

Rethinking Power and Politics in the African Diaspora

# Nuclear Imperialism and the Pan-African Struggle for Peace and Freedom Ghana, 1959–1962<sup>1</sup>

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*What is often missing from historical reflections on Pan-Africanism, African nationalism, and movements for independence is the relationship between struggles for the liberation of the continent from colonial rule and pacifist movements in opposition to nuclear armament. This article reconstructs the struggle against “nuclear imperialism” that emerged out of the Pan-African struggle for freedom in the late 1950s and early 1960s through the important work of radical pacifists Bayard Rustin and Bill Sutherland. Based upon a broad range of sources—published and archival—it revisits the dramatic attempt by peace activists to travel from newly independent Ghana to a site in the Sahara desert where the French intended to test their atomic bomb. The movement against nuclear imperialism that took root in the Pan-African freedom struggle not only showcases the “global” and the “transnational” in ways that need to be recovered, but stands as a counter-narrative, a corrective, to the afro-pessimism that has so dominated scholarship on Africa since the 1980s.*

Keywords: afro-pessimism, Algeria, all-African people’s conference, cold war, diaspora, fellowship for reconciliation, Ghana, national liberation, nationalism, nuclear disarmament, nuclear weapons, Pan-Africanism, peace movement, Sahara protest team, South Africa

“We face neither East nor West: we face forward.”

—Kwame Nkrumah, Positive Action Conference for  
Peace and Security in Africa, Accra, 2 April 1960

In 1962 Professor St. Clair Drake prepared a paper for the Accra Assembly on the World without the Bomb—a high-profile international gathering in Ghana’s capital of nearly a

hundred activists, statesmen, scientists, teachers, and clergy opposed to nuclear armament.<sup>2</sup> Drake, a renowned Pan-Africanist and then Professor of Anthropology at Roosevelt University, had served as the head of the Department of Sociology at the University College of Ghana from 1958–1961. In his paper, “The African Revolution and the Accra Assembly” Drake predicted:

History will record a significant fact about the African Revolution, that it was led by men who always exhibited an unusual concern for minimizing the violence of the revolutionary struggle, for seeking solutions through the United Nations wherever possible; and who were always concerned to insulate the revolution from Cold War politics so that Africa would not run the danger of becoming the spot from which World War III—the nuclear war began.<sup>3</sup>

Regrettably, Drake—an extraordinarily incisive and prescient social critic—was not on target with this particular historiographical prediction. By and large, these are not the “facts,” of the “African Revolution” that history has chosen to remember. While we have heretofore managed to avoid World War III (an “accomplishment” increasingly imperiled with each passing day), the achievements of the “African Revolution” have for the most part been buried beneath the detritus of coups and counter-coups, debt, civil war, and structural adjustment. What many have termed an “afro-pessimism”—“nothing good ever comes out of Africa”—has erased the vision, the new world order that so many sought to build.<sup>4</sup>

What I would like to accomplish with this essay is rather simple. I want to recount a story—for some it may be a familiar story—of one small episode in that African Revolution. I wish to focus on the movement against what was called by activists at the time “nuclear imperialism” as it emerged out of the Pan-African struggle for freedom from colonial rule in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It is a story I reconstruct out of the private papers and recollections of participants, government documentation, and newspapers, both in Ghana and the U.S. I want to revisit this moment in Africa’s past and in the history of Pan-African revolt for three basic reasons. First of all, and quite simply, it is important to remember in these days of war, torture, and U.S. imperialism run amok, that there was a time when Africa was at the very center of the global peace movement and when radical visions of a new world order were being generated from the streets of Accra to the mountains of Kenya, from the townships of apartheid South Africa to the Qasbah in Algiers. Secondly, I offer these stories as a reminder, if not a corrective, to the new discourse on globalization that has washed across so many campuses in North America. New transnational and global studies programs and institutes are popping up everywhere, offering “new” ways to understand the world that transcend political/national borders. They are either oblivious to or perhaps strategically dismissive of the fact that interdisciplinary programs like African–American Studies and Peace Studies have been “global”—in subject and method—from the outset.<sup>5</sup> The movement against nuclear imperialism that took root in the Pan-African freedom struggle showcases the “global” and the “transnational” in ways that need to be recovered and remembered. We must not forget that Pan-Africanists like W.E.B. Du Bois, Paul Robeson, George Padmore, Kwame Nkrumah, Walter Sisulu, and Patrice Lumumba were, in many ways, on the front line in confronting the harsh realities of our current world order—the post-War imperial world that the U.S. has sought to make in its own racist image.

Thirdly and finally, this story stands as a counter-narrative, a corrective, I would argue, to the so-called “afro-pessimism” that has dominated scholarship on Africa since the 1980s. The focus of much of that pessimism has been on the failure of the African nation. Ever since the promise of the newly independent African nation states of the 1950s–1960s

and the celebratory historiography that heralded their rise crashed against the hard rocks of neocolonialism and neoliberalism, many scholars of African nation and nationalism have been immobilized by what has been widely deemed the failure of the nationalist and Pan-Africanist project in Africa. As a result, few, if any, have transcended the modernization-bound question “What went wrong?”<sup>6</sup> Even when scholars have deployed counter-modernization theories of dependency and underdevelopment, the question has, in many ways, remained the same. This profound, almost discipline-defining pessimism—a pessimism which seems consistently fueled by horrors transpiring in places like Rwanda, Liberia, and more recently, the Sudan—has prevented us from comprehensively recognizing, problematizing, and historicizing the legacies of nation and Pan-Africanism in late colonial and neocolonial Africa. Yet these are stories we need to remember, perhaps more so now than ever—“nation time,” liberation times, times when Pan-Africanism recognized no boundaries and a United States of Africa was considered not a pipe dream, but a plan just shy of a blueprint.<sup>7</sup>

## Black Internationalism and Emergent Ghana

These kinds of stories always have multiple beginnings and manifold genealogies of origin.<sup>8</sup> The story I wish to tell here, for example—though it unfolds in West Africa during the first years of Ghana’s independence—is inextricably connected to stories of radical Black internationalism, especially in the United States. Thanks to the works of Horne, Plummer, Richards, Meriweather, Kelley, Von Eschen, Gaines, and many others, we know that in the U.S. there was an efflorescence in Black internationalism in the wake of Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia in 1935—an internationalism that continued to insist on the inextricable connections between struggles for equality and racial justice in the U.S. and anticolonial resistance in Africa and Asia.<sup>9</sup> Through biographical accounts, through histories of organizations like the Council on African Affairs and through careful readings of the African–American press, we can trace the paths and reconstruct the meetings and rallies that brought radical Black internationalists into alliance, debate, and common struggle across the globe. We can follow Du Bois, Robeson, Max Yergan, and the Council on African Affairs from 1937 until the height of the Cold War;<sup>10</sup> or we can look at the NAACP’s colonial conference in April 1945, which brought together participants from throughout the colonial world, including Kwame Nkrumah.<sup>11</sup> In Manchester, England at the Fifth Pan-African Congress in October of that very same year, Padmore, Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, along with Du Bois, Amy Ashwood Garvey, and many others made sure that Africa and an African agenda for liberation was front and center.<sup>12</sup> A year later, the Big Three Unity Rally in New York in 1946 emphatically placed an anti-nuclear agenda in the foreground of struggles against colonialism and racial oppression, as explicit connections were made between new U.S. investments in Africa (for example, in the mining of uranium in the Belgian Congo for the construction of atomic bombs) and issues of social justice in the U.S.<sup>13</sup> Those connections—between Pan-Africanism, anticolonialism, and global peace—continued to resonate throughout the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace in New York (March, 1949) and at the World Peace Conference in Paris (April, 1949).<sup>14</sup>

But by the early 1950s, as many historians have argued, the Red Scare, McCarthyite repression, and the systematic persecution of Black internationalists in the U.S., including the confiscation of both Robeson’s and Du Bois’s passports, “limited the scope and capped the resources of many mass organizations that had been militant during the war years. Cold War rhetoric questioned the legitimacy of anticolonialism and pacifism in a world dominated by armed superpowers.”<sup>15</sup> As a result, the Cold War “severed the black

