Janha.³² He would then eat his favourite meal: palm nut soup, snails, fish and fufu.³³

After lunch he would sometimes have a siesta or he would read. He was an avid reader and made requests for many of the books he read. Individuals from around the world, and particularly his research assistant, June Milne, loyally supplied the books he asked for.³⁴ After his siesta he would often be preoccupied with responding to cables and messages and receiving visitors. In the evening he usually ate a very light snack. He enjoyed the occasional Cadbury's chocolate biscuit.³⁵ He would fast every Friday for purely health reasons and for mental discipline. The day would end in discussions with his entourage, ambassadors of socialist embassies in Conakry or individuals from the African liberation movements.³⁶ He regularly listened to the BBC World Service, or sat on the veranda by the sea.³⁷ At times the Korean, Chinese and Cuban embassy officials based in Conakry would come and show movies. Before he slept, Nkrumah would 'power walk' around the compound as a form of exercise, in the company of Lamine Janha.³⁸ As a nightcap he would eat a few raisins, nuts and a wholemeal biscuit with a cup of powered skimmed milk.

Sometimes, he pursued one of his very few hobbies, and planted his favourite flowers, roses, in pots around the villa. On some occasions Nkrumah would pass the time listening to speeches on vinyl records by Stokely Carmichael, the radical African American, and former leader of the Black Power Movement in the USA, or to the late Malcolm X, the charismatic spokesman of the Nation of Islam.³⁹ Also, soon after his arrival in Conakry, Nkrumah took up French lessons with a tutor and became proficient in the language.⁴⁰ In addition, he made use of Julia Wright's translation skills as she spoke fluent French and came to stay in Conakry.⁴¹

Nkrumah established a well-run and self-sufficient base at the villa. 'It was a Spartan, disciplined, all-male environment', maintains Milne.⁴² Written by Nkrumah's literary executrix, Milne's biography is the exception in presenting a serious account of the later years of Nkrumah's life. Whilst Davidson correctly observes that 'they were sad years, but it seems he never lost heart, nor did he lack friends', he has very little to say about Nkrumah's years in Conakry.⁴³ Similarly, the works of both Rooney and Timothy skim these years in a superficial manner.⁴⁴ Assensoh's work sheds light on attempts to restore Nkrumah to power, in which he was involved. However, unlike Milne's biography that tends towards deification of Nkrumah,

³² Interview with Lamine Janha, 21 Sept. 2003.

³³ Interview with Madam Fathia (Mrs. Mkrumah), 14–16 Feb. 2004, Cairo, Egypt.

³⁴ Janha, interview, 21 Sept. 2003. Nkrumah's frequent request for books are littered in his correspondence to Milne in *Conakry Years*. ³⁵ Milne, *Conakry Years*, 93.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 16.

³⁷ Interview with Janha, 21 Sept. 2003.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Milne, *Conakry Years*, 123.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 17.

⁴¹ She was the daughter of the famous African American novelist Richard Wright. Milne, *Conakry Years*, 17.

⁴² *Ibid.* 15.

⁴³ Basil Davidson, *Black Star: A View of the Life and Times of Kwame Nkrumah* (London, 1973), 204.

⁴⁴ David Rooney, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Political Kingdom in the Third World* (London, 1988); Bankole Timothy, *Kwame Nkrumah: From Cradle to Grave* (London, 1981).

Assensoh demonstrates some of the deposed leader's personality flaws. Yet he does not focus on Nkrumah's ideological development because, as Assensoh himself states: 'His ideological flirtations, however, had no appeal to me at all'.⁴⁵ Milne's rather uncritical biography gives a more detailed account of not only Nkrumah's daily activities, but his intellectual pursuits, his pastimes and his dedication to committing his political thought to posterity.⁴⁶ Significantly, it is Milne's *Kwame Nkrumah: The Conakry Years. His Life and Letters*, and the unpublished Kwame Nkrumah Papers at Howard University, that add richly to our understanding of Nkrumah's ideological thought during the last six years of his life.

During the five years Nkrumah spent in Conakry he refused to allow his wife and family to visit him. He was initially fervently optimistic that he would return to Ghana where the family would eventually be reunited.⁴⁷ Yet, Nkrumah's stoical qualities perhaps concealed a profound pride. He was powerless and no longer head of state. He maintained correspondence with Fathia and enquired about the children's progress and health. He also sent photographs and expressed to Fathia his belief that the family would soon be reunited in Ghana.⁴⁸ After Nkrumah's death, Mrs. Nkrumah stated in an interview with the Ghanaian *Daily Graphic* that her husband feared that she and the children might be hijacked on their way to or from Guinea and that she and Nkrumah decided not to see each other for the sake of the children.⁴⁹

Visitors to Villa Syli included the leader of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands (PAIGC), Amilcar Cabral, and John Marshment and Roland Randall, who were the printers of the magazine *Africa and the World*.⁵⁰ Nkrumah also spent a great deal of time responding to the hundreds of letters he received from sympathetic individuals around the world.⁵¹ He refused to receive newspaper, radio or television reporters, who constantly approached him during his first few years in Conakry, particularly from Western media outlets.⁵² His position

⁴⁵ K. B. Assensoh, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 14.

⁴⁶ June Milne, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Biography* (London, 1999).

⁴⁷ Madam Fathia informed me she was desperate to visit Nkrumah in Conakry but he constantly told her to wait until they returned to Ghana; interview 14–16 Feb. 2004.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* ⁴⁹ *Daily Graphic*, 14 July 1972.

⁵⁰ The magazine was set up in 1964 and funded by the CPP government. The idea originated with Nkrumah who wished it to be published in London to disseminate the concept of African unity. It gave publicity to economic and political news from all over the African continent. Its circulation numbered some 30–40,000 copies; interview with Douglas Rogers, a British journalist who was sympathetic to Nkrumah's government and wrote for the magazine, 12 Feb. 1999.

