

DE GRUYTER
OLDENBOURG

Sebastian Pampuch

EXILED IN EAST GERMANY

LIFE STORIES OF MALAWIAN AND SOUTH AFRICAN
FREEDOM FIGHTERS DURING THE COLD WAR



DIALECTICS OF THE GLOBAL

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BERLIN

Sebastian Pampuch
Exiled in East Germany

Dialectics of the Global



Edited by
Matthias Middell

Volume 18

Sebastian Pampuch

Exiled in East Germany



Life Stories of Malawian and South African
Freedom Fighters during the Cold War

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On the Series

Ever since the 1990s, “globalization” has been a dominant idea and, indeed, ideology. The metanarratives of Cold War victory by the West, the expansion of the market economy, and the boost in productivity through internationalization, digitization and the increasing dominance of the finance industry became associated with the promise of a global trickle-down effect that would lead to greater prosperity for ever more people worldwide. Any criticism of this viewpoint was countered with the argument that there was no alternative; globalization was too powerful and thus irreversible. Today, the ideology of “globalization” meets with growing scepticism. An era of exaggerated optimism for global integration has been replaced by an era of doubt and a quest for a return to particularistic sovereignty. However, processes of global integration have not dissipated and the rejection of “globalization” as ideology has not diminished the need to make sense both of the actually existing high level of interdependence and the ideology that gave meaning and justification to it.

The following three dialectics of the global are in the focus of this series:

Multiplicity and Co-Presence: “Globalization” is neither a natural occurrence nor a singular process; on the contrary, there are competing projects of globalization, which must be explained in their own right and compared in order to examine their layering and their interactive composition.

Integration and Fragmentation: Global processes result in de- as well as reterritorialization. They go hand in hand with the dissolution of boundaries, while also producing a respatialization of the world.

Universalism and Particularism: Globalization projects are justified and legitimized through universal claims of validity; however, at the same time they reflect the worldview and/or interests of particular actors.

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Introduction

Perhaps the most frustrating thing about the inexorable cross-influences and echoing that gives the black diaspora its restless logic is the fact that meanings accrue to a sound or a symbol or a person completely independently of the original intention—this is the problem of all communication.

Louis Chude-Sokei, *Dr Satan's Echo Chamber*

There is much to be admired in those who have struggled under the inspiration of Marxism. And no recitation of their courage and sacrifice would be adequate or sufficiently eloquent to capture their awesome achievements—or unhappy failures.

Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: the Making of the Black Radical Tradition*

The presence of Africans in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) is very rarely thought of in connection with the experience of exile. Instead, Africans in the GDR are predominantly viewed through the prism of educational and labor migration. This study offers a different approach. Through biographical portrayal, it unfolds the life stories of some members of African liberation movements or freedom fighters who lived in exile in the GDR and, ultimately, remained in reunified Germany, with the main case study being a Malawian activist—Mahoma Mwaungulu—who was eventually expelled from East to West Berlin. Recounting his experiences along with those of some South African exiles, chief among them Asaph Makote Mohlala, a former medical worker for the African National Congress' (ANC) armed wing, the study reconstructs the multiple entanglements between the “Second” and “Third” worlds from the vantage point of the politically displaced within the concrete historical contexts of African decolonization, the struggle against the Malawian Banda dictatorship, and the struggle against South African apartheid. Discursively, it counterposes the competing figures of the political exile and the refugee. Through a close reading of literature on the South African exile experience, it discusses the problems reunified Germany has had in coming to terms with its socialist past, further unearthing the political-economic critique of capitalism that is clearly visible in the lives and struggles of these exiles. The main thesis developed here is that the exiles' own critique of capitalism, developed on African soil in the context of the liberation struggles they participated in, primarily explains the strong attraction of the GDR and the Eastern Bloc to them in a way that goes far beyond anti-colonial solidarity or a purely instrumental search for educational opportunities.

African Freedom Fighters Exiled in East Germany

That the GDR, whose government for the sake of political survival prevented its own people from moving freely across national borders, was also a place where African *freedom fighters* made their home in exile is an image so hard to imagine in contemporary Germany that the title of this study will read for many like a true oxymoron. The reasons for this are manifold: first, a general lack of knowledge about African history and an unreflected-upon Eurocentrism among the population at large; second, a biased, anti-communist view on everything related to the GDR that dominates the public discourse and curricula of Germany's public schools, usually portraying the GDR as a failure *without any revolutionary impetus*, as a country whose history is mostly restricted to the Berlin Wall, the security police, or a handful of nostalgia shows about everyday life there, from which its foreign policies are completely excluded, as another contemporary observer aptly remarked;¹ third, and connected to the former, the striking under-representation of East German intellectuals at universities and in the wider public sphere; and last, but not least, the violent racist outbursts after reunification, which erupted with particular intensity in the former East, turning this part of reunified Germany into a stronghold of rightwing populist movements to this day. Together with the mass repatriation of thousands of African and Asian migrant workers who had lived in the GDR during the 1980s, such phenomena whitened East Germany to such an extent that it should not be considered unusual to hear a young, white German student of anthropology saying that, 25 years after reunification, she simply *cannot imagine* the GDR as a space where *any* Africans lived at all.²

1 The white West German Lukas Heger, then an M.A. student of art, curation and literature, expressed this sentiment during a talk with Peggy Piesche, a famous Afro-German cultural critic born in the GDR, about his project *Utopia falling apart*. See *Red Africa: The legacy of cultural relationships between Africa, the Soviet Union and related countries during the Cold War. Artist Talk: Lukas Heger: Presentation of the Project Space "Utopia Falling Apart."* Part of the program for the exhibition *Things Fall Apart*, Iwalewaha, University Bayreuth, 26 May 2016, Evening Session, 7–10 pm, https://www.bayreuth-academy-futureafrica.uni-bayreuth.de/en/academy/Archiv_eng/2016/Ausstellung-Things-fall-Apart_-26_5_-18_9_-im-Iwalewaha/index.html (accessed 2 October 2023). I thank the organizers for recording the event and providing me with a copy of the audio file (own transcription). For an account of the exhibition *Things Fall Apart*, see Heger 2016.

2 This actually occurred in a class that I gave on the topic at the department of European Ethnology at Humboldt University Berlin in 2015, titled *Verflechtungen aus Postsozialismus und Postkolonialismus: Die DDR und die „3. Welt“ am Beispiel Afrikas* (Entanglements between Postsocialism and Postcolonialism: the GDR and the “Third World,” as seen through the example of Africa). For a German description, see <https://agnes.hu-berlin.de/lupo/rds?state=verpublish&status=init&vmfile=no&publishid=97399&moduleCall=webInfo&publishConfFile=webInfo&publishSubDir=veranstaltung> (accessed 2 October 2023).

The aim of this study is to turn this image radically upside down. It wants to open up the discussion about the GDR to these “inexorable cross-influences and echoing that gives the black diaspora its restless logic” (Chude-Sokei 2013) in a more dialectical and politically challenging way than studies on African migrant workers or students have done so far. Reconstructing the life story of the late Mahoma Mwaungulu, an exiled Malawian freedom fighter who migrated to the GDR in 1960 and lived there for almost two decades before his expulsion to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in 1982, and contrasting it with that of Asaph Mohlala, an exiled South African freedom fighter who more successfully made the eastern part of Berlin his *permanent* home, this study seeks to draw its readers deep into the history of African decolonization, the notable role which the Eastern bloc played therein during the Cold War, and the lives of some Africans who not only lived in exile in the GDR but also remained in Germany after its reunification. Biographical, historical-anthropological, postcolonial as well as postsocialist in its approach, this study joins the growing scholarship in global history and area studies which has found fertile research ground in the entanglements between the so-called Second and Third Worlds. New approaches to topics such as labor migration, development policy, or African liberation movements place the GDR in East–South socio-political relations in a much more nuanced way than earlier research had (e.g. Dallywater/Saunders/Fonseca 2019; Burton 2021; Burton et al. 2021; Schade 2022; Pugach 2022; Schenck 2023; Saunders/Fonseca/Dallywater 2023). By supplementing archival sources from various countries with oral histories, for example, they have been approaching the GDR and the socialist world from more decidedly transnational or globally informed perspectives. A similar widening of analytical frameworks can be observed in research on the global history of socialism or the anti-apartheid struggle (e.g. Mark et al. 2020; Mark/Betts 2022; Betts et al. 2019). As an ethnography created during my studies at Humboldt University’s Department of European Ethnology, however, the present study places stronger emphasis on the contradictory ways in which these entangled histories can be linked to the present and asks why they have generally been overlooked or sidelined in contemporary Germany.

By linking these marginalized pasts to the present, this study also seeks to overcome a certain provincialism and methodological nationalism still characteristic of the German debate when the GDR and the division of Germany during the Cold War are at stake. What is usually left out or downplayed in this debate is the historical relationship between Western Europe’s colonial expansion, specific forms of racism that emerged during this expansion, and the development of capitalism, all of which made international communism a driving force for decolonization, particularly, though not exclusively, in Southern Africa, where the system of apartheid counted on the indulgence and support of Western powers as long

as the existence and presumed dangers posed by the Soviet Union could serve as a pretext for these powers to portray communism as the greater evil while downplaying palpable inequities linked to racism and colonialism. Hence, by placing the experiences and political struggles of two exiles from Southern Africa³ at the center of this study, *capitalism*—as the political-economic motor of the Cold War’s Western powers, dominating the world economy to this day—always remains in sight.

Structure of the Book

The study is divided into four main chapters. As I discuss examples from the rich literature on foreigners in the GDR and on the relationship between the GDR and Africa throughout the whole study, the first chapter, “Exiles,” commences with a sustained reflection on the rather abstract figure of the exile, strongly associated in Germany with the German-Jewish exile of the Nazi period but, as I will show, only rarely applied to African nationals. I also examine how scholars in the humanities, particularly in anthropology as well as in political science and literary studies, use and discuss exile as a key figure of mobility and how they distinguish it from or relate it to the figure of the refugee. Furthermore, I investigate how exile is used in African Studies, giving examples of scholarly approaches to exile in the context of Southern Africa during decolonization and looking at how selected African intellectuals have conceptualized it. The chapter ends with several examples of how German post-reunification scholarship, art and literature have thus far approached the exile of South Africans in the GDR, considered by far the most prominent case of African exile to that now-extinct country.

“Exiles” is followed by the longest chapter of all, “Mahoma Mwaungulu: ethnography of an intra-German expulsion,” which acts as the empirical core of this study. In opening this chapter, I explain how a chance encounter with Mwaungulu aroused my interest in exile, motivated me to write this study, and why I believe that his life story, leading from colonial Africa to the GDR and, ultimately, the FRG—via such diverse countries as Malawi, Uganda, Ghana, Tanzania, and even Cuba—is worth such an elaborate reconstruction. Then, I outline my biographical encounters with Mwaungulu in Berlin during the early 2000s as well as my methodological approach and sources, including a variety of interviews, archived material,

³ I am aware of Malawi’s distinct geographical position between Central, Eastern and Southern Africa. If I sometimes nevertheless refer to Malawi only as part of Southern Africa, I do so for both pragmatic and geopolitical reasons.

films and newspaper articles. Being the life story of a highly politicized African of Marxist-Leninist convictions, in which several of those “unhappy failures” lamented by Cedric J. Robinson (2000: xxvii) accumulate, this part also includes two relatively long subchapters: one about The Socialist League of Malawi (LESOMA), a largely forgotten opposition movement in exile, which Mwaungulu became the representative of in the GDR, and another about Mwaungulu’s unfinished PhD thesis on Malawi’s economic development, which he almost completed at one of the GDR’s most prestigious universities. Moreover, a dominant theme running through Mwaungulu’s life story with respect to the GDR that is spotlighted here is how the more widely known exile of South Africans constantly superimposed itself over Mwaungulu’s exile as a member of the deterritorialized Malawian opposition, thereby transferring onto the fragmentary image of the African exile community in the GDR portrayed in this study the very same logics already existing in Southern Africa, where the struggle against the military and economic power of the South African apartheid regime overshadowed all other political struggles.

The third chapter, “Asaph Makote Mohlala: ‘I had to fight my way back,’” is shorter than the one on Mwaungulu, for the exiled South African freedom fighter Mohlala only arrived in the GDR in 1984, after Mwaungulu had already been expelled to West Berlin, and lived in the GDR for a much shorter period of time. Whereas Mwaungulu’s life story illuminates the first stage of African decolonization and offers unique insights into the GDR of the 1960s and 1970s, Mohlala’s covers the exile experiences of a younger freedom fighter, who left apartheid South Africa in the mid 1970s and became a member of the ANC. He first came to the GDR as a medical student in Quedlinburg, a small rural town, via Crimea in the Soviet Union and Angola in southwestern Africa, before finally settling in East Berlin during the tumultuous period of the GDR’s dissolution and subsequent German reunification. Besides providing detailed insights into the GDR’s medical training program for foreigners in the 1980s, Mohlala’s life story powerfully illustrates what it meant to be a member of the ANC’s armed wing, *Umkonotho we Sizwe* (MK), against the backdrop of the ANC’s difficulties in finding a safe haven on the African continent for its exiled army and, on an individual scale, of Mohlala’s difficulties in securing such a political sanctuary for himself in the GDR.

Read together as a larger global-historical tale, these two life stories couple the beginning of Africa’s decolonization with its virtual ending—marked by the fall of apartheid in South Africa—via recounting the experiences of exile that two male Africans underwent in the GDR, including their marriages to East German women. Their exile experiences did not stop there, however, as Mwaungulu and Mohlala—one through his expulsion from the GDR, the other through German reunification—both eventually ended up living in the FRG. This raises questions about how such life stories can be connected to more recent forms of South–North migration, to

which I come in the fourth and final part: “African exiles and the awkward figure of the refugee.” Here I reconnect to the introductory chapter, “Exiles,” and discuss on the theoretical as well as the empirical levels the tense relationship between the exile and its notorious twin figure, the refugee, by giving space to Jeannette Selby, another freedom fighter from South Africa who spent most of her life in exile. Selby, whom I first introduce in “Exiles” through my reading of a work of popular German literature, belongs to the same generation of exiles as Mwaungulu—the two actually knew each other—and lived in the GDR from 1961 onwards. Like her younger compatriot Mohlala, Selby continues to live in Berlin, unlike Mwaungulu, who passed away in 2004. During the time that so-called refugee protests were taking place in the very heart of Berlin in the 2010s, I regularly met and conversed with Selby, who shared her own opinions about the protests, largely involving Africans from sub-Saharan countries who, having previously lived as migrant workers in Libya, had fled the Libyan civil war to Europe via the Mediterranean. The prominent role which this relatively small group of Black Africans played in the Berlin protests gave renewed popularity to the figure of the poverty-stricken refugee from Africa. Firmly anchored in the racist imagination of the West, this is also a figure which, as my conversation with Selby reveals, former African exiles from the GDR have had to deal with while continuing their lives in a reunified Germany.

1 Exiles

Exile lacks a clear definition. Precisely for this reason, anthropologists tend to use the term exile more metaphorically rather than discuss it conceptually (Salazar 2017: 7; Hackl 2017: 55). French anthropologist Didier Fassin's use of the term during a 2019 lecture in Berlin titled "Forced Exile as a Form of Life" offers a good example here. Against the backdrop of current migrations and a "shift from humanitarian reason to securitarian order",⁴ Fassin attributes an exilic condition to the following two groups:

- Syrian men who had fled the civil war there and were living in a refugee camp in Calais and
- Zimbabwean women who had migrated to South Africa in the 2000s and were currently living in shanty towns there.

Coupling the classic anthropological figure of "the nomad" with "the exile," Fassin speaks of "transnational nomads forced [in]to exile" and specifies his concept by arguing that 1) "forced exiles" are generally unwanted in the lands where they seek refuge; 2) in many cases, it is not possible to distinguish between underlying economic and political causes for migration; and 3) these two causes are in any case closely related. If Fassin had wanted to emphasize that there are broader political and economic causes that motivated such Syrian men and Zimbabwean women to leave their respective countries and drove them to live in, respectively, a French refugee camp or a South African shanty town, why, then, didn't he simply opt for the concept of forced migration, for instance?