American struggle for civil rights from the issues of anticolonialism and racism abroad.” The politics of Black internationalism in the U.S., Von Eschen concludes, “did not survive the beginnings of the Cold War.”<sup>16</sup>

Without minimizing the devastating impact of the Cold War on Black radical internationalism in the U.S., it remains important to understand the ways in which that internationalist vision so deftly reconstructed by Horne, Plummer, Von Eschen, and others, continued throughout the 1950s—albeit in very different forms and often in very different places.<sup>17</sup> For example, the so-called “Bandung Conference” in Indonesia in 1955, was one of the great watersheds in the history of struggles for peace, freedom, and non-alignment—and it provided an important context for radical Black internationalists to continue to engage, on a global stage, with the newly emergent non-aligned world, despite the ravages of the Cold War.<sup>18</sup> The famed African-American writer, Richard Wright, was in attendance and, though Robeson had been denied a passport for travel, he sent a long message of support that powerfully foregrounded the inextricable connections between colonialism, nuclear proliferation, and racial injustice.<sup>19</sup> After Bandung, the center of gravity for Black internationalism shifted decisively from what was fast becoming the center of a new global empire—the U.S.—to its margins, to a small country in West Africa, under the leadership of a staunch Pan-Africanist, Kwame Nkrumah. Nkrumah had spent a decade in the U.S. as a student from 1935–1945. These were the very years that Black internationalism was coming into its own and Nkrumah contributed directly to the forging of that radical internationalist agenda in the U.S. In many ways, then, the shift from Harlem in 1945 to Bandung in 1955 to independent Ghana after 1957 was predicted by and directly predicated upon the Pan Africanist Congress in Manchester, which witnessed African leaders taking center stage for the first time.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, as Du Bois wrote to Immanuel Wallerstein in 1961, “Pan-Africanism was not dormant between the Manchester meeting in 1945 and the Accra meeting in 1958. It was alive in the plans of Nkrumah, Padmore and many others . . . but the question was where it could meet and how far its program could go.”<sup>21</sup>

## **Ghana, the Sahara Team, and the Pan-African Struggle Against Nuclear Imperialism**

Du Bois’s second question—just how far the radical Pan-Africanist agenda did or might go—remains open. But his first question—the where?—was addressed, at least until 1966, by Ghana’s independence. The powerful initiatives of Black internationalism, particularly with regard to anticolonialism, non-alignment, and peace, resonated throughout the First Conference of Independent African States (Accra, April, 1958), which demanded an end to the “production of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons” and the suspension of “all atomic tests in any part of the world and in particular the intention to carry out such tests in the Sahara.”<sup>22</sup> Developing a position that he termed, “positive neutrality,” Nkrumah explained to Ghana’s National Assembly in February of that same year, that “Ghana has a vested interest in peace; our constant concern is national security, in order that we may get on with the job of economic and social reconstruction in an atmosphere of peace and tranquility.”<sup>23</sup>

That African liberation was inextricably bound to struggles for peace, security, and non-alignment echoed throughout the continent in the months following Ghana’s independence. At the All-African People’s Conference [AAPC] in December, 1958—a conference hailed by the *Chicago Defender* as proof that “Pan-Africanism is more than a vague dream of expatriates in London or Negroes in Harlem”<sup>24</sup>—the East–West conflict and the



7 July 1959 © *Ghana Evening News*.

prospects for non-alignment were central to discussions.<sup>25</sup> Many Black radicals joined Du Bois in considering the AAPC the direct successor of the 1945 Pan-African Congress—a sixth congress, as it were. Robeson was able to attend the historic gathering in Accra, though Du Bois was not. His message to participants was delivered by his wife, Shirley Graham Du Bois.<sup>26</sup> Together, conference members decried the ways in which imperialists “are now coordinating their activities by forming military and economic pacts such as NATO, European Common Market, Free Trade Area . . . for the purpose of strengthening their imperialist activities in Africa.” Participants—Patrice Lumumba from the Congo and Tom Mboya of Kenya among them—pledged their “full support to all fighters for freedom in Africa . . . as well as to all those who are compelled to retaliate against violence to attain national independence and freedom for the people.”<sup>27</sup>

The following year, when France made clear its intent to begin testing a new atomic bomb in the Sahara desert in the very near future, the connections between colonialism and nuclear proliferation took on an even greater urgency for African nationalists and Pan-Africanists. In August, 1959, the Monrovia Conference on Algeria, which included foreign ministers from nine independent African states who gathered to discuss support for the Algerian nationalist struggle, passed a resolution denouncing the decision to conduct nuclear tests in Africa.<sup>28</sup> Two months later, when the AAPC steering committee met in Accra, Nkrumah demanded that the major world powers “stop all nuclear tests, stop research on, and manufacturing of nuclear weapons, destroy all existing stocks of atomic and hydrogen bombs and dismantle all rocket bases. . . . [N]uclear weapons,” he declared, “constituted the ‘sword of Damocles hanging over the head of mankind . . . which we must remove by positive action.’”<sup>29</sup>

But by the time Nkrumah addressed the AAPC steering committee, concrete plans were already well-underway—for one of the first times anywhere in the world—to make manifest the combined struggle against imperialism and campaigns for nuclear disarmament. Ghana’s central role in articulating a Pan-African vision, in re-animating Black internationalism in the wake of systematic Cold War repression, and in aiding anti-colonial movements throughout the continent made it a logical place for mobilizing against France’s nuclear imperial threat. And the Ghanaian government, as we will see, ended up providing significant logistical and practical support for the specific plans that began to unfold in April, 1959. Yet the monumental work of engineering this crucial alliance

between anti-imperial, Pan-African struggles for freedom and the anti-nuclear movement fell not to Nkrumah or his government, but to two African–American radical peace activists—Bill Sutherland and Bayard Rustin—who, like Nkrumah, were very much participants in and products of the efflorescence of Black internationalism in the previous decade and had been profoundly influenced by the Pan-African vision of Trinidadian revolutionary George Padmore.<sup>30</sup> Both Rustin and Sutherland had resisted the draft during World War II and, as a result of their actions, had been sentenced to federal prison—Rustin for three years, Sutherland for four.<sup>31</sup> Both were active in the Fellowship of Reconciliation,<sup>32</sup> as well as in founding the Congress of Racial Equality in 1942, and had participated in the Committee for Non-Violent Action and a range of international campaigns for nuclear disarmament, including Britain’s Direct Action Committee against Nuclear War. Indeed, Rustin was one of the main speakers at the Trafalgar Square launch of the famous Aldermaston March to protest nuclear armament on April 9, 1958.

Bill Sutherland had settled in Ghana at the beginning of 1954.<sup>33</sup> On Bayard Rustin’s recommendation, he had originally planned to travel to Nigeria to work with Nnamdi Azikiwe on the *West Africa Pilot*, but his visa was endlessly delayed by the British Colonial Office. Then, one afternoon, as Sutherland recounts it, “Padmore had me meet him at a sidewalk café in Paris, where he was discussing politics with African American author Richard Wright. Wright had just begun working on the book that was to become *Black Power*, and was filled with exciting stories about his recent trip to the Gold Coast.” Based on Padmore’s recommendation, Sutherland headed for Ghana. After several years working on an educational project, he became the personal secretary of Ghana’s first post-independence Finance Minister, K.A. Gbedemah, who shared a background in international peace activism. According to Sutherland’s recollections, he first learned of the French plans from April Carter and Michael Randle, who were centrally involved in the Direct Action Committee of the British anti-nuclear movement. Fortunately, because of his travels back and forth to Britain as Gbedemah’s secretary, Sutherland was able to liaise closely with his British counterparts, with Africans residing in London, and with the Convention People’s Party [CPP] in Ghana in order to work out plans for how peace activists should respond to the impending French threat to explode an atomic bomb in the Sahara.<sup>34</sup> In September, Sutherland also made his way to New York in an effort to build further support for direct action against the French threat. There he met with Bayard Rustin, who had played an absolutely critical role in organizing non-violent protest during the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and whom Sutherland considered crucial to any action against the French.<sup>35</sup> “Not only,” as John D’Emilio writes, “did [Rustin] have more experience organizing complex direct action projects than did any of the British pacifists, but the fact that he was black and so deeply involved in the Southern freedom struggle would bring credibility among Africans.” Ever the political tactician, Rustin was quickly persuaded by Sutherland and by the strategic possibilities of linking the struggles of African peoples to the campaign for nuclear disarmament.<sup>36</sup> By October, the War Resisters League agreed to fund Rustin’s journey to Britain and Ghana to help develop a plan for direct action.