⁵¹ Milne's *Conakry Years* contains a sample of some of the letters sent to Nkrumah. However, the Kwame Nkrumah Papers at the Moorland-Spangarn Center at Howard University contain many more.

⁵² Nkrumah refused to be interviewed by the British Africanist historian, Basil Davidson. See Davidson's letters to Nkrumah dated 2 Dec. and 13 Dec. 1966, Kwame Nkrumah Papers, Box 154, Folder 32. Nkrumah's response was dated 21 Dec. 1966. However, during his 'exile' in Conakry, he only gave one interview, with Douglas Rogers, editor of *Africa and the World*. It was published in the May 1966 issue.

was that he was not prepared to help them sell their newspapers when they had celebrated his downfall.⁵³

Security around Nkrumah, from the Ghanaian and Guinean security forces, was tight. There were naval patrols on the shore near to the villa, and armed Guinean soldiers guarded the gates.⁵⁴ He gave his utmost attention to groups and individuals who would assist him in executing Operation 'Positive Action' – a secret plan to restore him to power.

OPERATION 'POSITIVE ACTION'

From the moment of Nkrumah's arrival in Conakry in 1966, to August 1970, he closely monitored events in Ghana, via newspaper reports and particularly through individuals who claimed to be organizing a counter-coup to restore him to power. As Milne observes: 'Nkrumah's firm belief that he would return to Ghana was strengthened by the flow of mail and messages of support he received'.⁵⁵

On the ninth anniversary of Ghana's independence, Nkrumah made a broadcast to the Ghanaian people on Radio Guinea's 'Voice of the Revolution'. He made 15 further broadcasts between March and December 1966, in which he denounced the NLC and encouraged Ghanaians to resist the military junta. It was not until 1968 that he openly called for 'Positive Action' to overthrow the NLC. Meanwhile, from the moment of his arrival in Guinea, he actively supported a number of clandestine operations to return him to office. These activities involved a number of individuals. Many of them were considered 'braggarts'⁵⁶ and alleged 'opportunists'.⁵⁷

When Nkrumah first arrived in Conakry he received limited funds from friendly socialist governments and African governments.⁵⁸ But these soon diminished and he relied on the few financial resources accrued from the royalties he earned from the publication of his books, from his London-based account, to finance such missions. Both Lamine Janha and Kwame Ture, formerly Stokely Carmichael, were witnesses to the several individuals who visited Nkrumah and proposed missions to depose the NLC.⁵⁹

In his autobiography, Kwame Ture castigates some of the individuals who approached Nkrumah as 'hustlers, taking money for missions that never happened'.⁶⁰ Ture was nominated to lead one such mission by a small youth group that had formed around Nkrumah. The 'Old Man' 'looked surprised' when Ture informed him of the plan to attack the Ghanaian parliament.

⁵³ See cables to editor of the British *Sunday Express* and BBC TV dated 13 Oct. 1966 and 9 Feb. 1967, respectively, in which Nkrumah refused interviews. Kwame Nkrumah Papers, Box 154-11, Folder 1. Nkrumah also refused a request from Thomas Hodgkin, head of the Institute of African Studies at the University of Legon in Ghana, who had been sympathetic to his government in the 1950s. ⁵⁴ Milne, *Conakry Years*, 13.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 9. Assensoh also describes Nkrumah's trust in Ghanaians to restore him to power. See *Kwame Nkrumah*, 46–7. ⁵⁶ Milne, *Conakry Years*, 9.

⁵⁷ Interview with Janha, 21 Sept. 2003.

⁵⁸ Milne, *Conakry Years*, 10.

⁵⁹ Janha spoke disparagingly of individuals who misled Nkrumah. Interview with Janha, 21 Sept. 2003.

⁶⁰ S. Carmichael, *Ready for the Revolution: The Life and Struggle of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)* (New York, 2003), 692. Carmichael later changed his name to Kwame Ture in honour of Kwame Nkrumah and President Sékou Touré of Guinea.

Ture maintains the youth group received logistical and practical support in the form of passports and equipment from President Sékou Touré.⁶¹ The execution of the plan was not made known to Nkrumah until after it was carried out. Overall, the impact of the bombing was insignificant. The exuberant youth had merely proved to the 'Old Man' they were capable of such a small-scale operation. However, Ture noted that '[Nkrumah] then completely froze all activity after that'.⁶² In hindsight, Ture believed that Nkrumah's brake on such operations was on account of the fact that Nkrumah had been aware, long before the diagnosis of his illness around 1970–1, that his ill health would prevent him from returning to Ghana.⁶³

In early December 1966, Nkrumah expressed his irritation at the NLC's bounty of £10,000 sterling to any individual who returned him to Ghana, dead or alive.⁶⁴ He wrote in a letter to Milne: 'What fools they are! They are at their wits end'.⁶⁵

Meanwhile, in Conakry there was an attempt to kidnap Nkrumah on 16 March 1967. The Guinean navy intercepted a shipping trawler sailing close to the villa. Interrogation by the Guinean state security revealed that the crew aboard the ship had detailed knowledge of the layout of the villa, which strongly suggested that only a member of the entourage could have leaked such information.⁶⁶

Within Ghana, an unsuccessful counter-coup attempt against the NLC was carried out by Major General Barwah and Lieutenants M. Yeboah and S. Arthur on 17 April 1967.⁶⁷ The counter-coup was carried out without Nkrumah's involvement and gave grounds for his misplaced optimism. In mid-August 1967, Nkrumah wrote to Milne stating: 'My mind is being preoccupied with efforts to get back to Ghana as soon as possible. This is uppermost in my mind now, and all else is secondary'.⁶⁸

Two years later, Nkrumah called on 'the workers of Ghana', along with peasant farmers, to stage a general strike, 'with a military counter-coup to overthrow the NLC and liberate Ghana from the clutches of neo-colonialism'.⁶⁹ He was of the opinion that 'the only language which is understood is force and action'.⁷⁰ He reminded Ghanaians of the role they played in freeing the country from British colonialism. He wrote: 'Your goal is historic – it is the building of a society in Ghana within a united socialist Africa'.⁷¹ Via his broadcasts and through the pages of *Africa and the World*, Nkrumah waged a virulent campaign against the NLC. When the NLC handed over power in freely contested elections in August 1969, Dr. Busia, Nkrumah's former ideological adversary, won the vote and took office in October of the same year.⁷² Another major preoccupation was Nkrumah's

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 693.