1.1 Conceptual Approaches to Exile in Anthropology

The lecture described above was not the first one Didier Fassin gave on this topic. Rather, it was a variation on a lecture he had given before at the Adorno Lectures in Frankfurt and subsequently published in a book (Fassin 2018: 19–47). The book begins with a preamble from *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, the seminal work by German-Jewish exile and Frankfurt School theorist Theodor W. Adorno, to whose legacy the Frankfurt lecture series is dedicated, whereas the chapter containing the lecture is simply titled "Forms of Life." Therein, Fassin

⁴ Fassin, Didier: *Forced Exile as a Form of Life*. Lecture at the Department of European Ethnology, Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany, on 10 January 2019 (in cooperation with the Berlin Center for the Transnational Study of Borders *Border Crossings – Crossing Borders*).

uses the term exile only twice, and rather casually, to describe the two groups mentioned above, generally using instead the phrase “forced nomads” or referring to them as “refugees or migrants, asylum seekers or undocumented aliens” (2018: 20 & 42). While he portrays the Syrian men simply as undergraduate students who had fled the war and wanted to unite with family members or friends that have already settled in Great Britain, the only Zimbabwean portrayed in some detail was a member of an opposition party who had been physically attacked by government supporters, which, as I will show below, qualifies her for fitting under a more political understanding of exile (2018: 34 & 38–39). However, a slightly older research article dealing exclusively with the Zimbabweans, co-written by Fassin and two other scholars, is titled “Asylum as a Form of Life” and does not refer to exile at all (Fassin/Wilhelm-Solomon/Segatti 2017). Instead, the women portrayed there are described as having left Zimbabwe mainly for economic reasons (Fassin/Wilhelm-Solomon/Segatti 2017: 170–172), suggesting that the one presented in the lecture is more of an exception and Fassin’s decision to choose her as his case study was more of an attempt to bring the scope of his research into greater alignment with his new analytical concept. Put differently, Fassin’s increasing use of the term exile to refer to the same subject appears more like a rhetorical concession to his German audiences through evoking the German-Jewish exile of the Nazi period than a use of the term out of conceptual necessity, an impression reinforced by his references to other well-known European exiles such as Hannah Arendt and Walter Benjamin (2018: 47).

Two years before Fassin held the above-discussed lecture, the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) published a special edition of its journal in which six “Key Figures of Mobility” were discussed: the pedestrian, the flâneur, the nomad, the pilgrim, the tourist, and the exile. Noel Salazar, author of the special edition’s introduction, compares these key figures with keywords that “never acquire a closed or final meaning (not even within one domain or discipline)” (Salazar 2017: 6), a definition that to an extent accounts for the difficulty in defining exile itself. However, Salazar leaves out the question of whether exile is really the best choice as a key figure of mobility within an *anthropological* journal. When I began my research on Africans who had once been exiled in the GDR, I simply presumed that it belongs to the broader field of migration studies, convinced that the trajectories taken by these exiles might help us to better understand some of the historical causes for ongoing South-North migration and, in particular, Western reactions to it. For instance, in her brief discussion of exile, Jenny Kuhlmann—herself not an anthropologist—arguably subsumes exile under migration, writing that, when searching “for analytical concepts to examine and describe the experiences of migrants, the terms exile, diaspora, and transmigra-

tion have become central to migration research” (Kuhlmann 2018: 392).⁵ Moreover, although an abundant corpus of ethnographies that I would readily subsume under the label migration studies already exists, ethnographies dealing explicitly with exile are scarce. Thus, I would have usually considered the migrant—or, perhaps more poignantly today, the refugee—to be a rather obvious key figure of mobility and was pleasantly surprised to find my expectations disappointed.

Andreas Hackl, who authored the journal issue’s article on “the exile,” makes several good arguments for his understanding of the concept. First, he points to exile’s long genealogy in human history, writing that “exile is an ancient concept of political banishment and the enduring consequences for those affected by it” (Hackl 2017: 55). Because of territorial banishment’s inherent political character, many of its consequences—including the likely impossibility of return—are equally political in character (2017: 58). Second, as an anthropologist specializing in Palestine, Hackl points to the influence that Edward Said’s work, including his conceptualization of his own life as a form or *figuration* of exile, has had on cultural studies and anthropology. Hackl speaks here of “a widening gap between experiences of exile as a condition of displacement and some of the qualities the figure has come to symbolize, with consequences for questions of who may be considered exiled under what circumstances” (2017: 56). Finally, and connected to the latter point, Hackl discusses the subtle differences and intersections between “the exile,” the “(forced) migrant,” and “the refugee,” thus widening the semantic field to perhaps more commonly expected figures.

According to Hackl, in addition to its primary *political* connotation, exile refers to a movement between places that lies in the past and refers to the permanent state of the subject after having experienced such change of location (2017: 59). By contrast, “the (forced) migrant” is connected more to the movement itself; meanwhile, in an attempt to distinguish “the exile” from “the refugee,” Hackl uses an earlier definition formulated by his colleague Liisa Malkki (1995), for whom the figure of the refugee is linked more closely to certain status ascriptions within the realms of bureaucratic regulations and international humanitarianism (2017: 59). With reference to another colleague, Pilar Riaño-Alcalá, Hackl adds an important point by arguing that “these terms often replace exile because a set of transnational and national legal-political practices and power structures have redefined exiles as [. . .] a refugee, refugee claimant, or undocumented or illegal migrant”

⁵ For a German article discussing the differences between diaspora and exile, see Kuhlmann 2014.

(Hackl 2017: 61). This recalls Paul Tabori's older description of asylum-seekers as "hardcore exiles" in *The Anatomy of Exile* (Tabori 1972: 29).

Connected to the question of what becomes lost in such processes of shifting status ascriptions is Hackl's observation that anthropologists often invoke exile to relate "the complex subjectivities of the displaced to the political dimension" (2017: 60–61). This seems to aptly describe what Fassin was trying to do in his lecture. Yet Malkki's 1995 review article "Refugees and Exile," from which Hackl borrowed his definition of refugees, already pointed to the danger of depoliticization and *dehistoricization* within the then-growing field of anthropological studies on refugees and displacement. She also warned of the danger of an aestheticization of exile, closely related to the concept's manifold use in literature. Historically, she proposes, a crucial moment for the conceptual or figurative evolution of "refugees" in modern Western thought lies in post-World War II Europe. But, during the subsequent period of decolonization, Western anthropologists nevertheless regarded "refugees" more and more as a Third World problem, while the problematic entanglement between the discourse on such refugees and the discourse on *development* "facilitated the continued depoliticization of refugee movements" (Malkki 1995: 497, 503 & 507). I would agree with Malkki, even though Tabori proves that, at least until the early 1970s, there were white Europeans capable of thinking of exile and Africa together. Tabori's *Anatomy of Exile* contains a section titled "The Restless Continent," dedicated exclusively to Africa. Therein, he writes explicitly of an "African exile problem" beginning in the 1960s (Tabori 1972: 265) and that it is "not at all unusual for an African country both to receive and originate exiles" (1972: 266). He quotes from a 1967 conference report from the US titled *Refugee Students from Southern Africa*, remarking that the report itself acknowledged "differing views as to the definition of a refugee or exile" (Tabori 1972: 269).⁶ According to Tabori, the report listed three main types:

- (1) freedom fighters—active members of a liberation movement who may have left home on instructions from their movement [. . .];
- (2) other 'political refugees', i.e. persons who have fled from political repression and who cannot return, for political reasons, without fear of reprisal; these refugees may never have been affiliated with a particular liberation movement or they may have left or been expelled from a liberation movement; and
- (3) persons who have left their home country seeking a better life.

Tabori concluded, rather pragmatically, that "most of them cannot return home and are genuine exiles under the terms of our definitions" (*ibid.*). In a brief section on the Soviet Union, Tabori was even farsighted enough to mention it as a

⁶ Jacqz, Jane W.: *Refugee Students from Southern Africa*. New York: African-American Institute, 1967.

host country for “African leaders” and to include Africa and Latin America among the regions of origin of “such men and women whom their native lands considered traitors and whom the Soviet Union accepted either for reasons of political propaganda or [. . .] because they brought useful, even precious gifts of information and knowledge” (Tabori 1972: 356). Hence, Tabori was aware that the Soviet Union could serve as a host country for African exiles, even though he was unaware of its full dimension and depicts the GDR as a country that only produced (German) exiles and refugees (1972: 260–262).

Nevertheless, Malkki is right in so far as Tabori’s understanding of exile, which has been criticized as being too broad (Goddeeris 2007: 400), constantly overlaps with the figure of the refugee. Moreover, the *African* exiles that he evokes are predominantly manifested as nationally or ethnically defined *collectives* (i.e. national liberation movements or ‘ethnic’ groups); contrary to his previous chapters, it lacks any individual accounts or voices. He also concludes his section by adding that “there is a close connection between refugee problems and problems of development” (Tabori 1972: 270). Meanwhile, Malkki argues that associating refugees with the Third World has allowed for the collectivization of displacement as a mass phenomenon linked to underdevelopment, whereas associating exiles with the First World has led to an aestheticization of displacement as an individual phenomenon linked to Western modernity. Both intellectual moves, however, strengthened a Western tendency to depoliticize and dehistoricize human mobility and displacement, as Malkki concludes in her review:⁷

People who are refugees can also find themselves quite quickly rising to a floating world either beyond or above politics, and beyond or above history—a world in which they are simply ‘victims’. [. . .] it is this floating world without the gravities of history and politics that can ultimately become a deeply dehumanizing environment for refugees, even as it shelters. (Malkki 1995: 517)

By bringing the notion of (under)development into the debate, both Malkki and Tabori invoke the *economic* realm within Western conceptualizations of exile. This is a noteworthy move for two reasons. First, in the Western imaginary, and particularly in Germany, the aestheticized figure of the exile—preferably thought of as a self-sufficient and intellectually prolific individual—is rather seldom associated with capitalism’s expansionist logic. To give an example, only in 2015 did the German Society for Exile Studies dedicate one of its yearbooks to the topic

⁷ With regard to their discipline, Malkki and Hackl both agree that anthropologists themselves tend to uncritically apply an aestheticized version of displacement on their own way of professional life—ethnographic methods like field work, or even “academic mobility” as a euphemism for temporary appointments come into mind here (Malkki 1995: 513–514; Hackl 2017: 60).

“economics and exile”. The foreword’s authors state that “if addressed at all, questions of money and economic problems have been only a marginal topic within exile studies” and that “the relationship between economics and exile has not been investigated sufficiently” (Seeber/Zwenger/Krohn 2015: 9, own translation). Implicitly, they also point to a feasible reason for this neglect: “The Jews’ strong representation within certain occupations such as lawyers, doctors, and bankers reinforced the imagination of a Jewish hegemony in public and economic life and strengthened anti-semitic prejudices” (Seeber et al. 2015: 10). Hence, the Society’s focus on the German-Jewish exile of the 1930–40s, together with the anti-semitic stereotype of the rich Jew, made engagement with economic questions a highly sensitive task and further promoted a culturalist understanding of exile. Interestingly, Hackl’s article remains silent on economic questions, as well.

Second, Bhupinder Chimni speaks of a “myth of difference” created in the early 1980s, a myth in which “the nature and character of refugee flows in the Third World were represented as being radically different from refugee flows in Europe since the end of the First World War” (1998: 351). Additionally, he names “the geographical spread of capitalism and the politics of imperialism” (Chimni 1998: 359) as two of the main causes for the twentieth century’s displacements. Until the Cold War’s end, and driven by the impact of the Bolshevik Revolution, the typical refugee arriving on Western shores had been someone fleeing the Eastern bloc: “Thereby, an image of a ‘normal’ refugee was constructed—white, male and anti-communist—which clashed sharply with individuals fleeing the Third World” (ibid.). Vanessa Pupavac’s broadening of this typical figure of the Cold War refugee to include that of the “South African political activist”—who achieved heroic status within the West’s “radical circles”—seems to challenge Chimni’s argument a bit (2006: 1). But Pupavac seems to have only had in mind those South Africans who sought refuge in the West, where she also situated herself: otherwise it would make no sense for her to write of both the Central and Eastern Europeans as well as the South Africans together, saying that “we could vicariously bask in the nobility of their struggles and have our way of life affirmed for us because they had sought refuge in our society” (2006: 1–2). Against such objects of white Western desire, African *freedom fighters* who were exiled in the Soviet bloc, even more so if they had been expelled from it—being forced to leave the East for the West—must have appeared as an outright affront.

As an empirical science, anthropology, not least because of ethnographic methods such as participant observation, necessarily tends to privilege the present over the past. Hence, to find a historically informed view on present phenomena in ethnographies is far from self-evident, and the marginalization of Marxist approaches with their inherent historicism has further complicated this task. For instance, in Germany, ethnographies on migration and border regimes have been criticized for

neglecting their historical embeddedness in broader political-economic contexts as well as the latter's structural dynamics (Georgi 2016: 186–188). What is needed, then, is stronger historical-anthropological engagement with the political-economic processes that *continue* to shape South–North migrations. Conceptually, exile offers such a perspective, as Hackl himself suggests when he describes exile not only as political in nature but also as a *prolonged* condition (2017: 59). Kuhlmann specifies this temporal aspect by arguing that exile, “though in principle also a long-term phenomenon, is understood by exiles themselves as merely a temporary condition,” since the exile's principal aim is to make return possible through interfering in her/his home country's politics (2018: 394; see also 2014: 12). Nevertheless, as I have indicated at the beginning, Hackl criticizes that anthropology “has only rarely engaged with exile conceptually” (2017: 55).

This neglect becomes especially obvious when we compare anthropologists' wide understanding or use of exile with that of political scientists. As the historian Idesbald Goddeeris unsurprisingly notes, political scientists tend to define exiles much more narrowly “as refugees or immigrants engaging themselves in opposition politics against their homeland” (2007: 396) so that some day in the future they might be able to return. He admits that such an understanding departs from the term's etymological meaning of banishment. Hackl of course lists several ethnographies whose subjects fit this definition (2017: 61), and his own specialization on Palestine may have further motivated his strong emphasis on Said. As a writer, Said stands for a very “particular figuration of exile from an emic and autobiographical position” (Hackl 2017: 55) that represents more the figure of the migrant intellectual in the West than that of an exiled politician. However, given the relevance that Hackl attaches to exile's original meaning as a form of *political* banishment, it is striking that Fassin's two groups mentioned at the beginning, with the exception of the one woman from Zimbabwe, do not fit into exile as political scientists prefer to define it. Fassin did not mention Hackl's article in his Berlin lecture, and I have already argued that Fassin's replacement of formulations such as “forced nomads” by “forced exile” is most closely related to his preoccupation with the writings of German-Jewish exiles and speaking in front of German audiences. But at the same time, Fassin's ascription of a quasi-exilic condition to these two groups appears to me like a direct response to Hackl's suggestions, as Hackl's article is an anthropologist's plea to pay more attention to exile as a condition which “binds the subjective and socio-political dimensions of displacement conceptually” (2017: 65). This idea can help us to keep in mind the political and historical patterns of certain forms of transnational human mobility while, at the same time, focusing on the displaced individual's reaction to it. Correspondingly, even if the way Fassin invokes exile demonstrates the tendency of anthropologists to rely on the term more in a metaphorical sense, one could inter-

pret his usage as another anthropologist's attempt to take Hackl's plea seriously. Still, merely attributing a quasi-exilic condition to various groups of migrants and refugees is not the same as specifying the conditions and lives of people who have also left their countries but who, in contrast to Fassin's case studies, become members of exile movements continually and actively engaged with the politics of their homelands. By emphasizing the political and historical insights that studies on such specific types of exile can generate, I do not want to suggest that studying other types of exile or migrations cannot offer similar and worthwhile insights. All I want to say, in accordance with Hackl's main arguments, is the following: studying exiles who actively oppose their home country's politics offers a quite unique potential for understanding the subjective as well as the socio-political and, thus, also the *economic* side of larger patterns of geo-politics, given that, as I will seek to demonstrate throughout the present study, the exiled individual's biography constantly reminds us of these *global entanglements*.

Further clarifying my own perspective, let me add one more of Hackl's observations. He argues that *diaspora* became an "all-purpose" word in the 1980s which replaced exile under the influence of theories of postmodernism and globalization. According to Hackl, diaspora studies, together with the so-called mobility turn—even in its more critical postcolonial expressions—figured "movement as an empowering normality opposite to place attachment" (2017: 59) and obscured the discussion of exile. Hackl's following statement summarizes this process best:

In retrospect, the rise of diaspora studies expelled particularly the 'tragic' dimensions of exile: the political exclusion and the limitations of hybridity amid unbridgeable rifts and enduring immobilisation. This dimension also includes the 'lost context' of a history of war and colonialism that 'tore away people from their homes' before they came into the metropolises of the former coloniser [. . .]. Exile re-introduces this context of violent political displacement at a time when the celebrations of unrooted cosmopolitanisms are challenged by the 'continuing primacy of the state in determining the nature of mobility'. (Hackl 2017: 60)

A quite far-ranging critique: silencing "the tragic dimensions of exile" while, instead, focusing predominantly on its aesthetic or metaphorical possibilities, further delinking human mobility in Western thought from some of its most fundamental historical patterns – "a history of war and colonialism." What Hackl does not mention is that the diasporas which gained so much scholarly attention in Western academia were almost exclusively located within or closely tied to the West. For instance, African critiques raised against Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic*, a seminal work which, published in 1993, undoubtedly forms part of the mobility turn and had an enormous impact also on anthropology, target exactly this one-dimensional engagement and Gilroy's neglect of Africa itself (e.g. Masilela 1996; Zeleza 2005b: 212). Accordingly, James Clifford self-critically reappraised his influential essay on diaspora discourses,

wherein he counterposed Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* to notions of the Jewish diaspora, as expressing "a certain North American bias" (1994: 302). But he also argued that there is no reason why Gilroy's "privileging of the Black Atlantic, for the purposes of writing a counterhistory in some depth, should necessarily silence other diasporic counterhistories" (Clifford 1994: 320). Obviously influenced by Said, Clifford distinguished discourses on diaspora from discourses on exile by the latter's "frequently individualistic focus" (1994: 308). Simultaneously, he asked what experiences the former "reject, replace, or marginalize," ending his essay with a call to recover "non-Western, or not-only-Western" histories (Clifford 1994: 302 & 328).