Kevin Gaines has recently argued in his pathbreaking *American Africans in Ghana* that Ghana “provided an independent forum for black American radicals... offering them the opportunity to participate in a transnational culture of opposition to a Western culture seeking the preservation of colonial and neo-colonial dominance over the majority of the world’s peoples.”<sup>37</sup> Certainly, Ghana provided an important forum for African–American activists like Rustin and Sutherland, but we must also appreciate the reciprocal processes at work: what Black radicals from the U.S. and the broader diaspora brought to Ghana. Ghana became the new focal point of a “transnational culture of opposition,” in no small part because of the ongoing work of Black internationalists like Du Bois, Robeson,

Padmore, Rustin, and Sutherland. These activists were not simply accessing an existing (and heretofore separate) struggle for peace and freedom by locating their work in Ghana. They were generating and constituting that struggle—literally mapping it with their movements across borders and boundaries, as they forged links between pacifism, nuclear disarmament, and civil rights and reinvigorated the Pan-African struggle against colonial domination. In Ghana in 1959, it was Bayard Rustin and Bill Sutherland who sought to bring the lessons of Montgomery, Aldermaston, and the All African People's Conference on to the same page.

Yet the work of forging and maintaining transnational links—especially given the primacy of “nation” and “national interests” in a Cold War world—was not always easy, even when operating from Black internationalism's new center of gravity in an independent African state. Indeed, as D'Emilio points out, many in the civil rights movement, including Dr. Martin Luther King and A. Philip Randolph, were not pleased with Bayard Rustin's decision to travel to Ghana during what was understood as a critical moment in the Black Freedom Movement. They urged Rustin not to participate in any action that might result in a prison term and thereby prevent him from returning to the U.S. Meanwhile, Rustin's pacifist allies urged him on.<sup>38</sup> Unsure of how to proceed, Rustin—already in Ghana—requested that his allies from the civil rights and pacifist movements meet and agree on how he should proceed. The results of that meeting, held in Randolph's office in Harlem, were reported to Rustin by telegram: “‘Randolph expressed firm view civil rights struggle paramount and decisively important to African colonial struggle as well as peace fight. Your indispensable role in domestic actions requires return . . . Muste holds that Africa project potentially more important, capable of major contribution to civil rights struggle here as well as struggle against new nuclear colonialism.’”<sup>39</sup> In the end, Rustin found his own way, moving forward with his participation in the protest, while making arrangements, in consultation with Nkrumah and other protesters, for pacifist A.J. Muste (Fellowship of Reconciliation activist and then chair of the Committee for Non-Violent Action) to replace him in due course.<sup>40</sup>

Just what that protest would entail was “the culmination,” according to April Carter, “of . . . negotiation and planning between Accra, New York, and London; journeys to France; deputations to African Embassies in London; and debate about the politics, route, personnel and financing of the team.”<sup>41</sup> Rustin, Sutherland, Scott, Randle, Carter, and a handful of others ultimately decided that the protest team should assemble in Accra and then travel north through Upper Volta and the French Soudan, continuing directly to the test site in Algeria.<sup>42</sup> The plan had the full support of Ghana's ruling party—the Convention People's Party. In fact, the Ghana Council for Nuclear Disarmament [GCND], headed up by E.C. Quaye, Chair of the Accra City Council, had approached Ghana's Cabinet in October of 1959 with a request for assistance to send the protest team from Ghana “across West Africa into the atomic testing ground at El Hammoudia near Reggan”—approximately 2000 miles to the north of Accra some time in November.<sup>43</sup> After much discussion, the Cabinet decided that it would provide a special grant of G£2,757 to the African Affairs Committee, “which in turn could make the sum available” to the GCND. Concerned about maintaining an image of government neutrality, the Cabinet directed the GCND “not to publicise the source of their income in order to avoid possible embarrassment to the Government.”<sup>44</sup> Such budgetary laundering through African Affairs, however, could not have disguised government support for the protest. The African Affairs Committee met regularly at Flagstaff house, Nkrumah's residence in Accra, and included all of the top government ministers and CPP activists.<sup>45</sup>

By November, 1959, international activists began to converge on Accra. Reverend Michael Scott, the renowned anti-colonial, anti-apartheid peace activist, who had been arrested for civil disobedience in South Africa in 1946, and who would become a major

figure in the movement for colonial freedom in southern Africa, arrived in mid-November.<sup>46</sup> Joining him was A.J. Muste (who founded the American Committee on Africa) and Michael Randle (Chair of the Direct Action Committee against Nuclear War from 1958–1961). In addition to Bayard Rustin, Francis Hoyland (an art teacher and painter from Britain), and Esther Peter (a peace activist who worked for the Council of Europe in Strasbourg) made their way to Accra, although H.O. Hakansson, a professional dancer and life long pacifist from India, who was supposed to join the team, was not able to come.<sup>47</sup> As the team members assembled in Accra, they began the process of applying for travel documentation. The French government's immediate response to the activists' requests was to deny visas and entry permits to all team members, including Esther Peter, a French citizen. In a statement published in the *Ghanaian Times*, Rustin, serving as the team's secretary, responded by reaffirming the group's determination to proceed:

The French authorities, by imprisoning us, will hardly silence our voices. We cannot believe that the French people want to defy world opinion as expressed at the United Nations by exploding a bomb while the present nuclear powers are seeking an agreement to end all testing. We cannot believe that the French people want to perpetrate the infamy of violating and desecrating the soil of Africa in the interests of a new nuclear imperialism. . . . There is one thing that will cause us to abandon our mission—the abandonment of the Sahara Test.<sup>48</sup>

While diplomatic responses unfolded outside of Ghana, public fundraising for the campaign within Ghana reached a fever pitch with a mass rally at West End Arena on November 19 when Finance Minister K.A. Gbedemah appealed to the nation on behalf of the team and the GCND. "We the people of Africa," Gbedemah declared, "can under no circumstances permit our God-given land to be used for the destruction of humanity." Over G£4,000 were collected at that rally.<sup>49</sup> Meanwhile, the Ghanaian government continued to battle at the United Nations. In New York, Ghana's Permanent Representative to the UN sharply questioned French sovereignty over the Sahara: "... the whole question of French sovereignty in the Sahara is today being debated on the field of battle between the armies of France and the forces of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic. . . . If France must explode its bomb, they are quite welcome to do so somewhere in metropolitan France. . . . Those days when the destiny of Africa was decided at the conference tables outside Africa . . . are over."<sup>50</sup>