⁶² *Ibid.* 694.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Milne, *Conakry Years*, 19; see *Daily Graphic*, 29 Nov. 1966. Immediately after Nkrumah's death, the *Ghanaian Times* of 2 May 1972 withdrew the reward for Nkrumah's capture.

⁶⁵ Milne, *Conakry Years*, 93.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 106.

⁶⁷ Nkrumah dedicated *Dark Days* to these men who were executed for their action.

⁶⁸ Milne, *Conakry Years*, 171.

⁶⁹ Nkrumah, *The Struggle Continues*, 9. This short booklet contains some of Nkrumah's articles written in exile.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 11.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 12.

⁷² However, the CPP were proscribed from participating in the elections. See Y. Twumasi 'The 1969 election', in Austin and Luckham (eds.), *Politicians and Soldiers*, 140–64.

articulation of his political thoughts in writing. With time, Nkrumah's ideological vision became progressively more radical.

FROM 'POSITIVE ACTION' TO REVOLUTIONARY ACTION

During the six years Nkrumah spent in Conakry, through his letters to various individuals, his thinking on many social, political and economic issues can be delineated. When his research assistant, June Milne, expressed an interest in writing a book on Nkrumaism, Nkrumah wrote:

The most tantalising part of it will be my Marxist or socialist ideology. You know I am a Marxist and scientific socialist. But I don't consider myself in this particular sense a Leninist. Leninism is an application of Marxism to the Russian milieu. But the Russian milieu is not the same as the African milieu. And here the question of communism comes in – whether I am a communist or not. I am a scientific socialist and a Marxist and if that is tantamount to being a communist then I am. But not a communist of the Marxist-Leninist type.⁷³

Here Nkrumah openly acknowledged his Marxist beliefs. He considered Marxism to be a non-dogmatic tool applied to different social and economic conditions. However, he did not define what type of communist he was and therefore ambiguity remains as to his definition. In short, Nkrumah was undogmatic and flexible in his application of Marxist analysis to African realities.

He had ample time to reflect on his political convictions and he would often contemplate alone on his balcony.⁷⁴ It is evident that, whilst in exile, Nkrumah increasingly considered that the new phase of Africa's development during the late 1960s, which was characterized by armed struggle in various parts of the African continent was linked to a world revolutionary socialist struggle. He advocated revolutionary warfare as the only solution to the complete liberation of the African continent and the eradication of the partnership between the neo-colonial indigenous African elite and outside forces. Therefore Nkrumah's advocacy of violent armed struggle shares some affinity with the views of the Martinican psychiatrist and political philosopher Frantz Fanon, who believed in the necessity of violence for the oppressed to attain self-liberation. Nkrumah's politics also increasingly moved towards an internationalist revolutionary position during this period.

A month after his arrival in Conakry, he expressed in a letter to June Milne that 'the only solution to the Vietnam war is for the US to clear out its presence in Vietnam, north and south'.⁷⁵ He went on to write:

I am interested in the Vietnamese war because I am opposed to imperialism and neo-colonialism: and I believe that world socialism can end war and usher in permanent peace for the world. I believe in internationalism, but internationalism must presuppose Asia for Asians, Africa for Africans, and Europe for Europeans. These peoples in their various areas must see to their own problems. This does not do away with international co-operation and friendship. Nor does it smack of racism or racialism.⁷⁶

⁷³ Milne, *Conakry Years*, 94, letter dated 4 Dec. 1966.

⁷⁴ Interview with Janha, 21 Sept. 2003.

⁷⁵ Milne, *Conakry Years*, 29, letter dated 28 Mar. 1966.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 29–30.

Hence, Nkrumah's Pan-Africanism was based on a strong principle of anti-imperialism and the belief in self-determination for all peoples. Such a position did not preclude mutual exchange and solidarity, for he considered 'the African Revolution is an integral part of the world socialist revolution'.⁷⁷ In a letter to Milne, dated 26 August 1967, Nkrumah wrote:

I think and hold the view that the fulfilment of the African Revolution only implies two basic principles: (1) the principle of basic equality of all peoples and races, and that all men and women, irrespective of race, colour, or religion, have an equal right to dignity and respect, to freedom and national independence; and (2) the solidarity between the oppressed peoples of all countries.⁷⁸

In another letter, he expressed a wish for the socialist and communist world to unite, for 'a coming together of Russia and China would put the fear of God into America'.⁷⁹ He believed 'Cassius Clay [American boxer Muhammad Ali] has taken a good stand' in refusing to serve in Vietnam, and he condemned his treatment by the American authorities.⁸⁰ Nkrumah lamented the death of Ché Guevara in 1967 as 'a blow to the guerrilla freedom fighter in Latin America'.⁸¹