Indeed, until recently, Western scholarship has neglected the extensive interactions that took place during the Cold War between countries of the Third World and the Eastern bloc states (formerly known as the Second World), which have produced their very own diasporas and exiles. Instead, the focus lay one-sidedly on the West and the corresponding diasporas in the Americas, the Caribbean and Western Europe, accompanied by an overemphasis on the cultural effects of the former subject people's movements to and between these spaces—be it enforced or voluntarily. This has not only silenced the life stories of exiles like the ones presented in this study but arguably sidelined the Third World's failed attempts to build up postcolonial nation states (or larger territorial units) strong enough to counter Western hegemony.

Moreover, Hackl describes political displacement as a shift that "can result from forced human mobility, but also from the forced movement of boundaries and political projects across and around people" (2017: 65), which reminds us of the effect that the Second World's demise could have on Third World exiles who, because of these projects, lived in the former at the end of the 1980s. This brings me to my final point. Forced movement or creation of boundaries is something very familiar in African contexts. In his introduction to EASA's special edition, Salazar makes clear that *all* of the selected key figures' conceptual developments have "a distinctly European genealogy" (2017: 7). Exile, at least in its current configuration, is a Eurocentric concept closely tied to the model of the European nation state, the development of which is closely tied to Europe's colonial expansion during its imperial history.

According to the historian Marcel van der Linden, the modern understanding of exile is tied to specific characteristics attributed to the European state of the nineteenth century—such as the idea that a state should care for and protect its citizens. If it fails to do so, its citizens can seek another state's protection. This thinking, he continues, not only gave birth to the modern figure of the refugee but also informs the modern understanding of exile; research on the latter should, therefore, be entangled with the history of state- and nation-building (van der Linden 2012: 8). Europe's history of state- and nation-building, however, cannot be sep-

arated from its expansionist drive, while Africa's history of state- and nation-building cannot be separated from its struggle against Europe's expansionism (e.g. Boele van Hensbroek 1993: 119). The latter went hand in hand with the development of industrial capitalism and the rise of the "West" as a conglomeration of the world's economically strongest countries, driven by the political and military leadership of Europe's most prolific colonial outcome: the US. Africa, a continent that is home to the world's economically poorest states, stands in utmost contrast to this. How, then, is exile discussed within African Studies?

1.2 Recent Approaches to Exile in African Studies

Considering the countless studies on the African diaspora, it is astonishing that a volume from the US, said to be "the first of its kind to reconsider exile in its totality and to argue for its centrality to theorizations of state power in colonial and postcolonial Africa" (Carpenter/Lawrance 2018: 4), appeared only in 2018.⁸ The volume is, however, notable for departing from anglophone studies on the African diaspora—which normally focus on the US, the Caribbean, or Great Britain—by reversing the geographical perspectives dominant therein and putting greater emphasis on continental Africa instead. The contributions cover a broad range of themes: Sierra Leonean settlements of diaspora Blacks, the use of political banishment to rule in colonial Africa, expressions of exile in poetry and lyrics, European settlers who were deported from colonial Africa by the British, the role that Osama bin Laden's exile in Sudan played for al-Shabaab's attacks in Kenya, or recent Mauritanian diaspora communities in the US, to name only some. It also includes two chapters that, considering the geographical origin and temporal space of the exile biographies I am concerned with, address a type of exile that touches upon my own research field: one contribution by Susan Pennybacker on the ANC's exile in London and another by Joanna Tague on "Mozambican Liberation Exiles" (2018: 139), as she calls them, in Dar es Salaam. Taking all of the volume's contributions as a whole, exilic conditions are attributed to a wide variety of individuals or groups whose backgrounds and reasons for displacement strongly differ. Cases such as diaspora-born Blacks from the Americas who allied with the British only to be used by them for a new settler experiment in West Africa or white settlers in East Africa who were forced by their fellows to leave the continent because of their intolerable behavior

⁸ The volume is an outcome of the 4th Conable Conference "A Vision of Revolution": *Exile and Deportation in Global Perspective*, which took place in 2015 at New York's Rochester Institute of Technology. The conference's geographical spectrum was not restricted to topics related to Africa.

reveal very distinct historical linkages to “Africa.” Thus, a metaphorical use of exile can also be said to permeate this volume.

However, as one might expect from a volume temporally centered around colonial and postcolonial Africa, Nathan R. Carpenter and Benjamin N. Lawrance, the volume’s editors, bind African exile in their introduction conceptually to European colonialism and to “the instability of state authority during Africa’s long engagement with European power” (2018: 4). Instead of theorizing exile, they highlight it “as part of a continuum of African displacements beginning with the trans-Atlantic slave trade and continuing through imperialism, colonialism, independence, and up to and including contemporary events [. . .] ushering in waves of new migrations” (Carpenter/Lawrance 2018: 4). They argue that, “with the important exception of pan-African movements in exile, African exile is sidelined from the global encounter with colonial and imperial power” (Carpenter/Lawrance 2018: 6). Instead, exile has largely been undertheorized and used metaphorically as “suggestion, rhetorical device, and synonym for various forms of displacement or migration” (Carpenter/Lawrance 2018: 5). Oddly, however, this critique partly contradicts their own broad definition of exile made only three paragraphs earlier, where they propose that exile 1) “is the forced removal or coerced absence from one’s homeland”; 2) “has taken many forms [in Africa] including banishment, self-imposed expatriation, and forced resettlement, among others”; and 3) “encompasses not only political exclusion but also resettlement and migration born of environmental disaster, war, economic hardship, or fear of social persecution” (Carpenter/Lawrance 2018: 5).

Such a conceptualization makes enforced displacements a key characteristic of colonial and postcolonial Africa, with exile only being a variant within such displacements. Conceptualizing exile as a variant of enforced displacements is of course not particular to Africa; I would rather see the particularity of African exile as understood by Carpenter and Lawrance in the unique role that European (or Western) expansionism plays as the main generator of these displacements. This role, in turn, makes twentieth-century African exile in state-socialist countries an awkward research field in German academia, as I will discuss in more detail below.

Most of the other case studies presented in the volume are in one way or another tied to the West. That an African exile in Eastern-bloc countries existed is only indicated in the chapters from Pennybacker and Tague and even therein only in passing, since the former focuses on South Africans in London and the latter on Mozambicans attending a US-funded school in Tanzania. I would partly explain this neglect as being due to Western scholars having only recently begun to pay closer attention to Africa’s entanglements with the Eastern bloc. This delay, in turn, can be connected to the editors’ argument “that the diversity of exile experiences across the continent can be recovered and interpreted as ‘archive’” (Carpenter/Lawrance 2018: 4). Considering that the volume offers variations of African

exile in a very broad sense, I want to outline at least briefly a few more of Carpenter and Lawrance's conceptualizations and how Emily Burrill comments on the volume in her afterword, before I come back to Tague and Pennybacker.

The significance for theorization of state power that Carpenter and Lawrance attribute to African exile indicates their interest in exile's *political* dimensions; they consider exile as "fundamental to any account of state power or critical re-reading of colonial and postcolonial oppression" (Carpenter/Lawrance 2018: 4). Another noteworthy specification made by the editors is that exile "was not confined to African elites but rather encompassed all sectors of society" (Carpenter/Lawrance 2018: 4). This distinguishes their understanding of exile from, for instance, that predominating in the German Society for Exile Studies.⁹ Associating exile preferably with intellectual elites also touches on the question of the archive; for instance, Clara E. Lida has argued about the Spanish Republicans' exile in Mexico that "the exile which was best remembered is the literary exile, which was not the biggest in numbers but the one which bore testimony to its existence" (Ahrens 2014, own translation). This invokes Carpenter and Lawrance's notion of the archive and, translated into a world region in which oral tradition continues to play an important role, problematizes the inherent Eurocentrism of exile's connection with literacy as the primary means of creating collective memory.¹⁰ In line with this argument, Burrill recurs in her afterword to Sophia McClennen's much-cited study on exile in Latin American literature and, underlining an argument that the latter made therein, claims that we have to reconcile "notions of exile as an existential state of displacement with crucial implications for memory and identity" with the more descriptive approach to exile that prevails in "a scholarship that assesses the conditions and implications for those in exile from authoritarian regimes" (Burrill 2018: 310–311).

Carpenter and Lawrance identify two tropes within discourses on exile that would also exist in Africa. They point to exile as not only being a form of erasure or social death—in that exile "erases histories, lives, and experiences, to varying degrees of completeness" (Carpenter/Lawrance 2018: 6)—but also as being a unique condition for introspection and reflectiveness, which again recalls Said's use of the

9 As the German Society for Exile Studies 2009 yearbook's editors write, the German "study of exile reveals quantitatively and qualitatively its character as research on elites, working with other methods and theoretical approaches and having other tasks than contemporary research on migration" (Krohn/Winckler 2009: VIII, own translation).

10 The case of the Spanish Republican exile in Mexico is also notable in that the Mexican government allowed only such Spanish refugees to enter the country if they had learned a profession and knew how to read and write. Given the high rate of illiteracy in the Spain of the 1930s, exiles from lower social classes were automatically excluded, as Enrique Lister notes (2005: 290–291).

term. Even though they ultimately insist on exile's tragic or negative dimension, they do not dismiss the latter trope entirely. Instead, they point to exile's empowering effects by arguing that “not all narratives of exile are histories of erasure,” in that exile might also be creative or generative, dramatic and productive at the same time and “in most cases creativity happened *in spite of* exile's dislocation, disorientation, and violence” (Carpenter/Lawrance 2018: 7). It is exile's asserted productiveness that allows for a discreet critique of capitalism when they further write that “people in exile formed or recreated national identities, they catalyzed transnational anticolonial, anti-apartheid, and anticapitalist movements” (Carpenter/Lawrance 2018: 8). That African exile also articulated itself in anticapitalist movements was not exclusive to Southern Africa during decolonization; but it holds especially true for a region in which Portuguese colonialism, white settler regimes and apartheid persisted following the 1960s.

1.2.1 Case Studies from Southern Africa: Mozambique and South Africa

How do Joanna Tague and Susan Pennybacker invoke this region and period within the volume? Covering the 1960s and 1970s, Tague also raises the question of how to distinguish between exiles and refugees with regard to the Mozambicans in Dar es Salaam she is concerned with: “thousands of refugees who followed their leaders to this cosmopolitan city” (Tague 2018: 137), as she writes in the beginning, who, right in the next sentence, turn into a “diffuse exile community” whose leaders had problems keeping track of (Tague 2018: 138). What turns these Mozambicans into exiles, or what suddenly frees them from their former ascription as refugees within Tague's text, is their integration into a political organization linked to their home country—here, the national liberation movement Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Frelimo). This is a noteworthy move. Paul Zeleza, whose thoughts on exile I will discuss in the following section, argues that Said created a “hierarchy of the displaced” in his autobiography by equating displaced intellectuals, capable of drawing creative output out of their displacement, with the exile and putting them on top of the hierarchy, while refugees remained at the bottom (Zeleza 2005: 9–10). In Tague's move, refugees climb up this ladder through joining (or creating) a movement linked to the home country, and international assistance for refugees is substituted with a quasi-national assistance for party members. The latter is organized by a network of privileged but similarly displaced compatriots—in Tague's case including the Frelimo leader Eduardo Mondlane's US-American wife—in other words, by the construction-in-progress of a political movement in exile. This network offers a protective or caring structure in the host country, mobilizes its members for a political and military struggle related to the home country, and has

leading figures who serve as intermediaries to organize support. By relying on this infrastructure and keeping it active, refugees turn into a collective of exiles.

However, African exile during decolonization—including the anti-apartheid struggle—drew upon certain structural features that earlier or later periods necessarily lacked, namely the primacy of national liberation, effective political movements, and the need to organize international support, such as opportunities for vocational or military training or studying abroad. Attributing exile to a displaced person mainly because he/she has joined a broad political movement hence bears the danger of re-establishing a Eurocentric framework, as it takes certain logics of territorial units that would emerge out of European colonialism as African nation states for granted. Tague is, of course, aware of such contradictions and sees two reasons for the “ambiguity in distinguishing” (2018: 139) between the refugee and the exile. First, she refers to the United Nations’ 1951 Refugee Convention, which attributed a status of refugees only to Europeans who were displaced because of events that occurred before 1951. This convention was reformed only in 1967. Her second argument is, however, seemingly tautological with regard to her use of the term exile, explaining that “we also know very little about how African refugees and liberation leaders throughout the 1960s defined and navigated their own exile,” but “lack of substantive UNHCR support often meant that African liberation movements in exile assumed responsibility for refugees from their home territories” (Tague 2018: 139). By taking over such responsibility, one might conclude, these movements turned refugees into political exiles.

An important part of this responsibility was to offer its members opportunities that would distinguish them from mere refugees, such as a training or study abroad. The significance that these opportunities played for exiled members of liberation movements or Africans in general, as well as the significance that the Soviet system played in generating them, have been highlighted by various scholars (e.g. Mazrui 1999; Katsakioris 2016). Tague, in turn, theorizes the impacts that the prospect of obtaining a scholarship to study in the US had on Mozambican students’ *status as exiles*. Given that their careers were always temporary stages, Tague writes that “exile was, as Edward Said observed, a ‘permanent state’; as the multiple layers of exile—the various forms that exile took—followed students geographically” (2018: 142). She continues:

This notion of permanency, however, revolved around their educational advancement; students hoped to attain a scholarship abroad and did not fear being physically in exile as much as they feared a stalled education. In this way, the purpose of being in exile was intimately linked with ideas of permanency: one had to have a purpose (and to be serving the liberation movement through that purpose) to avoid being in permanent exile. (Tague 2018: 142)

In the beginning of her text, Tague writes that, although “‘exile’ encapsulates a range of experiences, from coercion to free will [. . .] we often default to imagining exile as punitive” (2018: 138). Her case study challenges this imagination. Within the context of decolonization and the Cold War, she argues, exile was also an opportunity closely intertwined with social advancement. Tague focuses only on the West, which is quite surprising since Frelimo maintained close relations with Eastern bloc countries during the independence struggle and, afterwards, even turned Mozambique into a nominally socialist state.¹¹ Thus, she mentions Eastern bloc countries as possible spaces for such opportunities of social advancement only in passing. Nevertheless, the way she invokes these countries indicates that they offered opportunities of high quality. Tague writes that, in the mid-1960s, Mozambicans not only used their status as graduates from the Tanzanian school to enroll in universities in western capitalist countries like the US, England, Switzerland, Belgium or Portugal, or in southern countries like Algeria and India, but also in socialist eastern European/Asian countries such as Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Romania, or the USSR. Moreover, she presents a Mozambican exile who studied and even received a doctorate in East Germany before beginning a career in high profile positions for the Mozambican government (Tague 108: 145 & 149).¹² Hence, within the broader discussion of African exile during colonial and postcolonial history that the volume seeks to address overall, Tague’s contribution invokes the Eastern bloc exclusively in the context of higher learning and in an unreservedly *positive* way. This is remarkable if we recall how predominantly *negative* the West, which emerged victorious from the Cold War and has usually been portrayed as being morally superior to its former eastern counterpart, is presented in the volume as the main generator of enforced African displacements. From a German point of view, it is even more remarkable or paradoxical, since the GDR continues to be represented almost entirely negatively within dominant streams of Germany’s post-reunification discourse—its treatment of Blacks and People of Color being no exception.

Does Pennybacker’s contribution invoke the Eastern bloc in ways similar to Tague’s? Tague writes that, for the Mozambicans, Dar es Salaam was “the preeminent hub for liberation exiles and other activists from across the continent” (2017: 138). Something similar can be said about London with regard to the exiles that Pennybacker addresses: South Africans who found themselves exiled in the west-

¹¹ Not unlike Tague, Andrew Ivaska also highlights the importance of Frelimo’s first president Eduardo Mondlane’s relationship with the US (2018: 28).