On December 5, 1959, the night before the team's departure, Rev. Scott told Radio Ghana listeners that the desert "was being prepared as a base for nuclear war in North Africa and the Middle East." Their journey would be "a holy war, a non-violent war, against the inhumanity of nuclear war."<sup>51</sup> The following morning, the Sahara Protest Team, which now included eighteen members, began its trek after a dawn farewell rally at the Arena. The members included ten Ghanaians (C. Ablorh, B.M. Akita, K.M. Arkhurst, George Asante, K.A. Dornu, K. Frimpong-Manso, F.A. Koteye, P.G. Marshall, George Odoo, and R. Orleans-Lindsay); a Nigerian student, H. Arinze; Ntsu Mokheke, president of the Basutoland National Congress; Hoyland, Randle, and Scott from Britain; Peter from France; and Rustin and Sutherland from the U.S. A.J. Muste remained in Accra in charge of communications, though he planned to meet up with the team briefly when it reached the border. The team's departure captured world media attention the moment it left Accra.<sup>52</sup> By the afternoon of day one, the team had reached Kumasi—the capital of the historical Asante empire—where it was met by an enthusiastic crowd. As Muste later wrote, "I wish that all activists in the United States and Britain could witness these scenes—the big rallies, the people lined along the streets and roads shouting, 'Freedom!' and 'Sahara Team!' as the huge truck and the Land Rovers rolled by."<sup>53</sup>





*“Sahara Protest Team Stopped at Bittou,” 19 January 1960 © Ghana Evening News.*

After leaving Kumasi, the team continued its journey north, reaching the town of Bolgatanga on December 7, where members then made the decision to try to cross the border at the frontier town of Bawku.<sup>54</sup> From Bawku, the team passed into French territory, but had to travel sixteen miles before reaching the first French government post at Bittou. There team members met three French officers and Michael Scott immediately set about explaining their mission. According to Muste’s account, “one of the officers interrupted him and said: ‘you do not need to speak at length. We know all about your group. . . . But we are here under instructions from Paris to forbid you to proceed.’”<sup>55</sup> And it was there, at Bittou, that the team sat for several days in a strange kind of limbo: they were not allowed to pass, nor were they arrested. Sutherland recalls that they “maintained their presence in Bittou, handing out leaflets. . . . Once it was clear that the group was well received, evident by local offers of food and shelter, the French police surrounded them.”<sup>56</sup> Esther Peter, as a French citizen, was the only one allowed to move about, but she could only do so under guard.<sup>57</sup> At times, the situation grew quite tense. As Sutherland recalls, Bayard Rustin at one point said, “Let’s start up our motors and see what happens.” Apparently, seconds later, “the French paramilitary came and took their positions with their weapons at the ready and the team members stopped the motors.” The team withdrew to Bolgatanga to reconsider their strategy.

Several days later, the *Ghanaian Times* announced the protesters’ new strategy with a bold headline: “Protest Team Makes Second Dash.” A smaller group of seven, led by Michael Scott, left Bolgatanga on the 17th, this time heading toward Po in the Upper Volta. The team included Randle, Scott, Sutherland, and four others. While this group made their move, other members agreed to focus on propaganda in Ghana, the surrounding region, as well as Europe and the U.S.<sup>58</sup> But the smaller version of the team was again halted at the end of December at the frontier post of Po. There they camped for some time, unable to move. Finally, as Sutherland recounts:

After getting to know the African guards, the second team moved early one morning across the border. “The guards did not try to stop us physically,” Bill remembered, “but they did alert their French superiors, who arrested us after we advanced about one mile into Upper Volta. We were put into jail. . . . The next morning, we were all

put into a large van and the amiable military officer in charge led the way in a small Land Rover. We did not know where they were taking us, but we drove for several hours. Unfortunately, the officer's land rover skidded and turned over on the very sandy road. The team of seven of us was allowed out of our van to help put the overturned vehicle right and we continued on our way! Eventually . . . we . . . were dumped uncereemoniously into Ghana."<sup>59</sup>

As all of the personal accounts of the protesters attest, the standoff between the team and the French officers was incredibly tense, though there were, at times, surprising moments of easy interaction with the soldiers. Michael Scott recounts several of these, including one on Christmas day, when soldiers approached the camp and the protesters were sure they were about to be arrested. Instead, "the soldiers had come to share food and drink with us," Scott remembers, "and sing us French songs."<sup>60</sup> On another occasion, when the protesters were moving through French territory under French escort, one of their truck's tires was punctured and they were forced to stop. The soldiers who had been following them pulled up along side and set their rifles down, knowing that no one could flee. Then, according to Scott, "Michael Randle, who had a guitar, started singing and playing. The soldiers became interested and the whole thing ended up with them doing their dances and our people doing ours. The French officers, three of them, eventually arrived and found their own troops dancing with us, their rifles parked by the side of the road."<sup>61</sup>

Such light-hearted moments notwithstanding, by January team members were utterly exhausted, though they made several more attempts to cross the border, urged on, according to Sutherland, by the enthusiasm of Finance Minister Gbedemah.<sup>62</sup> Finally, in mid January, the team again crossed the border—not at an official post—with the help of a "local guide along a path usually used by smugglers."<sup>63</sup> They hid in the bush and slept under blankets draped over tree branches for shade, and moved only at night, on foot, toward Ouagadougou. Exhausted and without water, they eventually hitched a ride with a truck. But their relief gave way to dismay when, as Scott recalls, "Instead of being taken to the next town, we found ourselves being driven right into the compound of the French authorities. One of the French officers who had had the Christmas dinner with us lifted up the flap of the lorry and said, 'Bon jour. Good to see you again.'"<sup>64</sup> The team members were again arrested and again they refused to cooperate with the police. They were then hand carried, one by one, into a van, driven south, and dumped, for the last time, on the Ghana side of the border.<sup>65</sup>

After this failed attempt, the Sahara Protest Team, as it came to be known, returned to Accra where it now had a permanent office, and was officially co-chaired by E.C. Quaye and Michael Scott, with Michael Randle as secretary. Its working committee included Abdoulaye Diallo, E.J. Duplain, K.A. Gbedemah, R.T. Makonnen, Bayard Rustin, Bill Sutherland, and N.A. Welbeck.<sup>66</sup> For several months team members continued their struggle on a range of fronts. Scott left Accra for Tunis on January 25th for the All-African People's Conference where he announced that he was "prepared to fly into the Sahara test area, if he could find a plane and a take-off strip."<sup>67</sup> Rustin and Muste returned to the U.S. where demonstrators, organized by the Committee to Support the Sahara Protest Team, marched in protest against the testing outside the French Tourist office in the heart of Manhattan.<sup>68</sup>

But as peace activists—African, American, and European—strategized around new transnational peace tactics, France's plans continued apace for the first atomic bomb testing. The only factor hindering French efforts in late January and early February was the weather and when those conditions improved, they exploded their first nuclear device at 6 a.m. on February 13, 1960. At an emergency cabinet meeting, Nkrumah proposed and cabinet members agreed that all of the assets of French firms operating in



10 February 1960 © *Ghana Evening News*.

Ghana should be frozen and no permits for the transfer of assets issued.<sup>69</sup> Several weeks later, on April 1, the French exploded a second bomb—reported by the *Ghana Evening News* as “representing thrice the strength of the bomb which devastated Hiroshima.”<sup>70</sup> The cabinet immediately met to discuss “stronger measures.” The government then suspended diplomatic relations with France, recalled J.E. Jantuah, the Ambassador to France, refused visas to French citizens, and froze all assets and properties of French citizens residing within Ghana’s borders.<sup>71</sup>

Outrage at France’s unilateral disregard for African soil and African lives was expressed throughout the continent and beyond, although as David Birmingham rightly points out, there was “no outcry from the neo-colonial puppets”—most notably from Côte d’Ivoire’s Felix Houphouët-Boigny.<sup>72</sup> The only act of colonial aggression to elicit a similar level of outrage in the Pan-African press was Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, which had galvanized Black internationalism throughout the world. More than a few speakers and editorialists pressed the connection. “There is only one incident in living memory,” an editorial in the *Ghana Evening News* exclaimed, “that compares in magnitude with the ephemeral, almost agonizing, triumph of Might over Right at Reggan last week—Mussolini’s rape of Abyssinia with the gas bombs and mass slaughter that eventually sounded the death-knell of the League of Nations.... Then as now, certain nations, loud in their profession of humanity, fraternity, justice and democracy sat complaisantly as Ethiopia, nailed to the wall, stretched her bleeding hands for succor.”<sup>73</sup>