Significantly, during this time, Nkrumah's voracious appetite for reading and discussions with the Guinea-Bissau national liberation leader, Amílcar Cabral, seemed to have considerably shaped his ideas on armed struggle and national liberation movements. Cabral, who had been given a house in Conakry by President Sékou Touré, was one of Nkrumah's few visitors. The two would engage in political discussions and, on one occasion in June 1967, Cabral presented a film on 'Portuguese Guinea' to Nkrumah and thirty of his entourage.⁸² It seems the theory of armed struggle significantly shaped Nkrumah's outlook on global conflict, in which he considered Africa had a crucial role to play. These ideas were expressed in *Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare*, published in 1968. The particular timing of this book was crucial. Major violent struggles for national independence were being waged in various parts of the African continent. The Portuguese colonies of Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Angola, as well as South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, were sites of revolutionary upheavals against settler colonialism, often aided and abetted by Western powers.⁸³ On a global level, there were similar emerging struggles in Latin America and the war in Vietnam. The strident demands for Black Power in the United States and strong anti-Vietnam war protests led by young students in Western capitals shook the prevailing liberal democratic capitalist order. The political and social ferment occurring in Africa, Asia and Latin America during this period, which initiated demands for justice and freedom, also gave inspiration to demonstrators in the West. In short, the late 1960s was an era of protest, defiance and demands for an alternative to the liberal market order. It is in this specific political and ideological climate that the *Handbook* emerged.

⁷⁷ Kwame Nkrumah, *Class Struggle in Africa* (London, 1970), 10.

⁷⁸ Milne, *Conakry Years*, 176.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* letter dated 18 Dec. 1967.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* letter dated 14 May 1967, written to Milne.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* letter dated 24 Oct. 1967, written to Milne.

⁸² *Ibid.* 157.

⁸³ Ehiedu E. G. Iweriebor, 'African nationalism: the struggle for national liberation, 1960s–1990s', in T. Falola (ed.), *Africa, v: Contemporary Africa* (Rochester NY, 2003), 193–218.

The book appears to signal that, in 1968, Nkrumah no longer considered non-violent constitutional methods efficacious in achieving independence. He now embraced armed revolutionary struggle as the only means of achieving political independence and eradicating neo-colonialism and imperialism from the African continent. In the *Handbook*, Nkrumah expressed the view that: 'Revolutionary warfare is the logical, inevitable answer to the political, economic and social situation in Africa today. We do not have the luxury of an alternative'.⁸⁴

It appears that Nkrumah had been influenced in his reading by the writings of Mao Tse-tung, and Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, as well as such books as Tzu's *Art of War*, *The War of the Flea* by Robert Taber, *Guerrilla and Counter-Guerrilla Warfare* by W. J. Pomeroy, *Philosophy of World Revolution* by F. Marek, and *Peoples' War, Peoples' Army* by the North Vietnamese general, Nguyen Giap. Such influences led him to conclude that 'what is urgently needed now is co-ordination and centralised political and military direction of the struggle' on a continental level.⁸⁵ Therefore, he considered his *Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare* as a manual for guerrilla warfare. Amilcar Cabral's influence on Nkrumah is most likely to have considerably shaped his political analysis of national liberation struggles. The two political leaders shared many similarities, such as an undogmatic belief in the Marxist method as a tool for political analysis; both were pragmatists, anti-imperialist and anti-neo-colonialism. They also demonstrated politically independent thought and believed in the necessity for a vanguard revolutionary party led by a conscious political elite to transform African society. Yet, whereas Cabral's political analysis came from practical experience, Nkrumah had no direct experience of revolutionary warfare. It appears Nkrumah's manual for guerrilla warfare was based on armchair theorizing, whilst Cabral's views were closely forged through revolutionary praxis.

Another significant development in Nkrumah's thought during his time in Conakry was his embrace of a class analysis of Africa, which he set out in *Class Struggle in Africa* published in 1970. Hountondji contends that, in the 1964 edition of *Consciencism*, Nkrumah 'ducked the theoretical problem of the internal composition of colonial and post-colonial African societies', whereas in *Class Struggle in Africa*, Nkrumah confronts the problem of the nature of class conflict in Africa head-on.⁸⁶ Also, whereas in the 1964 edition he championed the position that 'the passage to socialism lies in reform', he now rejected this view.⁸⁷ In *Class Struggle*, he advocated that it is through the waging of a violent armed struggle that the total liberation of Africa under scientific socialism can come about in order to destroy imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism. Nkrumah espoused socialist revolution for Africa. He was of the opinion that 'there is no hard and fast dogma for socialist revolution, because no two sets of historical conditions and circumstances are exactly alike, experience has shown that under conditions of class struggle, socialist revolution is impossible without the use of

⁸⁴ Kwame Nkrumah, *Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare: A Guide to the Armed Phase of the African Revolution* (London, 1968), 42. ⁸⁵ Milne, *Conakry Years*, 326.

⁸⁶ Paulin J. Hountondji, *African Philosophy* (London, 1983), 150.

⁸⁷ Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism* (London, 1964; revised ed. 1970), 74.

force'.⁸⁸ He believed that 'revolutionary violence is a fundamental law in revolutionary struggles' and, moreover, 'those who argue that the transition from capitalism to socialism can be accomplished without the use of force are under a delusion'.⁸⁹