¹² The only other explicit reference Tague makes to an Eastern bloc country is her mentioning of a Czech teacher at the school in Dar es Salaam; she also mentions a German teacher but without further specifying if he was from the FRG or the GDR (2018: 145).

ern part of the Cold War world. Just like Tague, she invokes the corresponding exiles in Eastern bloc countries only in passing. However, due to the specifics of the South African context, her contribution reveals significant differences in terms of the importance which communism played for African decolonization and the anti-apartheid struggle. First, Pennybacker uses interviews with ANC members, conducted in the early 1990s by Hilda Bernstein and Wolfie Kodesh, who were South African exiles of Jewish origin as well as members of the South African Communist Party (SACP).¹³ Instead of simply mentioning the latter, Pennybacker highlights the role that communism played in her subjects' biographies right from the start by further stressing interviewer Bernstein's "Soviet diplomat's Bolshevik family's" background, international communism's influence on anticolonial struggles, and the Soviet Union's support for the anti-apartheid-struggle in particular (2018: 185–187). Hence, considering the outcome of the "committed few thousand South Africans who continued actively to oppose apartheid from abroad," she writes of a double existence "as a peaceful, antiracist, broadly based, global 'human rights' movement in one guise, and as a paramilitary, ideologically orthodox, communist-engaged, Black-dominated and secret underground movement in another" (Pennybacker 2018: 187). Note that she links communism not only to militancy or dogma but also to Black dominance, thus implicitly linking communism to emancipatory struggles of groups racially subjugated and economically exploited by the West. Second, communism and the Eastern bloc run through many of the exile narratives collected by Bernstein and Kodesh and selected by Pennybacker. These narratives also include that of a white South African who spent seven months of training in the Soviet Union, leading Pennybacker to construct the following spatial sketch, which also mentions the GDR in passing and suggests that Marxism was not merely a discursive tool to mingle a critique of capitalism with anticolonialism but also that the Second World's material support was substantial:

His journeys bespoke the Cold War context of the militarized armed struggle in Africa, [. . .] the lesser power that Britain now was, and the magnanimity of the Soviet state in its South African project. The USSR was a competing base of support to that offered by Britain, involving different kinds of political means testing. [. . .] Havana was also on the map for some young South Africans in long-term exile and training, as was the German Democratic Republic and other points in the former Eastern Europe. (Pennybacker 2018: 187)

¹³ The Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), founded in 1921, was declared illegal by the apartheid regime in 1950 and refounded itself as the South African Communist Party (SACP) in 1953. For the prominent role of South African Jews in the anti-apartheid struggle, see Plass 2020.

In her earlier descriptions of Britain as a host society, Pennybacker also highlights its inherent contradictions when it comes to questions of its postcolonial heritage and South–North migration. She argues that “the liberal democracy that claimed inalienable rights to safe haven for so many, was at the same time the weak surviving pivot of an exploitative empire that fostered unresolved relationships at home” (Pennybacker 2018: 187). The most pronounced critique of capitalism and, in reverse, positive invocation of international communism within this volume on African exile appears in the final exile narrative that Pennybacker chose for her contribution, which belongs to an interview Kodesh conducted in 1993 with Denis Goldberg.¹⁴ Goldberg was a long-time member of the SACP and, as the only white person who was sentenced in the Rivonia trial, one of the most prominent South African exiles of Jewish background. He talks about how much the Western discourse on racism and apartheid astonished him when he came to Britain in the mid-1980s after more than twenty years of imprisonment:

we know quite simply that racism is apartheid, apartheid is part of capitalism, is part of imperialism and this was accepted throughout the ANC and the liberation movement ever since I've known [of it]—and not just amongst communists as such. [. . .] But when you get to Europe [. . .] all these things got blurred in the kind of ‘Oh we are democratic in Britain. We have a great human rights record.’ [. . .]here’s a kind of ideological falsity about Europe and its politics. And yet the mass of people seem[s] to accept it. And so it was exciting actually to see this. (Goldberg, as quoted in Pennybacker 2018: 196)

Pennybacker further quotes some of Goldberg’s critique against the Soviet Union’s authoritarianism as well as his comments on the fall of the Soviet Union. Goldberg found it necessary to defend it during the Cold War, but its demise somehow contradictorily led to a “freer Southern African region” (Goldberg, as quoted in Pennybacker 2018: 196).

That Pennybacker, of all things, decided to end her contribution’s empirical part with Goldberg’s narrative is remarkable for several reasons. First of all, Goldberg

¹⁴ Pennybacker abbreviates most of the exiles’ names with their initials. However, given Goldberg’s status as a public figure and the need to contextualize his statement, I find it necessary to explicitly name him. His passing in 2020 also eliminates any possible need to maintain his anonymity. Moreover, anyone familiar with the ANC’s history could easily identify him because of the additional information Pennybacker gives: “a male, Jewish South African, who was a defendant in one of the key trials of South African history. Spared the death sentence, DG spent twenty-two years in prison for treason while his wife, who had been held in more limited detention, left the country with their children to live in London; he joined them there after a negotiated release” (2018: 196). In 2002, after the death of his first wife, Goldberg married the East German Edelgard Nkobi (born Schulreich), who had left the GDR in 1975 together with her first husband, ANC member Zenzo Nkobi (Quart 2014).

was not a Black or ‘coloured’ but a white Jewish South African and, thus, hardly representative for South Africa, whose vast majority was and still is Black. A Communist Party member during the anti-apartheid struggle, he held on to his Marxist convictions even after the collapse of the Soviet Union. His inclusion may be considered even more surprising because Goldberg is more likely to be associated with his two-decades-long imprisonment in South Africa than with his later exile in London, even though African writers like Kofi Anyidoho (1997) have pointed out the many analogies that exist between prison and exile. Goldberg’s exile narrative explicitly links racism and apartheid to capitalism and imperialism, pointing towards a specific type of human rights discourse as a functional element within the West’s ideological repertoire to justify its political economy and touching on one of the hinges of its global dominance: the historical relationship between the development of its political economy and a specific kind of racism and material inequality that are entangled with (Western) Europe’s colonial expansion. It took a contribution on the exile provoked by the longest struggle against white oppression on the African continent to explicitly address this issue. Is there a similar tendency when African intellectuals of different national backgrounds reflect upon exile?

1.3 Approaches to Exile among African Intellectuals

1.3.1 Paul Zeleza’s Reflections on Exile in the Writings of Edward Said and African Discourses

The anthropologist Andreas Hackl took Edward Said’s exile as a point of departure to counter, as he wrote, “the chronic neglect of exile’s analytical value” (2017: 65) within anglophone Social and Cultural Anthropology. Although additionally relying on some literature from other disciplines, Hackl mainly focused on ethnographic approaches to exile. Much of the epistemological value attributed to such an approach arguably rests on the fact that many (white) Western academics consider Said to be an outspoken critic of the West. What happens, however, if an African intellectual takes Said as a point of departure to reflect on exile? Paul Zeleza, a historian and writer, undertook this approach several years before Hackl. Born in Zimbabwe of Malawian parents, who later moved with him back to Malawi, Zeleza grew up under the Malawian dictatorship of Hastings K. Banda before eventually leaving the country and continuing his academic career in Canada and Kenya. Consequently, tropes associated with African intellectuals in exile run through his own biography.

In an article from 2005, Zeleza focused on exile in African *literatures* that motivated Carpenter and Lawrance to make a brief reference to him, arguing that

“literary examinations of exile also suggest displacement as giving life, freedom, and opportunity” (Carpenter/Lawrance 2018: 29), though in the process only highlighting his positive examples. Nevertheless, a number of Zeleza’s observations do qualify for helping us attain a better understanding of African political exile as well as for rethinking Hackl’s observations. For example, Zeleza reads some of Said’s texts to reflect on how Africa and anti-Black racism in the US are invoked therein (Said spent several years of his early life in Egypt before moving to the US). Here, Zeleza’s article not only helps us to get an overview of African exile’s literary dimensions but also to see more clearly a certain Western bias in Said’s work that is often overlooked by Western scholars. Note, for instance, the following remarks Zeleza makes on Said’s autobiography *Out of Place*, published in 1999:

Said’s alienation from Cairo and by extension Egypt and Africa is unmistakable from the silences in the narrative. We are given the expatriate Cairo, the Cairo of Arab exiles [. . .], but the Cairo of the indigenous Egyptians is largely invisible. Egypt intrudes in this island of comfortable exile, violently and almost annoyingly, through the revolution of 1952 and Nasser’s doomed socialist experiment. (Zeleza 2005: 6)

The positive effect which Nasser’s coming to power initially had for Africa’s decolonization—culminating in the nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956—can hardly be overestimated. While this revolution, at least in Zeleza’s reading of Said, apparently made of Cairo a rather uncomfortable place for the type of exile Said had experienced there, Cairo became more generally a hot spot for African freedom fighters, and the city turned into a hub from which Africans from all around the continent departed to study at European universities (Burton 2019: 30–40). Of course, the Egypt revolution took place shortly after Said’s move to the US, from which he would cheer Nasser on (Shatz 2021). What Zeleza means, or at least how I understand him, is that Said has lived in (and uncritically remembers) a quite different hub: a “colonial, bourgeois Cairo” (Zeleza 2005: 5) in which Said enjoyed a privileged lifestyle within a small Western-oriented Arab expat community, protected and isolated from the ordinary Egyptians as well as from the looming political upheavals on the wider continent. A certain reluctance to address anti-Black racism, Zeleza continues, also counts for those parts of Said’s memoir in which he recalls his student life in the US. However, more interesting with regard to my main subject here—African exile in the GDR—is how Zeleza explains this ignorance.

Referring to a work of the late Pius Adesanmi (2004), Zeleza argues that “exiles who ignore the politics of their hostlands and are singularly fixated on the desolation of their homelands run the risk of producing and peddling exceptionalist discourses of oppression” (2005: 8). In other words, specific discourses bounded to

certain territories may facilitate the ability of exiles to tolerate or ignore the injustices of their host countries, as long as they target other members of the society than themselves. Following this logic, Said, the Palestinian child of an economically privileged Christian-Arab family, who would dedicate his political and intellectual energy to the Palestinian cause, was neither exposed to the everyday life of common Egyptians and Africans while living in Cairo nor subjected to *anti-Black* racism while living in the US. According to Zeleza, such conditions allowed Said to write a memoir that leaves in silence certain obviously negative aspects of his host countries that did not affect him personally but which most other critical observers would find obligatory to address.

To avoid misunderstandings: Zeleza leaves no doubts of how much he admires Said's lifelong engagement as a public intellectual committed to the Palestinian cause and to deconstruct certain Western epistemologies. He clearly acknowledges his intellectual and academic achievements. Yet, to the same extent to which he praises him, Zeleza points to several aspects within Said's theorization of exile that he considers problematic. To begin with, the wish to return—commonly seen as one of exile's indispensable characteristics—evanesces in favor of a celebration of the exilic condition itself (Zeleza 2005: 9). Zeleza argues that Said fetishizes a privileged form of exile in which “the worldliness of intellectual exiles assumes revolutionary potential” and “the historical imperatives of anti-imperialist struggle now find expression and vitality in exilic and migratory energies and movements” (2005: 10).¹⁵ Such a celebration of “the intellectual and artist in exile” goes hand in hand with depreciation of the “nearly forgotten unfortunates” when it comes to South–North migrations, as Zeleza polemically writes. Said, he explains, tends to see only “cosmopolitan intellectuals” as exiles, while “the rest are pretenders or undeserving of the true pathos and majesty of the exilic condition and experience” (2005: 10). This leads Zeleza to a more general critique of Western scholarship:

From here to the invocation of exile as an emancipatory experience is but a short step, especially in some of the celebratory, mischievous, and depoliticized narratives of postmodernism and postcolonialism that extol ambiguous, ambivalent, hybrid, contingent, cosmopolitan, borderless and unanchored identities. (Zeleza 2005: 10)

What needs to be mentioned here, however, is that Zeleza, in his critical reading of Said, leaves out *The Question of Palestine* (Said 1979), a book which articulates the experience of exile and forced displacement in a more collective and profoundly political sense. Ann Laura Stoler (2016: 37–67) points to the fact that this book, published only one year after *Orientalism*, has received considerably less

¹⁵ Zeleza refers here to an earlier critique he wrote of Said's 1993 book *Culture and Imperialism*.

attention than Said's other works, and Zeleza's as well as Hackl's article both confirm her argument, for they make no reference to this book at all. Who knows whether this neglect in the broader reception of Said's works has not also facilitated a culturalist reading of Said's configuration of exile?

In any case, even though Zeleza's approach to Said is more critical than Hackl's, both problematize specific streams within Western humanities coming out of the 1980s that have tended to celebrate human mobility and displacement (e.g. migration) *at the expense* of critically engaging with its deeper political and historical ramifications. But the reflections of Zeleza and Hackl on exile actually exhibit more similarities as well. Trying to grasp exile conceptually, Zeleza states that it "is exceedingly common in modern Africa, indeed in the world at large, yet it remains difficult to define as a concept and a condition" (2005: 10)—exactly as Hackl would argue more than a decade later. Indeed, many of Zeleza's arguments, such as that "the exile is usually seen as a victim of banishment while the expatriate and émigré enjoy some choice and emigrant and refugee are legal statuses" (2005: 11), sound so similar to Hackl's that the latter seems to have missed an opportunity to back up his own views by not having referred to Zeleza's article in his own. Considering exile's Eurocentric genealogy, Zeleza insists on the conceptual dependence of exile on distinct nation states and the latter's "coercive power over citizens and aliens" (2005: 11). Curiously, Hackl, an anthropologist, recurs to Said as a literary scholar and writer for exile's aestheticization and contrasts it with more pragmatic and politicized uses in selected ethnographic studies on refugees and displacement. Meanwhile, Zeleza, a historian and writer, recurs to the social science discourse on migration as a counter to Said's concept of exile, reminding us "that dislocation, expatriation from home is a prosaic condition experienced by millions of people rather than an exceptional reality only for those blessed with artistic souls" (2005: 12). Whereas Hackl speaks of exile as a metaphor, Zeleza speaks of exile as "a metonymy for various forms of dislocation from a physical and psychic homeland" (2005: 11). For Zeleza as for Hackl, exile can refer to real physical displacement as well as "be[ing] metaphorical, referring to artistic representations of alienation from familiar traditions" (Zeleza 2005: 11). Even though there are African authors who celebrate privileged forms of displacement as quasi-exilic, mentally stimulating and creatively enriching, Africans, Zeleza argues, have already experienced a metaphorical type of exile through colonialism and the consequent process of alienation from their cultures and languages (2005: 13). During the subsequent period of decolonization and the Cold War, exile became "an especially quarrelsome and opinionated lot" when ideological struggles between "liberals, nationalists and Marxists" were played out (Zeleza 2005: 15); physically, exile further gains in importance in the "struggles against the devastations of neocolonialism" (2015: 16–17) following decolonization. This leads us almost up to the present. Taking another

scholar's critical reading of the "fragmented fiction" of Dambudzo Marechera, a celebrated Zimbabwean author, as one of his final examples, Zeleza speaks of a "vision of exilic despair" characterized as follows:

It represents an ontological condition of humanity, the experiences of African deprivation and estrangement under colonialism, their alienation as émigrés and emigrants in racist Europe, and as disenchanting citizens in totalitarian postcolonial states, all of which produce devastating personal and psychological dislocations, making meaningful political action by the exile and returnee all but impossible. (Zeleza 2005: 17)

This sounds like a desperate situation, one which fits perfectly with the Western imagination and negative stereotypes of Africa. Zeleza lists more African authors whose exiled characters "are often lonely, traumatized and uncompromising individuals who return to an equally bleak, brutalized world of corruption where the promises of independence have been aborted" (*ibid.*). He writes of "alienated and impotent intellectuals" who are "sapped and paralyzed by a Manichean understanding of the world," dismissing "all national liberation struggles as mystifications contrived by an omnipotent, conspiratorial imperialism" and inhabiting "a nihilistic world of unyielding structural dualities and little agency, of a passive 'Africinity' and a destructive 'Westernity'" (*ibid.*).