The most dramatic Pan-African-led response to the French tests occurred shortly after the second bomb exploded at the beginning of April. Building directly on the twinned legacies of Pan-Africanism and peace that were manifest at the 1945 Pan Africanist Congress, the 1949 Peace Conferences in New York and Paris, the Asian–African Conference in Bandung, as well as at the AAPC in 1958, Ghana hosted the Positive Action Conference for Peace and Security in Africa. From April 7 to 10 delegates gathered from throughout the continent (officials from independent states and representatives of liberation movements), as well as non-voting observers from Japan, India, Britain, Sweden, the U.S., Yugoslavia, and France.<sup>74</sup> Non-voting delegates also represented the Committee for Non-Violent Action, the Montgomery Improvement Association (Ralph Abernathy) and the American Friends Service Committee. The Conference was initially planned as a specific and direct response to the French testing, but in 1960 history was moving faster

than conference planners possibly could, and dramatic events of the moment demanded a rapid expansion in the conference agenda. On March 21, 1960, South African police fired on a group of unarmed, demonstrators who were peacefully protesting the government's increasingly harsh and racist pass laws. In a matter of seconds, 63 lay dead, over 180 were wounded. The Sharpeville Massacre and the rapidly escalating violence and repression in Algeria that same month forced organizers to expand the conference mandate—a shift that generated some concern, especially from officials of invited governments. Nigeria's Prime Minister Abubakar Balewa wrote to Nkrumah on March 25 that he was concerned not only by the expanded mandate, but by the expanded participant list: "I must also tell you that I find the proposed Conference very confusing in that delegations of Governments, of political parties, and of trade unions are all to join in together. I consider that this unorthodox procedure will make it very difficult for the delegations representing the elected Governments of their countries."<sup>75</sup> In the end, Nkrumah was able to assure concerned leaders that the threat of the atomic tests was paramount, but that

on an occasion when so many of our brothers are able to meet together for an exchange of ideas in respect of the welfare of our motherland, advantage ought to be taken of any little opportunity that presents itself for the consideration of some of the most vital problems facing us as a people . . . it is precisely in the peculiar nature of our assemblies that we have an opportunity to provide new lessons to the older nations. The mobilization of the total African body politic in Conference is an achievement transcending the bounds of procedures, when the urgency of the matter and the colossal importance of protecting our interests are taken into consideration.<sup>76</sup>

In the end, the delegations that expressed concern about the conference's expanded mandate and the mixing of state and non-governmental agents, agreed to attend.

Nkrumah carefully set out the conference's agenda in his opening address, as he explained to delegates that they had come to Accra "first to discuss and plan future action to prevent further use of African soil as a testing ground for nuclear weapons; secondly to consider effective means to prevent further brutalities against our defenceless brothers and sisters in South Africa, brutalities which are the result of the South African Government's racial policy of apartheid. Thirdly, this conference must consider the ways and means whereby Algeria can be helped to bring an end to this dismal flow of human blood consequent upon this lingering physical conflict . . ."<sup>77</sup> At the start of the conference, the Sahara Protest Team, echoing the connections between the anti-nuclear struggle and African liberation, presented its manifesto to the delegates, calling not only for an end to nuclear tests and nuclear arms, but for a thousand volunteers for a renewed Sahara protest movement: "By joining with Africans from other parts of our Continent in positive non-violent action against nuclear imperialism they can make a decisive contribution to the liberation of all Africa."<sup>78</sup>

As the conference's aim was to mobilize the "total African body politic" in assemblies that did not privilege ministers and government representatives, delegates convened in separate committees to take on the specific questions of the conference's expanded mandate. Defying Cold War rhetoric, they worked to bring substance to Nkrumah's famous dictum, "we face neither East nor West, we face forward," as they strategized about how to address the French atomic tests, the war in Algeria, apartheid South Africa, and the full liberation of the continent. In the end, resolutions were passed by all of the committees. The first committee called for total disarmament; the second (on Algeria) recommended support for the Algerian fight for independence and encouraged the independent African states to "consider formation of African volunteer corps to fight side by side with their Algeria brothers." The third committee called on African states to support victims of apartheid, to consider imposing sanctions on South Africa and to demand



11 April 1960 © *Ghana Evening News*.

that the South African mandate over South West Africa be revoked. Finally the fourth committee on the liberation of Africa requested the United Nations to call a conference to consider a time table for the total liberation of all African countries.<sup>79</sup>

But perhaps what was more important than the resolutions passed at the Positive Action Conference was the process that had unfolded—"the peculiar nature" of the assembly, as Nkrumah termed it. It was a process that was transnational, non-aligned, progressive, multi-pronged and not solely reliant on the power and expertise of the state. As Sutherland recalls:

When Nkrumah asked the international grouping of mainly pacifist advisors to see what they could "come up with," even the most experienced amongst them found it to be a formidable task. Veteran US. Tacticians A.J. Muste and Ralph Abernathy worked long into the night with such figures as Madame Tomi Kora of Japan, Madame Asha Devi of India, Esther Peter and Pierre Martin of France and Britain's Michael Randle.<sup>80</sup>

Like its many precursors—from Manchester to Bandung—the Positive Action Conference sought to take on imperialism as a many-headed hydra—the forces of power that linked the atomic bomb with apartheid in South Africa and white rule in Algeria.

But if the conference demonstrated the common terrain upon which both Pan-Africanists and peace activists could work, even in the debilitating climate of the Cold War, it also exposed the fissures that would eventually pull the movements apart. In this important way, then, it constituted a momentous turning point in the Pan-African struggle against nuclear imperialism. In the wake of Sharpeville, in the face of French intransigence in Algeria, the issue of non-violence suddenly became a question. Among those attending



*"The wind now blowing in Africa is not an ordinary wind: it is a raging hurricane—Kwame Nkrumah of Africa," 27 April 1960 © Ghana Evening News.*

the conference was Frantz Fanon. "He spoke in a quiet and sober voice," recalls Sutherland, "explaining his view of the regrettable necessity for armed struggle... 'we tried [nonviolent means, Fanon explained]... but the French came into the Casbah, broke down door after door and slaughtered the head of each household in the center of the street. When they did that about thirty-five consecutive times, the people gave up on non-cooperation.'"<sup>81</sup> And in many ways, the massacre at Sharpeville brought home a similar lesson: non-violent direct action was only met with violence, murder, and massacre.

In the end, therefore, the Positive Action Conference brought the challenges and contradictions of the struggle against a nuclear imperialist world into sharp relief. Nkrumah, echoing the manifesto of the Sahara Protest Team, had opened the conference with a call for continuing non-violent positive action as the primary tactic against nuclear proliferation, apartheid, and entrenched settler rule on the continent. By the end of the conference, as Sutherland notes, there was "only a passing reference to the original proposals." While the conference ended with concrete plans for the setting up of a training center on non-violent protest tactics, as a wing of the proposed Ideological Institute at Winneba, even those plans were off the table within a year.<sup>82</sup> It is hard to imagine how it could have been otherwise, given events unfolding in Algeria, South Africa, Angola, the Congo, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. As Drake would later write, "Nkrumah, as a proponent of 'non-violent positive action' was committed to setting up a training center at Winneba for activists from southern Africa until 1961 when the beginning of armed struggle made this an untenable position for a leading Pan-Africanist. Sharpeville [sic] and Lumumba's murder also pushed Nkrumah away from a Gandhist position."<sup>83</sup>

Patrice Lumumba, the dynamic, progressive, and democratically elected leader of the Congo, was murdered by Congo secessionists, with the complicity of Belgium and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, on January 17, 1961. With Lumumba's assassination, the escalating violence in Algeria, and in the wake of Sharpeville, the transnational radical peace movement was severed from its Pan-African moorings. Ghana kept an official foot in the door of the international peace movement when it hosted the Accra Assembly in 1962—a gathering which, as I noted at the outset, drew a cast of experts and activists from throughout the world.<sup>84</sup> But the parameters of that assembly were much narrower than those of 1960. The conference focused almost exclusively on the nuclear arms race—any radical transformative social agenda had disappeared.<sup>85</sup> The Assembly was official and in many ways predictable. As Sutherland recalled:

Nkrumah was undoubtedly the leading voice of Pan-Africanism on the continent, and had become the leading African voice on the world scene. The nonviolence advocacy so prominent in the 1958 All African People's Conference, in the 1959 Sahara Protest Teams, and in the planning for the 1960 Positive Action Conference were all but eliminated from the mainstream political discourse. The Ghanaian government continued to provide support for the more conventional peace politicians . . . hosting the World Without the Bomb Accra Assembly . . . but there was little space or time for the radical experimentation of the previous years. . . .<sup>86</sup>

As Cold War lines, in other words, were drawn ever more sharply, as the space to speak from a position of non-alignment grew more narrow, and as evidence mounted—from Algeria, South Africa, Angola, the Congo—of the lengths the neo-colonial powers would go to preserve their power and entrench their profits, time, experimentation, and the space to imagine new worlds must have appeared as luxuries no one could now afford.