For Nkrumah, colonialist penetration and the era of colonial conquest brought European-type classes of proletariat and bourgeoisie to Africa.⁹⁰ Class distinctions had been submerged in the national struggle in order to win political freedom, only to re-emerge in all post-independent states. Five main classes transpired: the peasants; the rural and industrial proletariat; the urban and rural petit bourgeoisie; traditional rulers; and the bourgeoisie.⁹¹ For Nkrumah, the African middle class constituted 'the class ally of the bourgeoisie of the capitalist world'.⁹² They were a 'subordinate partner to foreign capitalism' – for international monopoly finance capital would not allow this class to become a genuine business competitor and to threaten its very existence.⁹³ Nkrumah's position held affinities with that of Fanon who had argued earlier in his seminal work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, that, on independence, 'the national middle class discovers its historic mission: that of intermediary'.⁹⁴ Furthermore, this class fails to transform the nation and considers its task as that of 'being the transmission link between the nation and capitalism'.⁹⁵ Undoubtedly, Nkrumah was shaped by Fanon's theoretical analysis of the contradictions and limitations of the African bourgeoisie. The Fanonesque language of *Class Struggle* is illustrated in Nkrumah's belief that 'the African bourgeoisie remains therefore largely a comprador class, sharing in some of the profits which imperialism drains from Africa'.⁹⁶

It appears that Nkrumah's ideological stance on the world had also been affected by what he considered to be the disturbing phenomenon of *coup d'états* that had occurred on the African continent between January 1963 and December 1969. He observed that, during this period, 25 military takeovers had occurred. He identified imperialism and neo-colonial links between Western and African intelligence networks as the causes of these takeovers.⁹⁷ In addition, the very fragmented nature of the African continent made it vulnerable to imperialist penetration. To counter the rise in military coups, Nkrumah urged 'the need for the founding of an all-African vanguard working class party, and for the creation of an all-African people's army and militia'.⁹⁸ He lamented the vast sums of money spent on the armies of Africa, whose interests were to repress the revolutionary potential of the African masses.

Lastly, Nkrumah emphasized that the African revolutionary struggle was not an isolated one, but an integral part of the wider 'Black Revolution'.⁹⁹ He argued that the struggle for civil rights in both the United States and the Caribbean were part of the demands of people of African descent for liberation and for social, political and economic justice. He claimed: 'All peoples of African descent whether they live in North or South America, the

⁸⁸ Nkrumah, *Class Struggle*, 80. ⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 80. ⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 10.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 17–22. ⁹² *Ibid.* 33. ⁹³ *Ibid.* 57.

⁹⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London, 1961), 122.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 122.

⁹⁶ Nkrumah, *Class Struggle*, 56. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 119–65.

⁹⁷ Nkrumah, *Class Struggle*, 48–9. ⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 54. ⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 87.

Caribbean or in any other part of the world are African and belong to the African nation'.¹⁰⁰ For Nkrumah, despite Africa's arbitrarily erected colonial borders and myriad ethnic groups, the continent fundamentally constituted a single nation. With strong Garveyite tones, Nkrumah continued: 'The core of the Black Revolution is in Africa, and until Africa is united under a socialist government, the Black man throughout the world lacks a national home. Africa is one continent, one people, and one nation'.¹⁰¹ In 1922 Garvey had similarly spoken of the need for black people to 'redeem our Motherland Africa from the hands of alien exploiters and found there a government, a nation of our own, strong enough to lend protection to the members of our race scattered all over the world'.¹⁰² It was Garvey who coined the slogan: 'One God, One Nation, One Destiny!'

It appears that Nkrumah's evolving attraction towards communism was demonstrated in his closing paragraph in the book. He argued that the creation of a unified socialist African continent would 'advance the triumph of the international socialist revolution, and the onward progress towards world communism, under which, every society is ordered on the principle of from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs'.¹⁰³ Yet, theoretically, his attempt to reconcile the spiritual dimension of African societies in his work *Consciencism* remains problematic for Marxist orthodoxy. Nkrumah saw no conflict between socialism as a value system and a set of rational economic methods of redistributing wealth in society and the existence and promotion of the spiritual values and practices of African society. The book was therefore, according to Nkrumah, a synthesis of Africa's spiritual character and dialectical materialist philosophy.

It appears, on a personal level, that Nkrumah's own religious commitment had been transformed. As a young student in America, Nkrumah had preached in several churches and at one time seriously considered joining the Jesuit Order. It appears that, very late in his life, he now no longer believed in 'the organised religions of the world', for they 'have done so much to bring pain and misery to man'.¹⁰⁴ In his *Autobiography*, published in 1957, Nkrumah had referred to himself as a 'non-denominational Christian and a Marxist socialist'.¹⁰⁵ Ten years later he wrote: 'I called myself a Marxist Christian. I think that was wrong. I am now simply a Marxist, with historical materialism as my philosophy of life'.¹⁰⁶

Class Struggle in Africa ends on a note of idealism: with the emergence of world revolution, capitalism, imperialism and neo-colonialism would be eliminated, giving birth to a socialist and unified Africa. Continental Union Government of Africa would co-exist with world communism in a global humanity created in the genuine interests of all workers and peasants of the world.¹⁰⁷

Nkrumah's position on the question of race and class was also briefly articulated in *Class Struggle in Africa*. He argued: 'a non-racial society

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 87–8.

¹⁰² M. Garvey, cited in A. J. Garvey, *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey* (Dover MA, 1986), 52.

¹⁰³ Nkrumah, *Class Struggle*, 88.

¹⁰⁴ Milne, *Conakry Years*, 161, letter dated 1 July 1967.

¹⁰⁵ Kwame Nkrumah, *The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (London, 1957), 12.

¹⁰⁶ Milne, *Conakry Years*, 161.