Here we need to keep in mind that contrary to Western authors who can write for their own lucrative national markets and in their own national languages, many African authors have to write explicitly for Western markets and in the former colonizer's language to make a living. They must, hence, satisfy some of their Western readers' expectations and feelings of guilt to sell their products (see also Zeleza 2005: 13). Zeleza's bibliography fortunately contains a wide range of authors, some of whom have created characters that draw a more positive picture of living abroad. Further, he also looks at literature where the exiles portrayed do not return or at literature focused on the exilic experience itself. Such fictions, he writes, offer "a kind of contrapuntal affirmation of rootless cosmopolitan affiliation, one marked with anxieties and contradictions held in fluid, suspended tension" (Zeleza 2005: 18)—an affiliation for exiles who have found a new home in western European countries, such as France, but one that raises constant fears of being racially insulted or attacked as well as living a life in isolation, alienated from the host as well as the home country. Taken to its extreme, the latter two can turn into "interchangeable spaces, indeed states of mind, real and imagined, present and absent" (*ibid.*). They transform exile into a "cosmopolitanism in which collective postcolonial subjectivities are endlessly negated, in which the borders of space, time, history, language, religion, culture and identity are perpetually transgressed" and "concepts of origin and belonging" continually constructed and deconstructed (Zeleza 2005: 18).

Zeleza's exile narratives, no matter whether they stem from real experiences or from a writer's imagination, are full of contradictions, always meandering, and dialectical in nature, leaving the impression that his continent of origin is a fertile ground for all kinds of exiles, especially the tragic ones. Two more points are noticeable here. First, Zeleza's analysis creates the impression that, from an African perspective, exile comes close to a timeless mass phenomenon; meanwhile, in its literary expressions a view that focuses on exile as an individual phenomenon is dominant. Second, most of the examples Zeleza gives lead to the West, and those who lead to other spaces he does not use for opening up another perspective. With the South African Alex La Guma, Zeleza lists at least one exiled writer whose biography could have led him into this field (2005: 11). La Guma was a high-ranked 'coloured' member of the South African ANC as well as of the South African Communist Party. At first exiled in England, he later moved on to socialist Cuba together with his wife, where he died in 1985. As I will discuss later, he published a hardly known travel account about a journey he made through the Soviet Union that contains some autobiographical references regarding his exile. Interestingly, his fictional works never addressed this exile but, rather, were concerned instead with the living conditions of fictitious characters in apartheid South Africa and feasible forms of resistance. Were African writers whose exile led them to the Eastern bloc and international communism less prone to aestheticize their experience of exile than their counterparts in the West did?

A puzzling question remains. To what extent does the discourse on literary African exile as depicted by Zeleza, however critical he might be of Western epistemologies, still follow a specific Western logic which emphasizes exile as generating tragic but, nevertheless, aestheticizable experiences of scattered individuals within an exclusively Western setting when it silences exiles connected to the Second World? The latter's exclusion is even more paradoxical when we consider that it was arguably an important part of the most radical forms of African resistance against the West in the twentieth century.

1.3.2 Francis Njubi Nesbitt's Classification of Migrant African Intellectuals and their Politics of Exile

An implicit Western focus is not unique to Paul Zeleza. It similarly characterizes, for instance, a brief article written by Francis Njubi Nesbitt on African intellectual migrants to which Zeleza also refers (2005: 15). Titled "African Intellectuals in the Belly of the Beast: Migration, Identity, and the Politics of Exile," it features exile prominently in its title while "Belly of the Beast" already indicates an exclusive engagement with the Western colonizer's world. However, given that the

Africans whose biographies I present here were exiled in the GDR but, given the German reunification, ended up in the Federal Republic of Germany and, thus, in a Western capitalist society, it is worth looking closer at this text.

Nesbitt—himself a Kenyan currently living in the US—argued in the early 2000s that African intellectuals are confronted with their “Africanity” for the first time when they enter the US or Western Europe, due to the racism to which Africans are constantly subjected there. He even went so far as to state that W. E. B. Du Bois’ concept of a “double consciousness,” developed exclusively on the African-American experience in the US, counts even more for African migrant intellectuals than for African Americans and African Europeans, given the former’s looser connection to the Western host societies:

The exiles are much closer to the African ‘soul’ Du Bois referred to and are less prepared for the pervasive racism and second-class status that they have to overcome in the West. This duality is intensified by the sense of alienation and guilt engendered by the widespread demonization of exiles as selfish and ungrateful wretches who escape to greener pastures as soon as they get their degrees, instead of using their education to uplift the poverty-stricken societies that educated them at great expense. (Nesbitt 2002: 70)

Nesbitt divides such migrant intellectuals into three groups which, as he adds in his conclusion, “are not mutually exclusive” (2002: 74): the comprador intelligentsia, the postcolonial critic, and the progressive exile. Note that, in other parts of his text, Nesbitt attributes exile to migrant intellectuals outside of Africa in general, whereas here he attributes it only to the last of his three groups explicitly. Unsurprisingly, as Nesbitt’s terms and order already suggest, the comprador intelligentsia is the most negatively connoted and the type that most obviously sells out to Western capitalism and neocolonialism:

Compradors can be recognized by their uncritical adoption of the free market ideology of globalization as the solution to Africa’s development crisis. They can be seen touring the continent on generously funded ‘research’ junkets and attending international conferences where they defend the global structures and heap blame on African countries for corruption, ‘tribalism’, and ineptitude. (Nesbitt 2002: 71–72)

In contrast to the former, postcolonial critics are less easy to grasp but more interesting when it comes to their relationship with Western knowledge production:

Much like the compradors, postcolonial critics take advantage of their color, nationality, and location in the West to become expert interpreters of the African experience for Western audiences. They also are conduits of Eurocentric thought for African consumption through the adaptation of the latest trend in European American perspectives to ‘explain’ the African experience. This adaptation of European American thought to the African experience has ranged from liberalism to various types of Marxism and to modernization, developmentalism, and dependency/world systems theories. Since the 1990s the most popular

Eurocentric perspective has been the postmodernist critique of essentialism and metanarratives through deconstruction and discourse analysis, which the postcolonial critics have adopted as their own. Thus, the postcolonial critic is only the latest phase in the long history of Third World scholars borrowing European American theories to explain African, Latin American, and Asian experiences. (Nesbitt 2002: 71)

Nesbitt invokes a problematic essentialism by suggesting the possibility of a ‘pure’ African, Latin American, or Asian experience that is free (or can be freed) from Western interference. Moreover, for the sake of his argument, and probably caused by his sketch-like article’s briefness, he depicts Western Marxist approaches—including dependency or world systems theory—as though they lack any theoretical benefit for African and other non-Western intellectuals. He also neglects that dependency theory was developed in Latin America. Further, by placing these approaches in a direct genealogy with postmodernist and postcolonial approaches, he silences the many dissonances that exist between them, such as, for instance, critiques against the two latter approaches raised by Marxists. Nevertheless, Nesbitt makes a point by suggesting that even the most critical Western theories are inescapably tied to Western hegemony and, in spite of their critical value, satisfy Western academia’s demands while leaving the underlying political-economic power structures which they criticize practically unchallenged.

However, if Nesbitt rejects Western knowledge production as being of no practical use to efficiently counter Western hegemony or to explain the African experience, what, then, does the political commitment and agency of his third type of African migrant intellectuals in the West—the “progressive exiles” —look like? What does it mean that he only speaks of them in exilic terms? Nesbitt refers to Du Bois, the Kenyan author Ngugi wa Thiong’o, and the global (meaning only “western”?) anti-apartheid movement to exemplify what African migrant intellectuals can do to qualify for this group. They have to “resolve the crisis of double consciousness” by building up a “dignified identity through Pan-Africanism and a commitment to the liberation of all people of African descent whether in the diaspora or on the continent” (Nesbitt 2002: 73). In doing so, Nesbitt continues, “progressive African exiles could use their location ‘in the belly of the beast’ to transform the international system for the benefit of all” (2002: 74). The underlying assumption is clear: the *racializing and exploitative* patterns of globalized capitalism can be overcome or attenuated, and progressive African exiles belong to those who can push these reforms from within the capitalist core states, to borrow a Wallersteinian term. Nesbitt seems to relate exile exclusively to the promotion of progressive and emancipatory change and attributes it to such African migrant intellectuals who maintain a positive relationship with their continent (or country) of origin while similarly establishing a positive relationship with the diaspora. They use their privileged location in the West not for their own benefit

but for “the benefit of all,” as happened, for instance, with the anti-apartheid movement and the abolishment of apartheid in South Africa.

What, however, does such a tale neglect? First, it neglects that, at the end of his long life as a political activist and intellectual, Du Bois had lost his faith in Western capitalism’s capability to reform in terms of racism and the economic exploitation of the global South. Instead, he joined the Communist Party, turned his back to “the belly of the beast”—the United States, his country of birth—and, together with his wife, migrated (or went into self-imposed exile) to Ghana. Second, Nesbitt mentions that “during the 1970s Africans and African Americans re-established ties that had been severed by the anticommunist hysteria of the 1950s” (2002: 74). Nevertheless, his article does not reveal any awareness of the significance which international communism continued to play for African decolonization and the anti-apartheid struggle, a significance that lasted until the Soviet Union’s very own demise. Third, Stuart Hall had good reasons in 1980 to describe apartheid South Africa as follows:

It is perhaps *the* social formation in which the salience of racial features cannot for a moment be denied. Clearly, also the racial structures of South African society cannot be attributed to cultural or ethnic differences alone: they are deeply implicated with the forms of political and economic domination which structure the whole social formation. Moreover, there can be little argument that this is a social formation in which the capitalist mode of production is the dominant economic mode. Indeed, South Africa is the ‘exceptional’ (?) case of an industrial capitalist social formation, where race is an articulating principle of the social, political and ideological structures, and where the capitalist mode is sustained by drawing, simultaneously, on what have been defined as both ‘free’ and ‘forced’ labour. (Hall 1980: 308–309)

If the French neo-Marxist discourse of his time did not totally misguide Hall, and he was right with this observation, contrary to what Nesbitt’s brief reference to the anti-apartheid struggle suggests, South Africa’s transition from a *capitalist* apartheid state towards a *capitalist* democracy cannot be told as a simple success story. Rather, it was a compromise on the interrelatedness between racial and *economic* questions. To see it otherwise would neglect that the underlying political-economic system that had driven both South Africa’s economic miracle as well as the racial and economic subjugation of the majority of the population under apartheid has basically remained the same since the end of apartheid. Moreover, it would neglect that South Africa’s transition was a highly ambiguous process that did not go unchallenged. Instead, it was (and still is) haunted by questions of economic inequality along racial lines—not unlike the questions that motivated Du Bois in 1961 to join the Communist Party and leave the US for Ghana.

1.3.3 Es'kia Mphahlele's Genealogy of a Specific African Discourse on Exile

Before I engage deeper with these points, I want to evaluate one more example of a Black African intellectual's approach to exile. Although similarly tied to the discursive sphere of the West like Zeleza and Nesbitt's accounts, it reveals more about the African geopolitics of exile during decolonization, due to the author's origin and the time span of his biography. It not only offers a more comprehensive approach towards conceptualizing African exile in the twentieth century but also points to some important specifics of the African region from which the exiles I present in this book once departed. Es'kia Mphahlele (1919–2008) was a teacher and writer who left South Africa voluntarily together with his wife and children in 1957, after having protested against the Bantu Education Act (a segregation law) and the regime banning him from teaching. This twenty-year journey led him to Nigeria, France, Kenya, the US, Zambia and again the US, where he lived until his eventual return to South Africa—still under apartheid rule—in 1977. His exile thus entangled him with the Western part of the Cold War world, as his work for the anti-communist Congress for Cultural Freedom shows.¹⁶ That his essay-like article “Africa in exile,” published in the US journal *Daedalus*' 1982 edition *Black Africa: A Generation after Independence*, cannot be separated from his own self-imposed exile becomes obvious through his many biographical references. For instance, his stay in Nigeria from 1957 until 1961 allowed him to attend the All-African People's Conference in Ghana and experience at first hand the enthusiasm created by the first wave of African decolonization. It did not, however, prevent him from also experiencing the disillusion that rapidly followed:

Almost overnight after independence, I witnessed the tragic unfolding of the imperial theme [. . .]. News filled the air of treachery, assassination, palace rebellions, preventive detention, corrupt government, neo-colonial plots to subvert independence, public executions involving rebels, of persons being liquidated by murder as members of the parliamentary opposition, and so on. [. . .] Men I found cabinet ministers in newly independent states were exiles three years later. (Mphahlele 1982: 30)

His article poignantly recalls the political upheavals that shaped Western anthropologists' perceptions in which refugees became particularly associated with the Third World, as Malkki later observed. Mphahlele also shows how awkward it is to distinguish between exiles as individuals within larger groups of refugees. Just as Malkki, Zeleza or Hackl would argue later in their own articles, Mphahlele nevertheless links the exile closer to embodying a mental state and the refugee closer

¹⁶ On the Congress for Cultural Freedom, see e.g. Grohmann-Nogarède 2020. For a brief biographical account that focuses on Mphahlele's exile, see his entry in Bernstein (1994: 52–56).

to a legal regime (1982: 31–32). Accordingly, he conceptualizes exile rather broadly and contradictorily, stressing the perspective of a displaced subject—someone leaving a home country against his or her will:

You are a refugee today. As soon as you find asylum in a country disposed to grant it, you are an exile. Indeed, mentally you already consider yourself an exile as soon as you cross the border of your country in flight. To the extent that you are conscious of what you are fleeing from and of where you are heading to seek a place of refuge, you are an exile. (Mphahlele 1982: 32)

Mphahlele must have carefully read Tabori's *Anatomy of Exile*.¹⁷ Contrary to Goddeeris, he found it necessary to add even more variants to Tabori's already generous definition of exile (Tabori 1972: 37–38; Mphahlele 1982: 32–34). With his eighth variant, he refers to former dictators pushed into exile after having been overthrown, thus reversing the common associations of exile as a condition only progressively minded people fall victim to (as in Nesbitt's coupling of "progressive" with "exile"). Mphahlele's fourth variant probably recalls experiences that he had in Zambia in the late 1960s, when the country hosted various liberation movements, among them the South African ANC (e.g. MacMillan 2013). He writes of an uneasy relationship that exiled freedom fighters maintained with their exiled compatriots. The latter held positions such as teachers, doctors or lawyers and were hired by the host country's government in ways that impeded their full integration into it while, at the same time, the freedom fighters did stop regarding them as one of their own. This often provoked the intellectuals to resign themselves to their academic pursuits in professional spaces created by their host governments, where they came to feel socially and politically irrelevant, isolated from the freedom fighters, who often had disdain for them (Mphahlele 1982: 33).

Counterposing political to intellectual exile suggests frictions between African exiles organized within political structures (and, as in the case of the ANC, largely supported by the Soviet bloc) and those consisting of generally non-affiliated intellectuals like Mphahlele, who had studied and/or worked in Western countries. Is it possible that such frictions translated into Western scholarship on African exile neglecting those exiled in communist countries? Of course, not all freedom fighters were of socialist orientation, but Mphahlele's description somehow mirrors the imbalances within German exile studies, favoring the 1930–40s intellectual exile in the West over the politically organized exile of Communist Party members in the

17 Just as his white South African compatriot Hilda Bernstein, who would later read Tabori during her work on a collection of South African exile narratives. See Bernstein, Hilda: *Going Home*. SACC Newsletter, October 1991. A3299, Collection Name: Hilda and Rusty Bernstein Papers, 1931–2006, Historical Papers Research Archive, Johannesburg 2015.

East. Moreover, the idea of being resigned to academic pursuits mirrors a certain criticism Mphahlele raised against Western academia that he developed during his years as a migrant intellectual in the US. It partly qualifies him as one of Nesbitt's progressive exiles and recalls Nesbitt's deprecation of the postcolonial critic: Mphahlele had to learn in the US "that an academic can, if he likes, lose himself in intellectual pursuits, move only in the university community, and be insulated from the rest of the larger community out there, safe, cozy, contented" (1982: 48). He rejected such a lifestyle and, as he further writes, maintained his self-respect through "the thin thread of long-distance commitment" (ibid.) to his home country.

What is remarkable in this respect is his ambiguous stance towards the diaspora—here African-Americans in the US—which in turn distances him from Nesbitt's idea of progressive exiles. "To be actively and meaningfully involved in a people's concerns and political struggle as a genuine participant, you should feel its history," Mphahlele argues, a sentiment he felt unable to because he "could only identify intellectually and emotionally with the black American's condition" (1982: 48). Such a statement puts into question the notion of pan-African commitment and, instead, points towards the specific conditions that a Black South African who left his country because of apartheid had to deal with. Interesting in this context is that Mphahlele binds exile not only to the wish to return but also to a *conscious* unwillingness of the politically dislocated subject to fully assimilate (or integrate) into the host society, especially one where similar conditions of racism and inequality as in their home country obviously exist (1982: 46–47).

Hence, Mphahlele is less concerned with the diaspora than with Africa's mis-carried independences, as he labels it, together with the then still-ongoing apartheid as the major causes for exile such as his. In this sense, his article reminds us of what kinds of historically informed perspective became marginalized during the rise of diaspora studies and the mobility turn in the 1980s and 1990s. For instance, Malawi—nowadays an almost forgotten country in the West's perception of Africa—is frequently mentioned in his text, showing how important the struggle against the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was, given that the latter's further existence would likely have led to expanding the logic of apartheid over the whole of Southern Africa (Mphahlele 1982: 29).