## Lessons and Legacies?

So, why remember the story of the Sahara Protest Team or recount the “peculiar assembly” of the Positive Action Conference that promised so much in 1960? The Sahara Team never made it more than a few kilometers north of the Ghana border and the “radical experimentation” of the Positive Action Conference dissolved in a matter of months. Certainly, contemporary observers and participants considered the dramatic efforts of the Sahara Protest Team of immense historical significance. “It would not matter if not a single person ever reached the site,” Nkrumah wrote,

for the effect of hundreds of people from every corner of Africa and from outside it crossing the artificial barriers that divide Africa to risk imprisonment and arrest, would be a protest that the people of France . . . could not ignore. Let us remember that the poisonous fall-out did not, and never will, respect the arbitrary and artificial divisions forged by colonialism across our beloved continent.<sup>87</sup>

Sutherland's more recent recollections were just as positive: “this joining up of the European anti-nuclear forces, the African liberation forces, and the U.S. civil rights movements could help each group feed and reinforce the other. Both the civil rights struggle and the CND were on a high at that time; they were really strong, people's movements. Then, to be sponsored by a majority political party in government clearly marked a unique moment in progressive history.”<sup>88</sup> And radical pacifist A.J. Muste, echoing Sutherland's enthusiasm, characterized the Sahara Protest as “an immense propaganda job for the idea

of nonviolence . . . among the masses. . . .”<sup>89</sup> The reflections of Nkrumah, Sutherland, and Muste remind us, I would argue, of the ways in which national liberation and nation-building, pan-Africanism and the radical, transnational peace movement were constitutive political struggles. Building upon two decades of sustained Black internationalist struggle, Ghana’s leadership role in the Pan-African movement of the post-War era was forged in the context of the anti-nuclear movement and, just as importantly, that radical, direct action struggle for peace gained some of its most dramatic impetus from the leadership and participation of Pan-Africanists from throughout Africa and the diaspora.

Their “global emancipatory vision,” as Gaines has termed it, and their “radical experimentation” toward realizing that vision in the first years of Ghanaian independence is not without its legacies—legacies that we would do well to recall, especially when we hear that “nothing good ever comes out of Africa.”<sup>90</sup> Indeed, in many ways one of the most significant legacies of those years is the very nation of Ghana—a nation that has managed to endure despite the fact that its disintegration, like that of so many African countries, appeared over-determined by the anti-democratic colonial legacies of dependence, uneven development, kleptocracy, and outsized militaries. “[W]hat is astonishing,” as C.L.R. James reminded us in 1972, “is not the failures but the successes. When did so many millions move so far and so fast?”<sup>91</sup> The stories of the Sahara Protest Team and the accounts of the radical experimentation that defined the Pan-African struggle in those critical years force us to remember not only the persistence and resilience of Black internationalism during the worst ravages of the Cold War, but the possibilities and promise of the African Revolution in ways that fulfill Drake’s prediction of nearly a half century ago. They expose the inextricable connections between war, racism, and empire (whether it be the imperialism of DeGaulle’s France or of Bush’s U.S. hegemon) and remind us not only of the necessity of combining struggles for peace with movements against racism, economic injustice, and imperialism, but of the absolute centrality of Africa to each and every one of those struggles. As Nkrumah wrote nearly a half century ago, “. . . the future of the world will be decided in Africa.”<sup>92</sup>

## Notes

1. This article was originally prepared for the conference held in celebration of P. Sterling Stuckey, “Africans, Culture, and Intellectuals in North America,” at the University of California—Riverside (21–22 May 2004). It was subsequently revised and presented at several venues, including the 2005 annual conference of the Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) and the College of St. Rose (Albany, NY). I wish to thank those who, in each of these contexts, provided such lively and constructive comments and suggestions, but especially Iris Berger, Michael Gomez, Vincent Harding, Robert Hill, Gariba Abdul-Korah, David Roediger, P. Sterling Stuckey, and Carl Swidorski. Finally, the engaged and constructive suggestions for revision provided by Manning Marable and the anonymous reviewers at *Souls* helped me understand this story in much broader and more complex terms. I am extremely grateful for their guidance.

2. In the end, Drake was unable to attend, but his paper is included in the volume produced out of the Assembly. A list of those who accepted invitations, along with their affiliation, can be found in the *Ghanaian Times*, 14 June 1962. See also, Accra Assembly, *Conclusions of the Accra Assembly* (Secretariat of the Accra Assembly, 1962) and Julian Mayfield, ed., *The World Without the Bomb: Selections from the Accra Assembly Papers* (Accra: Government Printer, 1962).

3. St. Clair Drake, “The African Revolution and the Accra Assembly,” St. Clair Drake Papers, SC MG 309, Box 67, Schomburg Library. Also reprinted in, Mayfield, ed., *World Without the Bomb*, 33–37.

4. For an excellent overview of afro-pessimism, see Wafu Okumo, “Afro-Pessimism and African Leadership,” *The Perspective* (5 April 2001), [www.theperspective.org/afro\\_pessimism.html](http://www.theperspective.org/afro_pessimism.html), who makes special mention of the works of Paul Kennedy, David Lamb, Peter Marnham and Robert D. Kaplan. See also, Manthia Diawara, *In Search of Africa* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998) and Goren Hyden, “African Studies in the Mid-1990s: Between Afro-Pessimism and Amero-Skepticism,” *African Studies Review* 39(2) (September 1996): 1–17. For a defense of afro-pessimism, see David Rieff, “In Defense of Afro-Pessimism,” *World Policy Journal*



15(4) (1998/99): [www.worldpolicy.org/journal/rieff.html](http://www.worldpolicy.org/journal/rieff.html). Disillusionment set in early with scholars of Ghana, see especially, Dennis Austin, *Ghana Observed: Essays on the Politics of a West African Republic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976), 2–5.

5. See the special issue of *Radical History Review* 87 (2003), “Transnational Black Studies,” ed. by Lisa Brock, Robin D.G. Kelley, and Karen Sotiropoulos.

6. Among the many scholars who have grappled with this question for Ghana since 1966 are: Bob Fitch and Mary Oppenheimer, *Ghana: End of an Illusion* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967); Samir Amin, *Neo-Colonialism in West Africa* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973); Dennis Austin and Robert Luckham, *Politicians and Soldiers in Ghana, 1966–1972* (London: Frank Cass, 1975); Dennis Austin, *Ghana Observed*; C.L.R. James, *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution* (London: Allison and Busby, 1977); Manning Marable, *African and Caribbean Politics: From Kwame Nkrumah to Maurice Bishop* (London: Verso Books, 1987); Kofi Buenor Hadjor, *Nkrumah and Ghana: The Dilemma of Postcolonial Power* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1988); David Rooney, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Political Kingdom in the Third World* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1988); and most recently, Kevin Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, 2006).