¹⁰⁷ Nkrumah, *Class Struggle*, 84–8.

can only be achieved by socialist revolutionary action of the masses'.¹⁰⁸ He claimed that the roots of racism were born out of capitalist class relationships. Nkrumah pointed to the example of apartheid South Africa, where he maintained it was capitalist economic penetration that created the master-servant relationship which gave birth to racist apartheid ideology. For Nkrumah, 'it is only the ending of capitalism, colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism and the attainment of world communism that can provide the conditions under which the race question can finally be abolished and eliminated'.¹⁰⁹

While *Class Struggle in Africa* did not focus extensively on the dynamics of race and class, it is clear that, alongside this book, Nkrumah was forging his position on the race question emerging in the United States. He was influenced in his assessments through his extensive correspondence with the African American political activists, Grace and James Boggs, Julia Wright and the then Stokely Carmichael. Nkrumah had written the first draft of the pamphlet *The Spectre of Black Power* by February 1967, after discussing the contents with Carmichael, who had attended the Twentieth Congress of the Guinean Democratic Party (PDG) around the same time.¹¹⁰ During 1967, when social, economic and political disturbances afflicted America's black inner cities, Nkrumah wrote a letter to Milne in which he expressed his rejection of the term 'race riot' used in the Western press to characterize the conflicts.¹¹¹ He wrote:

It is not racial. Those who think it is racial are fundamentally wrong. It is the rotten economic system there that has brought about Black Power. Black Power is nothing but a violent protest of the have-nots against the haves. It is the poor against the rich.¹¹²

In another letter, he expressed criticism of the Black Power leaders. In his judgement, they 'don't seem aware of Africa. They are more taken up with the struggle in the United States'.¹¹³ Furthermore, 'The concept of Black Power will be fulfilled only when Africa is free and united'.¹¹⁴ He ended the letter stating: 'I am trying to make Black Power not a racist issue. It is political and economic, and only socialism can make Black Power fulfil its destiny'.¹¹⁵

Nkrumah's opinions on the Black Power struggle were articulated in two short pamphlets he wrote in 1968, entitled *The Spectre of Black Power* and *Message to the Black People of Britain*.¹¹⁶ Nkrumah posed:

What is Black Power? I see it in the United States as part of the vanguard of world revolution against capitalism, imperialism and neo-colonialism which have enslaved, exploited and oppressed peoples everywhere, and against which the masses of the world are now revolting. Black Power is part of the world rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor, of the exploited against the exploiter. It

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 28.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 29.

¹¹⁰ The pamphlet was first published in *Africa and the World* in January 1968. For a copy of the draft see the Kwame Nkrumah Papers, Box 154-31, Folders 13, 14, 15.

¹¹¹ Milne, *Conakry Years*, 170, dated 10 Aug. 1967.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.* 186, letter to Milne, dated 6 Oct. 1967.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* 187.

¹¹⁶ Nkrumah, *The Struggle Continues*, 13–15 and 36–45.

operates throughout the African continent, in North and South America, the Caribbean, wherever Africans and people of African descent live. It is linked with the Pan-African struggle for unity on the African continent, and with all those who strive to establish a socialist society.¹¹⁷

Nkrumah acknowledged that he had learnt a great deal from his intellectual exchanges with the Boggs.¹¹⁸ He considered that their maturity of political thought on the African American struggle enabled them to correctly 'link the Black Power revolution in America with the African Revolution'.¹¹⁹ In a letter to Christine Johnson, whom he befriended whilst he was studying in America, Nkrumah remarked: 'Unless Afro-Americans think of themselves as black men and as people of African descent, they will never come up to their own. I am glad that they are now becoming conscious of their roots'.¹²⁰

In Nkrumah's worldview, the struggle for Black Power in the United States was inextricably linked to the African revolution, yet he recognized that 'it opens the way for all oppressed masses', even 'potentially revolutionary white masses in the United States' who are 'dispossessed' and 'often are without hope'.¹²¹

Overall, Nkrumah's evolving revolutionary socialist perspective on the world led him to reject the concept of 'the Third World'. He reflected his views on this concept in a short article entitled 'The myth of the Third World', first published in *Labour Monthly* in October 1968.¹²² Nkrumah called for the abandonment of such a misleading political term, for its meaning was vague. For different audiences, the term 'Third World' referred to developing nations or specifically to non-European coloured peoples of the world. For Nkrumah the most dangerous meaning of the term was its association with 'a kind of passivity, a non-participation, an opting out of the conflict between the two worlds of capitalism and socialism'.¹²³ Yet, the historical origins of the phrase evolved as a result of its popularization with the convening of the Conference of Non-aligned States in 1961 and 1964.¹²⁴ He also considered 'non-alignment is an anachronism'.¹²⁵ It was 'a form of political escapism – reluctance to face the stark realities of the present situation'.¹²⁶ Fundamentally, Nkrumah emphasized that: 'There are two worlds only, the revolutionary and the counter-revolutionary world – the socialist world trend towards communism, and the capitalist world with its extensions of imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism'.¹²⁷ He was of the opinion that the concept of the 'Third World' is 'neither a practical political concept nor a reality'.¹²⁸ For Nkrumah, its continued usage served to marginalize the so-called 'Third World' from 'being identified openly and decisively as part of the socialist world'.¹²⁹

During this time, in his written commentary, Nkrumah lamented the political developments in other African countries such as Kenya and

¹¹⁷ K. Nkrumah, *The Spectre of Black Power*, in *The Struggle Continues*, 39–40.

¹¹⁸ Milne, *Conakry Years*, 247. Nkrumah expressed this in a letter to Milne dated 13 July 1968.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* 253, letter dated 27 Aug. 1968.

¹²¹ Nkrumah, *The Spectre of Black Power*, 41.