Considering gender, the African exile Mphahlele describes is predominantly masculine and of age, making the heterosexual need for female companionship "an added problem that extends beyond the basic burden of exile and its political dimensions," since it "implies the acceptance [. . .] of an extragroup commitment"—one that necessarily complicates any idea of future return (Mphahlele 1982: 36). I stress this point here because my case studies are predominantly about males whose biographies mirror Mphahlele's description and almost invariably confirm the importance of romantic relationships that may convert exiles into per-

manent immigrants and secure them a residence permit. Highlighting this also helps us to be aware of the gendered dimensions of exile that Clifford has noted: “When diasporic experience is viewed in terms of displacement rather than placement, traveling rather than dwelling, and disarticulation rather than rearticulation, then the experiences of men will tend to predominate” (Clifford 1994: 313).

With these concerns in mind, what I find most interesting is how Mphahlele traces the genealogy of a specific *African discourse* on exile. As one would expect from such an attempt, it includes the Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans as an earlier form of enforced mass displacement. Here, Mphahlele speaks of a discursive repercussion of the African diaspora in the Caribbean that traveled back to continental West Africa, where it created the notion of an alienated African personality or a spiritual exile. He exemplifies this by pointing to the influence that early Haitian intellectuals had on the francophone Négritude movement, Edward Blyden’s conceptualization of an African personality, and Kwame Nkrumah’s further development of it (Mphahlele 1982: 37). Put differently, the colonial encounter with the West resulted in a spiritual exile for many Africans, due to their violent alienation from traditional values and epistemologies. However, Mphahlele points to important regional differences or limits when considering this discourse’s continental range: within the broader region of Southern Africa, given its higher percentage of white settlers and the fact that displacement of African people there was not of the same level of extremity as it was for West Africans enslaved and transported to the Americas, Africans “began to express themselves on their condition—landlessness and the total absence of political rights” but “generally would not conceive [of] the idea of alienation” (Mphahlele 1982: 40):

The sense of urgency generated by a brutal present-white rule preempted any sense of exile. To wrest power from whites, one needed formal education, political experience, and wisdom, and a relatively secure economic base—all of which are Western tools. (Mphahlele 1982: 40)

At this point, however, Mphahlele seems to underrate the Second World’s impact especially on Southern Africa. With the Soviet Union holding the West at bay, securing the emergence of China as well as of Cuba or Yugoslavia, tools formerly associated exclusively with the West—science and technology as well as economic and military power—were transformed by communism and directed against the West. Yet, at the beginning of his essay, Mphahlele does briefly note that, following Sharpeville in 1960,¹⁸ more South Africans fled the country and studied not

¹⁸ The Sharpeville massacre refers to the shooting of 69 people by the police during a protest march in South Africa.

only in the capitalist West but also in communist Russia or East Germany (1982: 30), meaning that he knew that such South–Northeast entanglements existed. Corresponding with this on the textual level, what Mphahlele describes as the regional specifics that made the West African discourse of spiritual exile less meaningful in Southern Africa were the rural exodus of young men from all around the region and the urban ghettoization provoked by industrial labor. Particularly within South African literature, Mphahlele argues that these conditions translated into a quasi-socialist discourse that replaced the more culturalist notion of spiritual exile with alienation through processes of rural–urban migration and pauperization:

The migrant labor system [. . .] drove able-bodied men into exile, where they became wanderers forever, having little or nothing to go back to after the valley had been raped. Urban ghettos swelled with workers, who were building the white man's cities and manning his industries, and became festering slums. To escape the agony of exile, these urban dwellers dug in to establish a kind of permanence in areas where they were denied a sense of place. Over the generations, the sheer struggle for survival blurred the sense of exile, the sense of being emigrants. Senghor's image of the prodigal was unheard of in South Africa.¹⁹ The literature here reflected a pastoral sense of dispossession on the one hand, and on the other, a proletarian sense of urgency and restlessness that had everything to do with subjugation sustained by the white man's political machine. (Mphahlele 1982: 41)

One might object now that this (literary) discourse is exclusive to South Africa and, therefore, meaningless to other countries within the region. Such an objection ignores, however, the historical role that South Africa played for countries that do not share a common border with it, such as Angola, Zambia, or Malawi, but do share entangled histories with it. South Africa not only siphoned off migrant workers from all around Southern and Central Africa but also the country's unique economic and military strength hampered the decolonization and development processes of the whole subcontinent. However, the point I want to make here in accord with Mphahlele's perspective is that Southern Africa's historical specifics transformed an older diasporic and West African discourse on spiritual exile into one of *bodily* exile. Fueled by the concrete effects of white settler colonialism, it echoed a European discourse on socialism which not even a moderate African intellectual like Mphahlele could ignore, although he avoids the term capitalism. Instead, he writes of “colonial exploitation, the racism of Europe, the money economy”; of “the continued dependence of Africans on their former colo-

¹⁹ Mphahlele refers here to Léopold Sédar Senghor's poem “The Return of the Prodigal Son.” Senghor, first president of Senegal and a key figure in the Francophone Négritude movement, reflects therein on his return to Senegal after a long stay in France.

nizers and the rest of the white world”; of “world powers that can impose their own terms for economic and technical aid on a governing elite in charge of a nation’s treasury”; or, finally, of “the failure of both Africa and the West to arrive at a synthesis” (Mphahlele 1982: 43).

In view of the fact that these conditions were a result of Africa’s colonial encounter with the West, it is hardly a surprise that many Africans—although it seems that Mphahlele was not one of them—perceived the Soviet Union’s emergence and subsequent consolidation as something positive. It is equally not surprising that their subsequent encounter with the Cold War’s East produced its very own variant of African exile, a variant that neither Zeleza nor Mphahlele really address but that can be understood as African exile’s most clear manifestation as a *critique of capitalism*. Nor is it surprising that, more generally, Western scholarship has neglected this exile—or has only begun to engage with it predominantly within the context of Africa’s most “European” or industrialized nation state, South Africa, as I discuss in the following sections.

1.4 Interruptions of the Economic: The Reissue of Alex La Guma’s *A Soviet Journey*

A ‘coloured’ member of the ANC as well as of the Communist Party, the South African writer Alex La Guma (1925–1985) spent most of his exile in London, before moving to socialist Cuba. Hence, quotations from his writings and speeches would have fit perfectly with Pennybacker’s article on South African exiles in London. Mphahlele (1982: 42) and Zeleza (2005: 11) both mention him, but neither addresses the spatial geographies of his exile and the strong socialist commitment it reveals. In 2017, the historian Christopher Lee took up the challenge to reconcile La Guma’s exile and communist beliefs with Western-centered epistemologies on the African diaspora and reissued one of La Guma’s lesser-known works, the propagandistic travel account *A Soviet Journey*. Originally published in 1978 within Moscow’s Progress Publishers’ book series *Impressions of the USSR*, Lee succeeded in getting the book reissued in the US within the prestigious Rowman & Littlefield’s *Critical Africana Studies* book series. The publisher’s website defines *Critical Africana Studies* as “a rubric term utilized to conceptually capture the teaching and research of a wide-range of intellectuals (both ‘academic’ and ‘organic’ intellectuals).”²⁰ In his comprehensive introduction to *A Soviet Journey*, Lee conceptualizes La Guma precisely as such: “La Guma was an organic intellectual in the Gramscian sense of having

20 https://rowman.com/Action/SERIES/_/AFS/Critical-Africana-Studies# (accessed 2 October 2023).

emerged from a working class milieu—unlike other activists, such as Fanon or Guevara who were middle class in background” (Lee 2017: 42). According to Lee, *A Soviet Journey* stands out for several reasons: first, considering memoirs of the Soviet Union, “there is no other memoir of comparable length or depth by an African writer, particularly of La Guma’s stature” (Lee 2017: 4).²¹ Second, based primarily on an organized journey that La Guma undertook in 1975, *A Soviet Journey* further relies on several other trips to the Soviet Union that he had undertaken at earlier dates; it thus comes most closely to acting as La Guma’s unwritten autobiography (Lee 2017: 3), especially because, unlike his fictional works on South Africa under apartheid, it is tied on a deeper level to his life in exile.

Lee’s introduction is one of the most elaborate attempts within Western academic discourse to come to terms with an African exile that at least partially unfolded in the socialist world, as well as with an African worldview that took an exclusively *affirmative* stance towards the Soviet Union. Lee does not explicitly point to the mobility turn and diaspora studies or postmodernism and postcolonialism as having facilitated certain forms of dehistoricization which, I think, also played a role in sidelining figures like La Guma. However, by arguing that *A Soviet Journey* “provides an ‘epistemic displacement’ apart from both the conventions of Western Marxism and the black radical tradition as typically understood” (Lee 2017: 5), Lee equally points to an implicit Western bias in such works as Gilroy’s *Black Atlantic* or Cedric J. Robinson’s *Black Marxism* (2000) and Reiland Rabaka’s *Africana Critical Theory* (2009), the latter two books being hardly known in Germany.²² How, then, does Lee address La Guma’s exile and communist beliefs within the context of the underlying *political-economic* discourse of (Soviet) communism as an *African* tool against Western colonialism and apartheid? The implications here for my own research should be obvious, as Lee’s framing of La Guma’s exile and political commitment may be helpful in understanding African exile in the GDR as well. This is all the more true since the younger of Alex and his wife Blanche La Guma’s two sons moved from British exile to the GDR in 1979, studied there, married an East German and still lives in (East) Germany, while the older son studied in the Soviet Union and later returned to South Africa.²³ Another important link between Alex La Guma and East Germany is that several of his fictional works first appeared through *Seven Seas Publishers*, the English-language series of the GDR’s book publishing house *Volk und Welt*; the series was

21 On the Soviet Union’s ambiguous stance towards the more far-ranging presence of people of African descent in Abkhazia, see Fikes/Lemon 2002.

22 Cedric J. Robinson’s *Black Marxism: the Making of the Black Radical Tradition* was first published in 1983.

23 For a biography of Alex la Guma’s wife, Blanche La Guma, see La Guma/Klammer 2011.

edited by Gertrude Heym, the wife of the Jewish writer and remigrant (or former exile) Stefan Heym. Nevertheless, as addressed in the following paragraph, there are certainly some limitations to too closely analogizing La Guma's exile with those of the African exiles I discuss in the present study.

La Guma qualifies in a particular way to bring Africa's entanglement with the Second World to the attention of those in the anglophone Western humanities. Labeled by the apartheid regime as 'coloured', La Guma was partly of British descent, which enabled La Guma and his family to relatively easily join ANC exiles in London, from which he departed for his various excursions into the Eastern bloc and to his final exile in Cuba. This is not to say that the family did not go through many hardships, but due to La Guma and his father's prominence within international communism and the ANC's networks—Alex La Guma's father was the 'coloured' South African communist Jimmy La Guma (1894–1961)²⁴—the La Guma family enjoyed certain privileges, compared to more ordinary members of the ANC. For instance, Bartolomew La Guma, the younger son who was exiled in the GDR, told me that he and his brother received their scholarships to study in the Eastern bloc with relative ease.²⁵ Such privileges at least partly put into question an uncritical conceptualization of La Guma as an organic intellectual. Moreover, even though Cuba was (or still is) a state-socialist country, the island's geographical embedment in the Caribbean, together with La Guma's former exile in Great Britain, makes of it a setting still close to the concerns of Gilroy's *Black Atlantic*. Meanwhile, biographer Roger Field argues that La Guma's familiarity with Western culture made him a cultural broker who could perfectly address eastern as well as western audiences. Field exemplifies this perspective by drawing on La Guma's speech *Culture and Liberation*, arguing that La Guma strategically used Amilcar Cabral's²⁶ thoughts therein:

24 In 1927, Jimmy La Guma attended the International Congress against Imperialism and Colonialism in Brussels and traveled through the Weimar Republic and the Soviet Union, where he influenced the Comintern's Native Republic Thesis. Alex la Guma wrote a biography of his father in which he also thematized the latter's visit to the Weimar Republic, organized by German communists: "[Jimmy] La Guma addressed several meetings in Germany surprising his audiences by speaking to them in their own language which he had learned in South West Africa. In later years, it was always his regret that he was not able to revisit Germany, particularly after the Socialist victory in the Eastern section" (1997: 34). On La Guma's participation in the congress in Brussels, see Weiss 2014: 83; on the Native Republic Thesis, which basically defined South Africa as a colonially oppressed "Native's Republic," with the peasantry as the strongest revolutionary force, see Adi 2013: 72–76. For a brief German account of the La Guma family's ties with Germany, see Pampuch 2018a: 339–340.

25 Conversation between Bartolomew La Guma and the author, Berlin, 14 September 2015.

26 Amilcar Cabral was an independence leader from Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde.

La Guma, through Cabral, (following Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto) acknowledged that capitalism had increased exploitation and misery, contracted the world geographically, but expanded it intellectually. [. . .] Cabral offered perspectives and formulations that kept the reductionism and dogma of Soviet Marxism [. . .] at a distance. In the version he presented to a Dutch audience, La Guma does not offer his support for the Soviet Union. Though the audience was progressive and aware of capitalism's and imperialism's contradictory legacy, he avoids the risks associated with the *Communist Manifesto* or *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Cabral's version of the same arguments brings them closer to a politically vaguer, more romantic and theoretically complex expression of insurgent nationalism [. . .] a language far more attuned to the discourse of solidarity work in advanced capitalist societies than Marxism-Leninism [. . .] could offer. (Field 2010: 202–203)

In *A Soviet Journey*, La Guma does not appear to care much about offending Western sensitivities. Instead, he unequivocally praises the Soviet Union and writes in the best Marxist-Leninist rhetoric that the “capitalist system, disguised under the gaudy neonlit mask of ‘the free world’, ‘the great society’, ‘Western civilisation’, increasingly reveals its inability to free man from national oppression, racism, to remove antagonism, hatred and distrust between nations from the life of its society” (La Guma 1978: 230). Lee contextualizes such a clearly propagandistic work basically through historicization. Three of his arguments are of particular relevance here. First, Lee counters the popular image of Mandela's release from prison in 1990 with the assassination of Mandela's comrade Chris Hani in 1993. Having returned to South Africa from a decade-long exile, Hani, like Mandela a Black South African, was heading the SACP when a Polish emigrant assassinated him with the help of a white South African politician. Lee does not discuss whether Hani's assassination by an anti-communist Polish emigrant could be linked back to state-socialist Europe by revealing a hidden side of opposition movements like *Solidarność*: the merging of anti-communism with racism that preceded the racist outbursts set in motion once the collapse of the Soviet bloc became clear in 1989 (Betts et al. 2019: 179; Christiaens/Goddeeris 2019: 305–306).²⁷ For Lee, Hani's assassination symbolizes the very limits of South Africa's transi-

²⁷ That opposition movements in state-socialist countries included right-wing extremist streams is a line of argument which has been taken up only recently within the German debate on its socialist past. However, unlike the authors quoted above, Enrico Heitzer (2018) does not link right-wing tendencies in the GDR's opposition movements to the socialist state's solidarity politics, thereby revealing once more a certain methodological nationalism still characteristic for the German debate. By analyzing a science hoax involving the Hannah Arendt Institute for Totalitarianism Studies in Dresden and Human-Animal Studies, Heitzer wrote a brilliant reflection on the strange paths that anti-communist thinking can take in German post-reunification scholarship (2018b).

tion process—we cannot understand the country’s relatively peaceful transition without taking into account the pressure put upon the ANC by the white South African elites and the mediating Western powers to renounce any intentions to restructure the South African economy along socialist lines (Lee 2017: 1–2). Lee further claims that, beside acting as another sign of the Cold War’s end, “the passing of Chris Hani can also be read as the death of a specific political imagination—a radical internationalism, African born and based, which informed the anti-apartheid struggle” (2017: 2). In this sense, he proposes to speak of the type of exile La Guma experienced as a “fugitive cosmopolitanism [. . .] defined by enforced political exile” (Lee 2017: 4). It was a radical internationalism tied to the Second World that was in no way exclusive to South Africa, as Lee’s account somehow paradoxically suggests, but—if we look only at this broader region—rather characteristic for the whole of Southern Africa.