7. The promise of those years is eloquently captured in Gaines, *American Africans*, esp. 19–26.

8. The difficulty of finding beginnings and examining “intricate connections” is described in the preface to Marable’s *African and Caribbean Politics*, vii.

9. See firstly, Paul Robeson, *Here I Stand* (New York: Othello Associates, 1958; reprinted with introduction by Sterling Stuckey, Boston: Beacon Press, 1988) and W.E.B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa* (New York: International Publishers, 1979). The literature produced by U.S. based scholars, particularly over the last decade, on the development of Black internationalism during World War II and the fate of that radical agenda during the Cold War is quite substantial. See, for example (by date of publication): Gerald Horne, *Black & Red: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944–1963* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986); Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935–1960* (Chapel Hill University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Robin D.G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture Politics and the Black Working Class* (New York: Basic Books, 1996); Penny Von Eschen, *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937–1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Yvette Richards, “African and African-American Labor Leaders in the Struggle over International Affiliation,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 31(2) (1998): 301–34; Gerald Horne, *Race Woman: The Lives of Shirley Graham Du Bois* (New York: New York University Press, 2000); Yvette Richards, *Maida Springer: Pan-Africanist and International Labor Leader* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000); Robin D.G. Kelley, “Stormy Weather: Reconstructing Black (Inter) Nationalism in the Cold War Era,” in Eddie S. Glaude Jr., ed., *Is It Nation Time? Contemporary Essays on Black Power and Black Nationalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 67–90; James H. Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935–1961* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Plays the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Brenda Gayle Plummer, ed., *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945–1988* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004). Gaines, *American Africans*. In addition to the above, see the following, which look specifically at U.S. foreign policy and race within the U.S.: Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000); Azza Salama Layton, *International Politics and Civil Rights Policies in the United States, 1941–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001); George White Jr., *Holding the Line: Race, Racism, and American Foreign Policy toward Africa, 1953–1961* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).

10. On the Council on African Affairs, see Robeson, *Here I Stand*, esp. Appendix D, “A Note on the Council on African Affairs,” by Alphaeus Hunton, 117–21; Horne, *Black and Red*, esp. Chapter 11 *passim*; Plummer, *Rising Wind*, esp. 116–18; Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*; Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, esp. 59–68.

11. Horne, *Red and Black*, 28–30; Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 63–64.

12. On the Pan African Congress and its connections to U.S. Black internationalism, see Horne, *Black and Red*, 29–47; Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 154–61; Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 45–53; Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 182–85. See also, Kwame Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1957), 52–55.

13. Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 103–107.

14. See Horne, *Black and Red*, 119–26. see Robeson, *Here I Stand*, 41–47.

15. Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 213. The argument was first set out in Horne, *Red and Black*.

16. Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 2–33.

17. For a similar argument, but utilizing the life and work of Lorraine Hansberry, see Fanon Che Wilkins, “Beyond Bandung: The Critical Nationalism of Lorraine Hansberry, 1950–1965,” *Radical History Review* 95 (spring 2006): 191–210.

18. The Asian–African Conference received wide coverage in the African–American press. See, for example, Horne, *Black and Red*, 190–91.

19. Robeson, *Here I Stand*, 45–47. See also, Richard Wright, *The Color Curtain* (New York, World Press, 1956).

20. Von Eschen points out that in Drake's subsequent overviews of Pan-Africanism, "The work of Paul Robeson, Alphaeus Hunton, and the CAA was invisible." Even in discussions of Padmore and Nkrumah, there is "scant mention of their roots in the left and without reference to their early alliances with African Americans or the repercussions of the Cold War for that generation of anticolonial activists." Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 176. See St. Clair Drake, "Diaspora Studies and Pan-Africanism," in *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, ed. Joseph Harris (Washington, D.C.: Howard University, 1982), 451–514.

21. Du Bois to Wallerstein, dd. 3 May 1961. Cited in Horne, *Black and Red*, 336.

22. Text reproduced in Colin Legum, *Pan-Africanism: A Short Political Guide* (New York: Praeger, 1963), 147. See also Kennett Loves, "African Nations Ask Nuclear Ban," *New York Times*, 23 April 1958, and Kwame Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom: A Statement of African Ideology* (New York: Praeger, 1961), 130. As Kwesi Armah points out, Ghana's commitment to a nuclear-free world actually pre-dated independence: "Ghana was consistent in this policy as expressed in the position taken on the eve of independence with regard to the Bandung Conference of Afro-Asian Countries in 1955." Kwesi Armah, *Peace without Power: Ghana's Foreign Policy, 1957–1966* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 2004), 137. See also Michael Dei-Anang, *The Administration of Ghana's Foreign Relations, 1957–1965* (London: Athlone Press, 1975), 19–20.

23. Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom*, 151.

24. Homer A. Jack, "African Confab Results," *Chicago Defender*, 17 January 1959.

25. See, for example, Bill Sutherland's account in his and Matt Meyer's *Guns and Gandhi in Africa: Pan African Insights on Nonviolence, Armed Struggle and Liberation in Africa* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 2000), 35.

26. Horne, *Black and Red*, 342 and Horne, *Race Woman*, 156.

27. *All-African People's Conference News Bulletin*, 1(4) (Accra: AAPC, 1959): 2.

28. "Special Conferences," *International Organization* 16(2) (Spring 1962): 445.

29. Reported in the *Ghanaian Times*, 3 October 1959.

30. See Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 49–63; Gaines, *American Africans*, 34–39. As Gaines writes, "Padmore was the leading theoretician, strategist, and publicist of anticolonialism and African liberation, linking metropolitan agitation to the nationalist movements on the African continent." (34). He first met Nkrumah in London in 1947. After Ghanaian independence, he relocated to Ghana and worked as Nkrumah's key advisor on African Affairs. Padmore died suddenly in London on 23 September 1959. See also Marable, *African and Caribbean Politics*, 120–23 and Von Eschen, 13–15 and 45, as well as Padmore's *Africa and World Peace* (London, M. Secker and Warburg, Ltd., 1937) and *Pan-Africanism or Communism* (London: Dobson, 1956).

31. For Rustin's life story, see John D'Emilio's authoritative, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). For Sutherland, see Bill Sutherland and Matt Meyer, *Guns and Gandhi*. See also, Gaines, *American Africans*, 103–106. To situate Rustin and Sutherland in the broader context of African–American international activism, see Brenda Gayle Plummer's introduction to her edited, *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945–1988* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2003), 1–16.

32. Nkrumah joined the Fellowship while he was teaching philosophy at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. See Gaines, *American Africans*, 43.

33. Sutherland and Meyer, *Guns and Gandhi*, 5–7 and 21–22. See also, Ernest Dunbar, *The Black Expatriates: A Study of American Negroes in Exile* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1968), 88–109.

34. Sutherland and Meyer, *Guns and Gandhi*, 36. See also D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, 280.

35. For an account of Rustin's work in Montgomery, see D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, 223–48.

36. D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, 280.

37. Gaines, *American Africans*, 13.

38. D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, 283–86.

39. D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, 285, citing Muste and Levison to Bayard Rustin, 11/14/59, Bayard Rustin Papers, University Publications of America.

40. D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, 286.

41. April Carter, "The Sahara Protest Team," in Carter, *Liberation without Violence*, ed. A. Paul Hare and Herbert H. Blubert (London: Rex Collings, 1980), 130.

42. When Rustin arrived in London, he began to meet with officials and various embassies, including the Moroccan Embassy, which offered to secretly provide financing for the team. According to D'Emilio, Rustin was concerned about the strings that might be attached to such an offer. See D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, 281.