¹²² Nkrumah, *The Struggle Continues*, 74–8.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.* 74.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* 76.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

Nigeria.¹³⁰ In 1967 he became deeply politically disillusioned with the internal strife emerging among the Somali people, who continued to be divided by boundaries inherited from the colonial era. He wrote:

Yes, indeed, the African Revolution should recognise none of the colonial frontiers between African territories or states. They are indeed artificial boundaries having no meaning in the context of African unity. And so there [can be] no question of revolutionary forces (e.g. AAPRA [the All-African Peoples' Revolutionary Army]) violating a country's sovereignty by entering it for the purpose of the political unification of the continent. The whole of Africa is one, and every part of it belongs to Africa as a whole.¹³¹

Here Nkrumah simply reiterated his deepest convictions, which had been articulated in his earlier book *Africa Must Unite*. He rejected any kind of partitioning of Africa and considered 'Africa with its islands is just one Africa'.¹³²

It also appears that, in mid-1966, Nkrumah lost confidence in the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the Commonwealth. He wrote in a letter to June Milne:

I am not interested in the Commonwealth, any more than I am interested in the OAU. As for the Commonwealth, I am out of it for all time. It can serve no useful purpose. It is becoming a tool of neo-colonialism. Its concept is no more relevant to the African struggle.¹³³

He considered the OAU conference of 1966 to have been 'a real flop' and that the institution was 'collapsing'.¹³⁴ After his return to Ghana, Nkrumah hoped to revive the institution with 'militant and revolutionary states'.¹³⁵ Yet his disenchantment with the OAU grew.¹³⁶ Towards the end of his life, he characterized the institution as 'a puppet organisation' and he scorned what he viewed as the 'grudging efforts' of the Liberation Committee of the OAU, compared to the huge efforts put into a Pan-African cultural festival in Algiers in mid-1969.¹³⁷ Nkrumah envisaged that an All African Peoples' Revolutionary Army (AAPRA) and an All-African Peoples' Socialist Party (AAPSP), planned on a pan-African basis, would be created to supplant the OAU.¹³⁸

Another conviction Nkrumah upheld to his death was his strong belief in the separation between the private and the political aspects of an individual's life. There were tensions in his views on women and on a man's personal life. To one extent, he also believed that 'a man's private life is his own in so far as he does not allow it to destroy the objective of his socialist revolutionary life'.¹³⁹ Yet, he also recognized that 'it is impossible for a revolutionary to

¹³⁰ Milne, *Conakry Years*, 53, letter dated 8 July 1966.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* 136, letter dated 9 Apr. 1967.

¹³² K. Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite* (London, 1963), 217–18.

¹³³ Milne, *Conakry Years*, 53, letter dated 8 July 1966.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.* 76, letter dated 10 Oct. 1966.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* 77.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* 326. Nkrumah expressed his frustration over the OAU in a letter to the British communist writer, Idris Cox, dated 16 Aug. 1969.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* 72–3, letter dated 27 Sept. 1966.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* 331, letter dated 6 Sept. 1969 to an African American woman by the name of Reba Lewis.

dissociate his private life from his public life if he wants to be a true revolutionary'.¹⁴⁰ Whilst he recognized the complexity of such a dichotomy, he tended to demonstrate a patronizing attitude towards the treatment of women. He wrote: 'I agree one must love a person who is also in agreement with one's socialist revolutionary objectives; if not, the revolutionary should leave women alone. Women, money and alcohol are hindrances to the revolutionary cause if not sensibly handled'.¹⁴¹

Prior to his own marriage, Nkrumah considered involvement with women a dangerous diversion from politics.¹⁴² However, on an intellectual level, he accepted that some women were committed to the cause of revolution. He admired the German revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg, and referred to her as 'one of the greatest, if not the greatest, socialist woman of our century. She was one of the few who could stand up against Lenin in those days'.¹⁴³ Despite this, Nkrumah's conception of political struggle was on the whole male-dominated and male-led. Women who proved themselves to be leaders and competent were much admired and respected by Nkrumah and consequently had been given posts within the party on account of their individual merit.¹⁴⁴ Nevertheless, this did not appear to influence his overall belief that women were a distraction to the greater cause of the African Revolution. Perhaps it was this belief that was the basis of Nkrumah's opposition to his family visiting him in Conakry, or was it simply that he was married first and foremost to his conception of an 'African Revolution' that in his mind required total dedication?

Whilst Nkrumah had ample time to reflect during his stay in Conakry, his self-criticism and self-evaluation reveal a man who had become divorced from reality. He believed he had made two mistakes: firstly he was 'not tough enough', and secondly he 'did not pursue socialism fast enough'.¹⁴⁵ Yet it was Nkrumah's authoritarian style of rule that had alienated him from many ordinary Ghanaians. Also, it is hard to accept that, in pursuing socialism at a greater speed, Nkrumah would have succeeded. In short, if we are to engage in historical conjecture, these strategies are guaranteed to have provoked a *coup d'état* rather than to have deterred one. They are products of deeply misguided thinking.

Towards the end of 1966, he wrote in a letter to June Milne:

I don't deny I have made mistakes. Many a time I have taken people for granted and trusted them and many a time they betrayed that trust or took advantage of it, and me. They took advantage of my kindness to them, when my kindness was a genuine effort to help them. In this wise I admit I have made mistakes, and have sometimes miscalculated human beings.¹⁴⁶

Unfortunately, Nkrumah does not expand on what he considers to have been his mistakes. However, he frequently repeated that, once he returned to power in Ghana, he would do things differently. What exactly he planned

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 335.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Nkrumah, *Autobiography*, 12.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* 291, letter to Reba Lewis dated 3 Feb. 1969.

¹⁴⁴ See T. Manuh, 'Women and their organisations during the Convention People's Party period', in K. Arhin (ed.), *The Life and Work of Kwame Nkrumah* (Trenton, 1992), 101–29.