Second, Lee asks why La Guma was silent about the authoritarian sides of the Soviet Union or, with regard to Central Asia, its quasi-colonial (or imperial) character. Where Zeleza would probably point to Adesanmi’s concept of exceptional discourses of oppression, Lee answers this question rather evasively by arguing that “La Guma was a committed communist, an appreciative guest, and, ultimately, not writing for a twenty-first century audience” (2017: 39). More convincing, perhaps, is his subsequent argument, in which he suggests a change of perspective, saying that La Guma “was, first and foremost, addressing the problem of the future world as defined by the South African liberation struggle and the politics of the Cold War” (Lee 2017: 39–40). According to this logic, overall it is the West’s inherent racism, and apartheid South Africa as one of its most enduring outcomes, that motivated a rather uncritical or affirmative African stance towards the Soviet Union.

Third, and connected to the previous point, Lee historicizes *A Soviet journey* by comparing it with earlier accounts of travel to the Soviet Union written by Black intellectuals. African-American writer Langston Hughes’ memoir *I Wonder as I Wander*, from 1956, is particularly striking here. Therein, Hughes describes how he met the Hungarian Jew Arthur Koestler in Soviet Central Asia in the early 1930s and how differently they looked at this part of the Soviet Union. Koestler later turned into one of the most pronounced apostates of the Communist Party and severe critics of the Soviet Union. Hughes, in turn, explains his much more favorable view of the Soviet Union in general and its politics in Central Asia in particular through his Blackness and the anti-racist politics that, in his eyes, the Soviets successfully applied there: “Koestler had never lived as a Negro

anywhere [. . .] Even with eternal grime and continued famines, racial freedom was sweeter than the lack of it” (Hughes 1993: 211).²⁸

Such accounts challenge the dominant reading of another white European’s travel account that also resonates within German exile studies: Andre Gide’s *Retour de l’U.R.S.S.* Published in 1936, this memoir painted a disillusioning picture of the Stalinist Soviet Union. During a recent conference on travel accounts regarding the Soviet Union written by exiles as well as non-exiles, historian Michael David-Fox explained Gide’s criticism of the Soviet Union as being based upon his prior anticolonial travel experiences, meaning that Gide’s earlier excursions through colonial Africa sharpened his critical perception of the Soviet Union (Greinert 2017: 16).²⁹ Even though it might be true that Gide likened European colonial rule in Africa to communist rule in the Soviet Union and that he came to the same critical conclusions by comparing them, accounts like those of Hughes or La Guma demonstrate that Black intellectuals could perceive the Soviet empire in a much more favorable and indulgent way, even during the worst moments of its Stalinist period. This was so because, contrary to whites like Koestler or Gide, they knew the West’s treatment of Blacks and PoC first hand.³⁰ Hence, previous experience of Western colonialism and racism obviously had an impact on how fellow travelers perceived the Soviet Union; but it could make a difference whether these travelers were Black or white, and if—as it was the case with La Guma—these travelers were members of African exile movements or not. This brings me to the African exile in the GDR.

1.5 African Exile in the German Democratic Republic: The Case of South Africa

As I have already indicated, Western academia has only recently started to more deeply examine Africa’s multiple entanglements with the Second World,³¹ crucial components of which emerged during the liberation struggles in the continent’s southern regions. Considering its overall dimensions, the first point to make here

²⁸ In 1954, Koestler published his own memoir – *The Invisible Writing* – in which he describes how he met with Hughes (1969: 137ff.). For an analysis of Hughes’ encounter with Koestler, see Moore 1996. For an analysis of orientalist views in the writings of Koestler, Hannah Arendt and George Orwell, see also Pietz 1988.

²⁹ Gide’s homosexuality is often mentioned as an additional reason for his criticism against the Soviet Union, given the latter’s homophobic tendencies.

³⁰ This is not to say that there are no critical accounts by Blacks or PoC at all; but there are also many more positive accounts (Lee 2017: 12–17).

³¹ I discuss selected examples of this literature within the context of my case studies. For an influential anglophone work in historical science, see Westad 2008: 207–249.

concerns the general exilic conditions of the liberation struggles in the south and the overwhelming importance of *African* host countries. Countries that achieved their independence relatively early and adopted pan-African politics, such as Tanzania (1960) or Zambia (1964), became refuges and hubs for exiled liberation movements from other parts of the region which were still struggling against white oppression, such as South Africa or today's Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Angola. While the South African exile has by far received the greatest amount of scholarly attention, host countries from the Eastern bloc still remain marginalized therein, as Pennybacker's contribution again demonstrates. There is still a lack of detailed studies on, for example, the extent of African exile in the Second World. Moreover, contrary to its Western counterparts like Great Britain, France or the US, Eastern bloc countries tend to be depicted rather as *transitory spaces* in which members of exiled liberation movements spent only a limited period of their exile. That Africans could live in exile in Eastern bloc countries for decades or even finally end up staying there instead of returning to their home countries is even sidelined in such an inspiring text as Marcia Schenck's research note on the "Black East" (2018).

Until recently, there were only two German monographs on exile in the GDR: one about Greek (Panoussi 2017) and another about Chilean exiles (Koch 2016).³² Its African manifestation, in contrast, with the exception of the Namibian children—a particular group which I do not address here—had raised only very little interest.³³ This is quite remarkable, since a German reference work that compares the African politics of the two Germanies already pointed in the late 1990s towards the political and ideological significance that the GDR attached particularly to Southern Africa and its support of liberation movements there (Engel/Schleicher 1998: 108–138 & 406–410). It is even more striking if the anti-apartheid struggle's prominent place within the West's imaginary, on the one hand, and the FRG's close ties with the apartheid regime on the other, are taken into account, and when we additionally think about all the public and scholarly debates about a specifically East German racism since the 1990s. To better understand this, it may be useful to more closely examine some of the already-existing German scholarship and literature on this particular subject.

³² For the exile of the Turkish Communist Party in the GDR, see Tügel 2014 and Karci 2020.

³³ The GDR's practice of hosting several hundred Namibian children and educating them within specific facilities has resulted in several monographs and edited volumes (e.g. Krause 2009; Schuch 2013; Kenna 1999).

1.5.1 The German-diasporic Approach: May Ayim and Yoliswa Ngidi

A testimony to early intellectual awareness after German reunification that there must have existed a South African exile community in the GDR is the life story of Yoliswa Ngidi. Ngidi had fled South Africa in 1977 and come to the GDR as a member of the ANC in 1986 via Swaziland (today Eswatini), Mozambique and Tanzania. She died in 1993, at the age of 33, in Berlin while suffering from HIV. The same year, May Ayim, a pioneering voice within Black feminist literature in Germany, wrote down and translated Ngidi's life story for an edited volume on intersectional approaches to racism, antisemitism and class-oppression (Nombuso 1993).³⁴ Published under Ngidi's pseudonym, Sithebe Nombuso, its title *East or West Germany, that's not a big difference for me* (own translation) picks up one of Ngidi's statements within the text. Her account narrates how she came to the GDR for vocational training as a radiographer and, thus, confirms Tague and Pennybacker's suggestions regarding African exile in Eastern bloc countries as a means for educational and social advancement. Nevertheless, it also speaks of initial difficulties for Ngidi and her comrades in coming to terms with strict rules in the residential houses. The same goes for befriending members of the state-organized *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (FDJ) or mingling with their white East German peers in general. Ngidi describes the latter as lacking political consciousness, exhibiting difficulties in expressing themselves freely on political issues, due to an atmosphere of insecurity and distrust. It was up to Africans like Ngidi to sensitize them for their use of racist language (such as the n-word). Ngidi further notes "a certain contradiction" between official solidarity campaigns in the GDR, such as collecting considerable amounts of money to support an ANC camp in Tanzania, and "the simultaneous lack of knowledge and empathy for the situation of Blacks in the GDR" (Nombuso 1993: 227, own translation). She further problematizes interactions with churches, noting that their members mistrusted ANC members as necessarily being communists and non-religious. But her narrative also contains explicitly positive memories of the GDR: "The conflicts lessened after time," she writes about the African students and her German peers, "later we even had a lot of fun together" (ibid., own translation).

³⁴ May Ayim's famous collection of poetry *Blues in Schwarz-Weiß* (Blues in Black and White) includes a poem titled "*im exil und hiv positiv*" (in exile and hiv positive) that was written in memory of Ngidi (2005: 95–97 & 134). Ayim, who is said to have suffered multiple sclerosis herself, reflects here on Ngidi's untimely death in a way that entangles exile with illness and can, thus, be seen as another metaphorical expression of the "journey" or "exile myth" of illness, as proposed by Hawkins (1999: 79–81). The poem reveals nothing about Ngidi's exile in the GDR, however, which is only mentioned in a brief biographical remark at the end of the collection.

Ngidi's account reveals that a combination of the individual's current situation, the interactive situation, and the questioner's interests always influence how a life story is told. In her case, the difficult living conditions she faced following the GDR's demise superimpose her life story, which stands as an early testimony of the violent racism and the logics of exclusion many Blacks and PoC had to confront in the aftermath of German reunification. For instance, Ngidi talks about a racist attack against a Black comrade in East Berlin and the new German administration's attempt to get rid of as many foreigners from the former GDR as possible. For Africans like Ngidi, one could conclude from her account that German reunification must have meant the rupturing of a life in exile that had developed relatively positively hitherto, followed by sudden insecurity and worsening of living conditions, while the political situation in the country of origin and a foreseeable return were still unclear. Confronted instead with the harassment of the new German administration, Ngidi recounts how she abandoned her training as a radiographer and moved from Dresden to Berlin, where she found support and new vocational training via self-organized migrant groups. She further explains that "Germany, fortunately, is not only a terrible country" (Nombuso 1993: 231, own translation) and that she had also had many positive experiences in Berlin.

Ngidi's account appeared in the year of her death in a non-mainstream, activist-based publication from (West) Germany's leftist-feminist and Black/PoC circles that she must have come into contact with after her move to Berlin. The section of the volume with Ngidi's story further includes an essay by Ayim as well as two poems—one by a Black German who was born in the GDR, another one by the African-American intellectual Audre Lorde. The significance which the latter's stay in the West Berlin of the 1980s had for the development of a politically conscious Black German movement can hardly be overestimated.³⁵ Notable here is that one of the earliest manifestations of African exiles in the GDR which I could find had articulated itself, in the reunified Germany, within a *Black German discourse* created mostly by German-born Blacks, such as Ayim who, in turn, were inspired by the African-American Lorde and in search of a broader history. In the words of Nicola Lauré al-Samarai, this discourse's development could be described as "a public space that renders a constantly mutating multivocal Black presentness (*Gegenwärtigkeit*) representable" (2016: 57) and that (re)connects "the multitude of dispossessed Black German spatiotemporal experiences with other Black time-spaces"

35 For the impact which Audre Lorde had on the black German community, see the documentary *Audre Lorde – The Berlin Years 1984 to 1992*, director: Dagmar Schulz, Germany 2012.

(2016: 57).³⁶ Within such a polyphonic space, Ngidi's story brought Southern Africa's entanglements with the Second World into an otherwise Western-centered, diasporic discourse and became interwoven with the biographies of German-born children having at least one Black parent. Here, *Blackness* and *Germany* are the central features that further superimpose themselves upon the historical particularity which distinguishes Ngidi's story from the majority of other Blacks in reunified Germany. In the process, the entanglements between the GDR and one of Southern Africa's most well-known liberation movements, as well as exile's *political* meaning, lose their significance, as both become just another means through which the Black German experience emerges. Ngidi's relationship with her home country—a crucial aspect within conceptualizations of exile—as well as the GDR's commitment to Southern Africa's decolonization both pale in comparison with her situatedness within a broader diasporic community whose center lies in the West.

1.5.2 The Affirmative-political Approach: Eric Singh, the Publication of *Sechaba*, and Rereading Wallerstein and Balibar's *Race, Nation, Class* in Reunified Germany

In 1994, another article authored by an exiled ANC member appeared, this time in a similarly non-mainstream but decidedly *East German* publication. Edited by Ulrich van der Heyden and Ilona and Hans-Georg Schleicher, three white East Germans who had all been engaged with the GDR's Africa politics—the first one as a scholar, the latter two as a diplomat couple—its subject was the entanglements between the GDR and Africa. The volume includes an article authored by Eric Singh, titled “Sechaba: An ANC journal printed in the GDR” (own translation). The volume's list of contributors presents Singh as follows:

A textile worker and trade unionist born in 1932 in Durban, South Africa; member of the ANC and the Natal Indian Congress; banishment, imprisonment and flight from South Africa; from 1968–1979 involved in the publishing of *Sechaba* in East Berlin, working within the ANC's section for information and propaganda; currently free-lance journalist in Berlin. (Schleicher/Schleicher/van der Heyden 1994: 295, own translation)

Singh, of whose marriage with an East German woman since 1981 the volume did not inform, never remigrated to South Africa. Instead, he died in Berlin in 2014.³⁷ What interests me here is that the volume presented him as an Indian South African

³⁶ First published in German (al-Samarai 2005).

³⁷ For a brief biographical account that I wrote about Singh after interviewing him in 2011, see Pampuch 2013b.

activist who, after having been banished and imprisoned, fled the country, came to the GDR via ANC networks, and continued to live in Germany when the book was published. As in the case of Ngidi's life story, the author's information for Singh links South Africans who lived in the GDR to (political) exile. In contrast to Ngidi, however, Singh represents an older generation of exiles who had spent a good part of their life in the GDR. Furthermore, if we compare Ngidi's full account with his article, Singh, a professional journalist, seems to write from a very different subject position; far from any expression of existential struggle or fear, such as in Ngidi's account, his concluding section even expresses a kind of self-complacency.

Singh emphasizes the importance *Sechaba* played for the ANC to counteract, as he writes, the apartheid regime's media propaganda within Western countries (1994: 132–133). He counters criticism raised against the GDR after 1990 but similarly highlights West Berlin's anti-apartheid movement's support for *Sechaba* (Singh 1994: 135). First published in 1967, *Sechaba* was discontinued in October 1990, the same month when the GDR officially joined the FRG, with its last volume appearing in London in December of the same year. Singh quotes from the final editorial, which expressed gratefulness for the GDR's support; this volume of *Sechaba* further had a picture of the opening of the ANC's mission in East Berlin in 1978 on its front cover. Beside giving a summary of *Sechaba's* history, beginning with the suppression of progressive publications within South Africa and the offer the GDR's solidarity committee made to the ANC at the Tricontinental Conference in Havana 1966 to help print *Sechaba*, Singh explicitly thematizes South Africa's Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 as one of the apartheid regime's practices to suppress any form of serious opposition (1994: 130–132).³⁸ Hence, not unlike Pennybacker's contribution, his article puts the ANC's exile and struggle in an affirmative relationship to the Second World—only it did so more than two decades earlier, under the authorship of a former exile, and in German.

Singh concludes his article by quoting from a letter which the renowned white sociologist Heribert Adam had written in 1991 to a South African magazine, on the occasion of *Sechaba's* final volume.³⁹ In his letter, Adam had expressed his incomprehension about *Sechaba's* final editorial, arguing that it falsely lamented the demise of the GDR, an “embarrassing socialist system” (Adam, as quoted in Singh 1994: 138). In Adam's eyes, the latter had fortunately been overthrown by

³⁸ The Tricontinental was a Cuban conference which led to the foundation of the Organization of Solidarity of the People of Asia, Africa & Latin America (OSPAAAL) as well as to the influential leftist journal *Tricontinental*.

³⁹ The German-Canadian Heribert Adam was a former PhD student of Adorno at the Frankfurt School (Institute for Social Research); he published several books on South Africa and is professor emeritus at a Canadian university.

its formerly oppressed people. To claim that East German workers voluntarily printed *Sechaba*, as the journal's editorial did, would distort the truth, since the printing press was controlled by the Stasi and the workers were not free in their decision. Singh comments on these accusations as follows:

It cannot be my task here to judge about the GDR's mistakes and shortcomings. Admittedly, there must have been many of them. [. . .] But it does not change the fact that millions of people worldwide—among them the South African people—are grateful that the GDR and their many helpful people existed. (Singh 1994: 138)

Singh further stresses his point by mentioning one of the East German graphic designers who worked in the printing press by his full name, adding that without such worker's engagement *Sechaba's* printing could often not have been finished in time.⁴⁰ Moreover, he rightfully marks Adam's view as exemplary of what the vast majority of white Western intellectuals thought (and arguably still tend to think) about Eastern bloc countries in this respect, views that are characterized more by an implicit anti-communism and disinformation than by a real knowledge of how state-socialist societies actually functioned. Singh was a PoC who had lived for two decades in the GDR and had experienced German reunification at first hand. He knew the FRG's gestures of superiority that accompanied the GDR's demise just as he knew the FRG's close historical ties with the apartheid regime. Hence, in the context of the 1990s and the violent racism that was of particular intensity in East Germany, his insider view, however biased it actually was, was a true challenge to German academia. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that it ever found a considerable reception among West German scholars who worked on the GDR at that time or among scholars who have worked on racism and migration since.