43. National Archives of Ghana, Accra [NAG], ADM 13/2/65, Cabinet Memorandum, 23 October 1959.

44. NAG, ADM 13/1/28, Cabinet Minutes, 23 October 1959

45. NAG, Special Collections, Bureau of African Affairs [SC/BAA] 251, African Affairs Committee Minutes, 19 November 1959. [File is in the process of being renumbered as RG 17/1/465.] Committee members included: Nkrumah himself, Ako Adjei, N.A. Welbeck, Kofi Baako, Abdullahi Diallo, Tawiah Adamafio, T.R. Makonnen, E.J. Du Plain, John Tettegah, Kwaku Boateng, Yankeh, Joe Fio Meyer, Eric Heymann, A.K. Barden, Kojó Botsio, Amoah Awuah, A.Y.K. Djin, and Mbiyu Boinange.

46. For Scott's life story, see Michael Scott, *A Search for Peace and Justice: Reflections of Michael Scott*, ed. Paul Hare and Herbert H. Blumbert (London: Rex Collings, 1980).

47. *Ghanaian Times*, 1 October 1959 and 22 October 1959. For reconstructions of the protest based on participants' accounts, see Bayard Rustin, *The Reminiscences of Bayard Rustin*, no. 8: Interview of Bayard Rustin by Ed Edwin, 6 November 1985 (Alexandria, VA: Alexander St. Press, 2004), 341–44. D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, 279–88; Scott, *Search for Peace*, 131–37. For brief secondary accounts of the Sahara protest, see also, Armah, *Peace without Power*, 138. Gaines, *American Africans*, 103–106.

48. *Ghanaian Times*, 30 November 1959.

49. *Ghanaian Times*, 21 November 1959.

50. Full text reprinted in *Ghanaian Times*, 23 November 1959.

51. *Daily Graphic*, 5 December 1959.

52. Many scholars have noted the decline in coverage of African affairs in African–American newspapers in the wake of the Cold War. See esp. Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 153–57 and Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 107, 118, and 152. Ghana's leadership role in the anti-nuclear movement received some coverage in the African–American press before Rustin, Sutherland, and others assembled in Accra. See, for example, *Chicago Defender*, 13 Sept. 1958, 17 Jan. 1959, 8 Aug. 1959; 16 Sept. 1959. The Sahara protest itself was covered in the mainstream U.S. press: *New York Times*, 15 Oct. 1959, 5 Nov. 1959; 20 Nov. 1959; 5 Jan. 1960; 31 Jan. 1960; 10 Feb. 1960; *Washington Post*, 15 Oct. 1959, 20 Nov. 1959. However, it did not receive coverage in the *Chicago Defender* or the *Pittsburgh Courier*—two of the leading African–American papers.

53. Muste, *Essays*, 398.

54. For a full account see Muste, *Essays*, 398–400.

55. *Ibid.*, 400.

56. Sutherland and Meyer, *Guns and Gandhi*, 38.

57. *Daily Graphic*, 14 December 1959.

58. From late December until early January, Pierre Martin, a peace activist and teacher in a mass education unit in North Africa fasted outside the French Embassy in Accra to protest the proposed French tests. See *Daily Graphic*, 5 January 1960 and *Ghana Evening News*, 1 January 1960. In an interview with Mabel Dove, Martin explained, “There are two Embassies in Ghana today. I, Pierre Martin, I am the Ambassador presenting the people of France and the Embassy on the fifth floor of Ghana House represents French Officialdom.” *Ghana Evening News*, 1 January 1960.

59. Sutherland and Meyer, *Guns and Gandhi*, 38–39. For Scott's account see his *Search for Peace*, 132.

60. Scott, *Search for Peace*, 131.

61. *Ibid.*, 132.

62. In early January, Sutherland and Randle traveled to Accra to confer with government officials and activists there. See *Daily Graphic*, 7 January 1960.

63. Sutherland and Meyer, 39.

64. Scott, *Search for Peace*, 131.

65. See Sutherland and Meyer, *Guns and Gandhi*, 39–40 and *Daily Graphic* 19 January 1960.

66. See NAG, SC/BAA 514, Sutherland to Nkrumah, dd. Accra, 26 August 1960.

67. *Ghana Evening News*, 1, 29–60.

68. *Ibid.*

69. NAG, ADM 13/1/29, Cabinet Minutes, 13 February 1960. See also, “Ghana to Freeze Assets of French,” *New York Times*, 14 February 1960. Over the next ten days, Professors R.W.H. Wright, A.H. Ward, and John Marr of the University College of Ghana conducted extensive testing to measure fallout. They noted that there was a dramatic increase in levels of radiation throughout Ghana, all the way to Accra, but nowhere did measures exceed “what is considered to be the maximum safe dose.” See ADM 13/2/69, “Confidential: Radioactive Fallout Effect in Ghana Following the French Atom Bomb Test,” 23 February 1960.

70. *Ghana Evening News*, 4 April 1960.

71. NAG, ADM 13/2/71, Cabinet Memorandum, “Second French Nuclear Test in the Sahara,” 1 April 1960. See also, Armah, *Peace without Power*, 138–39.

72. David Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Father of African Nationalism* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1998), 104.

73. *Ghana Evening News*, 17 February 1960.

74. A pamphlet, “Positive Action Conference for Peace and Security, April, 1960,” which includes Nkrumah's opening and closing speeches, resolutions of the conference, and the manifesto submitted by the Sahara Protest Team can be found in NAG, ADM 16/24.

75. NAG, SC/BAA 68, Abubakar Balewa to Nkrumah, dd. Lagos, 25 March 1960.

76. NAG, SC/BAA 68, Nkrumah to Balewa, dd. Accra, 2 April 1960.

77. For Nkrumah's opening address, see ADM 16/24, "Positive Action Conference." A slightly different version of the speech is reprinted in Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom*, 211–22.

78. ADM 16/24.

79. Ibid.

80. Sutherland and Meyer, *Guns and Gandhi*, 40.

81. Ibid., 41.

82. Ibid. In August, 1960, after conversations with Scott, Muste, and Rustin, Sutherland wrote to Nkrumah to follow up on plans for the "Non-Violent Positive Action Training Centre," but realized that "the Congo Crisis naturally took precedence over everything else." See NAG, SC/BAA 514, Sutherland to Nkrumah, dd. Accra, 26 August 1960. [File to be renumbered as RG 17/1/411]

83. St. Clair Drake, "Nkrumah's 'Ban the Bomb' Conference" (handwritten note, no date), St. Clair Drake Papers, SC MG 309, Box 67, Schomberg Library. Sutherland also believed the murder of Lumumba was crucial: "After the 1961 murder of Lumumba—a murder that was originally planned by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)—Nkrumah's disillusionment with nonviolent strategies became solidified." Sutherland and Meyer, *Guns and Gandhi*, 47.

84. The papers and proceedings of the Assembly were edited and introduced by playwright Julian Mayfield. See Mayfield, ed., *World Without the Bomb*. For a brief account, see Gaines, *American Africans*, 164.

85. See NAG, SC/BAA 137, "The Accra Assembly, 10–17 May 1962," [pamphlet]. Invitees to the Assembly were to come as individuals, not as delegates or representatives. As the preliminary program explained, "The Assembly will be composed of about one hundred individuals invited in their personal capacity who have been active in putting forward proposals independent of the policies of any Power Bloc."

86. Sutherland and Meyer, *Guns and Gandhi*, 42.

87. Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom*, 215.

88. Sutherland and Meyer, *Guns and Gandhi*, 59, citing 1993 conversation in Brooklyn, NY.

89. Muste, *Essays*, 397. Many years later, as Scott reflected on both the significance of the Sahara protest and its limitations, he considered the government's support of the protest or rather the reliance on the government a problem: "any time we wanted to go further, we had to send people back to Accra to find out whether the government would be willing to put up the necessary funds to allow the action to continue. Bayard Rustin and Michael Randle had to go back to Accra for several days in order to keep us 'on location', so to speak. In the end the decision was really made by the Ghanaian government, that they were willing to risk their trucks." Scott, *Search for Peace*, 134.

90. Gaines, *American Africans*, 285. On "radical experimentation," see Sutherland and Meyer, 42.

91. C.L.R. James, *At the Rendezvous of Victory: Selected Writings* (London: Allison and Busby, 1984), 184.

92. Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom*, 220.

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