¹⁴⁵ Milne, *Conakry Years*, 45; Milne noted these criticisms in her notebook dated 10–23 June 1966.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 97–8.

to do differently, Nkrumah does not disclose. Nevertheless, he recognized his colossal misjudgement of individuals, and this misjudgement continued in Conakry. In July 1969, the small youth group banned Ambrose Yankey Snr., whom Nkrumah had appointed as head of his security at the villa.¹⁴⁷ According to Lamine Janha, 'Yankey was corrupt and misinforming the Old Man'. The banning of Yankey appeared to have received Nkrumah's 'tacit approval', for he did not utter a word when he was told by the youth the reasons for their actions. Was this the reaction of an Nkrumah who was no longer in charge of his surroundings, except his ideological thoughts?¹⁴⁸

CONCLUSION

During 1968 there were small signs of deterioration in Nkrumah's health. Outwardly, he maintained an optimistic disposition and his daily routine. Increasingly, however, a low morale dominated the atmosphere of the villa. Milne observes that, in addition to the slackening in the pace of day-to-day activities there, 'doubts were beginning to be expressed as to whether in fact Nkrumah would ever be restored to power'.¹⁴⁹

His ill health was initially attributed to digestive trouble and back pains. Prior to the coup he had regular medical check-ups in Ghana. In Guinea, Nkrumah's attitude in 1968 was that he would have a thorough medical examination once he returned to Ghana. The following year did not bring about his restoration, but instead a downward decline, in spite of several hopeful indications that a counter-coup would occur. In Ghana, General Ankrah was forced to resign as chairman of the NLC when it was discovered in 1969 that he was involved in corruption. Whilst this gave Nkrumah hope, his Ghanaian contacts proved to be a disappointment, and by the end of the year he refused all contact with them.¹⁵⁰ Meanwhile, as Milne observes:

It was pressure from Ghanaians on Nkrumah to be ready for an 'imminent' counter-coup which led him to postpone plans to go to the Soviet Union for a much-needed rest and medical check-up. He had intended to go if nothing had happened by April 1969. By then he was steadily losing weight, and weighed barely ten stone. He had weighed well over eleven stone when he arrived in Conakry three years before.¹⁵¹

Nkrumah's physical decline was mirrored in the economic decline in Guinea. Lack of spare parts meant that the failing generator at the villa could not be repaired. Similarly, the air conditioner in his bedroom was broken and his ceiling leaked.¹⁵² Exacerbating the economic difficulties in the country was the attempted assassination of President Sékou Touré in March 1969. The impact of this led to a tightening of security, both inside the country and in the villa.

With his failing health and concern over the future of his books, Nkrumah drew up his will in the last months of 1969. The will entrusted Milne to become his literary executrix and was signed and witnessed in Villa Syli on 21 January 1970. Around this time, Nkrumah could no longer conceal the

¹⁴⁷ Milne, *Conakry Years*, 56, 324. Interview with Janha, 21 Sept. 2003.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Janha, 21 Sept. 2003.

¹⁴⁹ Milne, *Conakry Years*, 214.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* 280.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 279.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

fact that his health was deteriorating. It became worse with the rainy season when he suffered what was diagnosed by a Russian doctor as acute lumbago. Whilst Nkrumah and members of his entourage were sceptical about this diagnosis, the medication, a course of injections, was accepted. It was later discovered he had prostate cancer.¹⁵³

Nkrumah's correspondence during 1970 decreased considerably due to his ill health. During this year Madam Fathia received typed letters from Nkrumah, with his handwritten signature. This worried her greatly as Nkrumah had always handwritten letters to her.¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, another reason for the scarcity of letters was the discovery of interception of the mail by unknown persons. Consequently, Nkrumah reduced his letters and resorted to cable as a more reliable form of communication. Also during this year, a stubborn Nkrumah would not be persuaded by pleas from those around him, including Sékou Touré and his wife, to seek medical treatment overseas. In August 1971, his condition became very severe and he finally agreed to seek medical treatment in Bucharest. He was taken to Conakry airport in a stretcher and accompanied by Sana Camara, who was Nkrumah's protocol officer and interpreter, appointed by President Sékou Touré, and two devoted members of his entourage, B. E. Quarm and Nyamikeh.

At the Sanatorial de Geriatrie in Bucharest, Nkrumah spent his days sitting in a large armchair, unable to move his now 8½-stone frame. He had lost his energy and was suffering a great deal of pain. He permitted only selected individuals to visit. Among them were Milne, Madam Sékou Touré, and the wife of Sana Camara.¹⁵⁵ The Guinean ambassador in Rome, Seydou Keita, once visited Nkrumah in late October 1971, and during the visit Keita lambasted the seditious activities of Guinean ministers. The ambassador was angry and said that corruption was an ingrained trait of Africans. Nkrumah's reaction was observed. Milne wrote:

[Nkrumah] sat back in his chair, tapped Keita's left hand and said slowly and quietly: 'It is not the colour of the skin. The solution is the political unification of Africa. When Africa is a united strong power everyone will respect Africa, and Africans will respect themselves'.¹⁵⁶

It is apparent that his political vision and convictions remained intact despite his illness. As Nkrumah wasted away, the powerful pain-killing drug Fortral sustained him.¹⁵⁷ He was unable to eat and therefore had to be fed by a drip. Nkrumah died at 8.45 a.m. on 27 April 1972 from prostate cancer, at the age of 63 – lonely and isolated but boundlessly optimistic, as illustrated in the pages of the *Conakry Years*.

¹⁵³ Interview with June Milne, 21 June 1999, London; interview with Madam Fathia, 14–16 Feb. 2004.

¹⁵⁴ Madam Fathia recalled that, during their marriage, Nkrumah was frequently visited by doctors who gave him injections. She suspects that the cancer had begun to develop soon after their marriage. When she asked Nkrumah about his health, he would tell her not to worry herself. She believes he shielded her from his illness. Interview with Madam Fathia, 14–16 Feb. 2004.

¹⁵⁵ Milne, *Conakry Years*, 410.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 406.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 412–13. As this drug was unavailable in Romania, Milne managed to get her own doctor to prescribe it. Interview with Milne, 21 June 1999, London.