A case in point for this gap is the German publication *Race, Nation, Class: Re-reading a Dialogue for Our Times* (Bojadžijev/Klingan 2018), which discusses the impact of Immanuel Wallerstein and Etienne Balibar's influential work *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (1991). The latter includes a chapter by Wallerstein that takes a debate from a *Sechaba* volume from 1984 between ANC members on the

⁴⁰ Singh's tribute to an ordinary East German worker to highlight the GDR's solidarity work's sincerity anticipated the Finish artist Laura Horelli's exhibition *Namibia Today* in 2017 in Berlin; its subject was the Namibian liberation movement SWAPO's journal of the same name, which was printed in the GDR as well. Among the invited guests of the exhibition's inauguration in one of (East) Berlin's subway stations was not only the Namibian ambassador but also Thomas Lendrich, a former worker of the Gera printing press in Thuringia, once responsible for the journal's printing. He was obviously positively affected by the late recognition that his work received in reunified Germany. <https://archiv.ngbk.de/projekte/kunst-im-untergrund-201617-mitte-der-pampa/> and <http://laurahorelli.com/namibia-today/> (accessed 2 October 2023).

South African category ‘coloureds’ as a starting point to reflect on racialized national identities (1991: 71–85; first published as Wallerstein 1987). Wallerstein was most likely unaware of the exilic setting of this debate, as he neither mentions where *Sechaba* was printed nor that one of the discussants, Arnold Selby—a white South African to whom I return below—was living in exile in the GDR (another discussant was Alex La Guma). Tellingly with regard to Germany’s post-reunification discourse, however, more than three decades after this debate took place, the German authors of *Race, Nation, Class: Rereading a Dialogue for Our Times* seem to be equally unaware of this fact. Hence, in an otherwise excellent chapter on the German reception of Wallerstein and Balibar’s work, the West German migration researcher Mark Terkessidis (2018) misses the chance to evoke the GDR also as an emancipatory space that enabled a debate among exiled South Africans which Wallerstein later drew inspiration from. Whereas Singh’s article provides us with a completely different perspective on how to contextualize Wallerstein and Balibar’s work within the context of a reunified Germany, Terkessidis can evoke the GDR only negatively as a postsocialist German space in which labor migrants and refugees fell victim to racist attacks during the reunification period (2018: 211).

Although the actual topic of Singh’s article was *Sechaba*’s history and its printing in the GDR, he drew early attention to the GDR’s broader commitment to the ANC’s struggle and, thus, to a state-socialist country’s positioning in what arguably was the most notorious struggle against white settler colonialism and racial capitalism in the twentieth century.⁴¹ And he did so from a South African exile’s perspective. Although including some criticism against the GDR, as his above-quoted argument reveals, Singh, through his focus on the GDR’s concrete material support, painted a much more positive picture of the GDR than Ngidi. Notwithstanding these differences, both Ngidi and Singh’s texts were early opportunities for German researchers to take note of this subject and investigate it more comprehensively. Given that both texts were authored by exiles, they were also chances to notice the *continuing presence* of such Africans within reunified Germany. Why not research their experiences and consult more of them to enrich scholarly investigations with personal testimonies? For years to come, German academia would miss this chance, a fact that is even more difficult to comprehend if the growing interest in Postcolonial Studies, beginning in the 2000s, is

41 For the South African genealogy of the term “racial capitalism,” coined by white authors Martin Legassick and David Hemson, see Hudson 2018; for its elaboration by the African-American Cedric J. Robinson (2000), see Kelley 2017 (both articles have also been published in print in the *Boston Review*: a political and literary forum, Forum I, Winter 2017: *Race Capitalism Justice*, edited by Deborah Chasman & Joshua Cohen).

taken into account.⁴² To better understand this neglect, I first provide another example from popular literature before discussing a pioneering article from German historiography that does include the South African exile in the GDR.

1.5.3 The Critical-literary Approach: Jana Simon and the Story of Felix S.

For anyone familiar with the right-wing extremism of the *Nachwendezeit*, entangling South African exiles in an affirmative way with East Berlin's infamous hooligan scene of the *Wendezeit*⁴³ must sound rather odd. Yet, Jana Simon (2011), a white East German author and journalist, took up this task in 2002 by publishing a haunting account of her childhood sweetheart Felix S.⁴⁴ Born in 1970 in East Berlin as the son of a white East German father and a 'coloured' South African mother, he belonged to the relatively small group of GDR citizens who were Black or PoC. His mother had been brought to East Germany as a child by his grandmother—an exiled South African—in 1961. Together with her second husband, an exiled white SACP member (and not her daughter's father), the grandmother and her husband took charge of Felix from the late 1980s on. Simon's narrative develops around its central figure: Felix became a successful kick-boxer, bouncer, and prominent figure within East Berlin's hooligan scene until he was charged with drug trafficking and taken into custody, committing suicide in prison in 2000. In a strangely contradictory combination, his life tragically brings together East German society's integrating *and* exclusionary logics with regard to its Black and PoC citizens.⁴⁵

Simon, however, was aware of the significance and innovative nature of her book's wider subject—the South African exile in the GDR. Touching on the difficult story of Felix' mother only in passing, she dedicated almost sixty pages of her book to the life of Felix' grandparents and conducted long interviews with the couple during the research for her book. These discussions revealed the story of a 'biracial'

⁴² Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* appeared in 2000 in German translation.

⁴³ *Wendezeit* (The turn) is a German neologism to describe the period in which the German reunification took place. Correspondingly, *Nachwendezeit* means the post-reunification period.

⁴⁴ Throughout the whole book, Simon uses only the initial of the family name. The book's 2011 edition, however, contains information that the forenames of Felix and his grandparents are real (Simon 2011: 253).

⁴⁵ Felix' commitment to martial arts and readiness for physical confrontations recalls Nicola Lauré al-Samarai's observation of an autobiography written by André Baganz (1993), another Black male who was born in the GDR. According to Lauré al-Samarai, "only physical assertiveness and being physically prepared to fight remained as a strategy in his isolation to defend his threatened everyday world" (2004: 204, own translation).

South African couple—a ‘coloured’ named Jeannette and a white named Arnold—who fled South Africa in the aftermath of the Sharpeville massacre and came to the GDR via the SACP’s networks but on separate paths: Arnold via Ghana and Jeannette—together with her daughter from an earlier partnership—via London. Simon claims that the three were the first South African refugees in the GDR (2011: 159) and uses their life story to illustrate the complexity of Felix’ familial background and, further, explain his later problems. For Simon, exile occurred to Jeannette and Arnold like a natural force, quickly and irreversibly (2011: 155). Although Simon’s focus lies more on the couple’s earlier life in South Africa and their flight and migration to the GDR in 1961, with Ghana and London as temporary destinations, she also dedicates several pages to their life in the GDR.

The couple spent their first three years at the trade union college Fritz Heckert near Berlin, after which Jeannette was not allowed to study, as neither the GDR nor the ANC supported her wish to do so.⁴⁶ She explains this outcome by citing the official version regarding her quasi-“bourgeois” family background as well as pointing towards the ANC’s favoritism when it came to awarding scholarships from host countries to its members. Later, she lost a job as a translator for foreign visitors because she was unwilling to maintain her contact with the latter on a merely professional level, as GDR authorities demanded her to do. Arnold, in turn, was employed by the English section of the GDR’s international broadcast station, *Radio Berlin International* (RBI), and worked there until his retirement.⁴⁷ He also became a prominent long-distance runner, as well.

Hence, Simon highlights the grandparents’ difficult integration into their East German host society. Although she does not thematize it explicitly, her account suggests that race mattered: Arnold’s integration seems to have been easier than the integration of his ‘coloured’ wife. By transcending their individual biographies, however, Simon points to the significance which their exile in the GDR played for the ANC. The reader learns that high ranking members such as Oliver Tambo, Joe Slovo, or Thabo Mbeki visited the grandparents in their apartment in Berlin-Schöneweide, an Eastern district which would turn into a no-go area for Blacks and PoC in the 1990s. Further, the grandparents also served as contact persons for the increasing number of younger Umkontho we Sizwe members who

⁴⁶ On African trade unionists at the GDR’s *Fritz-Heckert Gewerkschaftshochschule*, see Harisch 2018 & Angermann 2018; the latter work mentions Felix’ grandfather, Arnold Selby, on p. 35.

⁴⁷ Among RBI’s staff must have been several migrants from all around the world. For a Chilean exile who worked there, see Trigo 2010; for a white former US soldier who defected to the Eastern bloc in the 1950s and worked at RBI for a while, see Grossman 2003. On the reception of RBI in India, see Bajpai 2021.

entered the GDR in small groups after the Soweto uprising in 1976.⁴⁸ At one point, Simon writes that more than a hundred South African exiles lived in the GDR (2011: 210).

Just like Ngidi's account and Singh's article, Simon's book reveals that some of these exiles continued to live in Germany after 1990—in the grandparent's case, at least until the early 2000s. The picture that Simon paints of the GDR's solidarity politics towards South Africa differs from Tague's or Pennybacker's invocations of the African exile in the Eastern bloc as well as from Singh's article or even Ngidi's more ambiguous account. Where the latter is overshadowed by the difficulties that Ngidi faced after German reunification, Simon's account of the grandparent's life is eclipsed by Felix' suicide—there is no real chance for a positive outlook or assessment. Moreover, being a work of popular literature, Simon's book partly reads like an attempt at atonement for a lost friend whose suicide she had been unable to foresee. It thus can be seen as Simon's attempt to understand, retrospectively, the deeper causes of Felix' alienation. Against such a personal backdrop, it is hardly surprising that Simon's views on GDR politics is critical. The problems Felix had as a PoC in the GDR, such as the society's inherent racism, strengthen Simon's underlying skepticism with regard to the sincerity of the administration's official solidarity politics. Simon's own subject position, however, becomes relevant beyond her private relationship with Felix: it helps to understand a certain perspective which a number of East Germans of Felix and Simon's generation have adopted on the GDR.

The book's 2011 blurb describes Felix as a 'coloured' (*Farbiger*) but lacks any information regarding his mother's South African origin. Instead, it announces "the extreme life of a *Wendekind*." The latter is a term used to describe a generation of East Germans who experienced the reunification as teenagers, a description which not only fits Felix but also Simon as the one who narrates and appears in the former's life story. She describes the East Berlin of the late 1980s—the years of Felix as well as of her own coming of age—as a melancholic place. Simon's GDR of that time is a place of no future, in which the disillusioned grandchildren of revolutionaries had turned into goths filled with *weltschmerz*, death wishes, and sarcasm (2011: 35). How to approach such a country's past in an uncritical or positive way? In Simon's words, the grandfather's life story is that of a white South African worker's child who achieved social advancement thanks to his membership in the South African Communist Party and who allied with the

⁴⁸ The Soweto uprising was a series of mass demonstrations, starting with protests by Black students against the introduction of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in schools. The protests were violently suppressed and left several hundred protesters killed by security forces.

Blacks to destroy the supremacy of his own racial group. It seems to her “like a parable from a GDR school lesson in civics” that she, as a schoolgirl, “would have read only absent-mindedly and boredly, like a mere piece of propaganda” (Simon 2011: 125–126 & 128, own translation); on another page, she writes that not even Felix really listened to his grandparents’ story or that he maybe never really wanted to hear about it (Simon 2011: 54). The country which forced the grandparents into exile—apartheid South Africa—is a land of spies, “like all regimes that see themselves surrounded by internal and external enemies” (Simon 2011: 57, own translation)—the latter undoubtedly a reference to the grandparents and Felix’ mother’s host country, the GDR.⁴⁹ Simon wrote this in 2002. A grandchild of Christa Wolf, one of the GDR’s most politically outspoken authors, Simon evidently became fully aware of her country’s solidarity politics—here, the commitment for the anti-apartheid struggle—only during her research for the book. But, even then, she had problems to accept it as a *positive feature* of the lost country she had once lived in. This reveals, to my mind, as much about a socialist society’s inner logics and intergenerational conflicts as it reveals about a capitalist society’s difficulty in coming to terms with its partially socialist past. This brings me to a pioneering article from Germany’s post-1990 historiography.

1.5.4 The Historical-critical Approach: Patrice G. Poutrus, the South African Communist Party in Exile, and the Tense Relationship between Contemporary Witness and Historian

Titled “*Honorable comrades*”: *Political emigrants as strangers in the everyday life of GDR society* (own translation), the article was authored by historian Patrice G. Poutrus (2005). Poutrus is the GDR-born child of an East German mother and an Egyptian-Sudanese father and grew up in the GDR, a biographical feature to which I will soon return.⁵⁰ His article appeared as a chapter in a German volume which is still

⁴⁹ Such comparison is still an approved practice in German academia, as well: for instance, a relatively recent PhD dissertation (Kunst 2014) compares reunified Germany’s coming to terms with its state-socialist past with the case of South Africa’s coming to terms with its apartheid past. It does so, however, without any reference to (or apparent knowledge of) the GDR’s anti-apartheid commitment and relationship with the ANC.

⁵⁰ In 2006, a Black German of Ethiopian background was almost beaten to death during a nighttime brawl he had with two white Germans in the East German city of Potsdam. The attack led to a public debate on racism and “no-go areas” for Blacks and PoC because it occurred shortly before the soccer World Championship took place in Germany. At that time, Poutrus worked in Potsdam, at the Center for Contemporary History. Abini Zöllner, then a journalist and herself of East German-Jewish and Nigerian background, interviewed Poutrus on the attack. The interview

a reference work on migration in the GDR.⁵¹ Poutrus' contribution covers various groups of exiles (or political emigrants as he prefers to name them) in the GDR: Spanish, Greeks, Iranians, Algerians, South Africans, and Chileans. Contrary to Ngidi and Simon's biographical approaches, but also in stark contrast to Singh's approach as a contemporary witness, it is a classic historiography based exclusively on archival sources. Poutrus makes a strong argument by stating that these relatively small groups of migrants are particularly well suited to exemplify migration and intercultural contact in the GDR because, contrary to many other migrants, they were not segregated through residential homes but shared the everyday life of the GDR's population (2005: 221). He further suggests that the reluctance to investigate them in German academia might be motivated by the fact that this group is commonly taken as evidence for the importance that solidarity played for the GDR and the communist movement by "those who nowadays defend an affirmative remembering of the 'first Workers and Peasants State on German soil'" (ibid., own translation).⁵² The slightly sarcastic tone—not unusual in German academic writing on the GDR—points to the author's own positioning within the discursive struggle regarding how to interpret the state-socialist past in reunified Germany: an "affirmative remembering" is obviously not on his agenda. Fortunately, Poutrus' study is more substantial than this initial sarcasm might suggest. For instance, I fully agree with his assumption that the more positive light that studies of political emigrants could shed on the GDR might be a reason why German historical science, with the Chileans as the sole exception when Poutrus wrote his study, had so far neglected this group. Poutrus' bibliography lists neither Ngidi's nor Singh's articles. It is likely that Poutrus overlooked the volume with Ngidi's account because of its marginal character.⁵³ It is harder to understand, however, why he similarly overlooked Singh's account, which appeared in an edited volume of a well-known German sci-

was accompanied by a picture of Poutrus and informed about his parents' background. See Abini Zöllner: *Das Prinzip Ostdeutschland*, *Berliner Zeitung*, 23 April 2006, p. 33.

51 Poutrus already mentioned the existence of Algerian, Namibian and South African exiles communities in the GDR in an earlier article on political emigrants (2003). Therein, however, Poutrus does not touch on the South African case in such detail as he does in the above-quoted article. Instead, he only writes about the brawl between African students and Germans discussed below. For another insightful article focused only on the Algerian case, which I am not discussing here as my focus is on the southern part of the African continent, see Poutrus 2007.

52 As Poutrus makes clear in a bibliographical reference, his implicit criticism targets a publication from two elder scholars from the GDR (Elsner & Elsner 1994).

53 By including *Farbe bekennen. Afro-deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte* (Oguntoye/Opitz/Schultz 1992) in his bibliography, Poutrus refers to a classic of Black-feminist German literature (2005: 258); he was thus aware of activist-driven literature and did not hesitate to quote it, unlike what more conservative scholars might have done.

entific publisher. Regardless of the reasons, how does Poutrus interpret the South African exile in the GDR on the base of his archival research?

In accordance with his sources, Poutrus focuses on the institutional side instead of on the exiles themselves. He differentiates the GDR's accommodation of Greek and Spanish exiles from the Algerian and South African cases: while an "internationalist and revolutionary solidarity policy" for "communist brother parties" characterize the former type, Poutrus sees the latter motivated by the GDR's self-interest to achieve international recognition as a sovereign nation state by forging relationships with newly independent states (2005: 223, own translation). He repeats the latter argument in his section on Algerian exiles, where he argues that "in the late 1950s, the SED's leadership understood decolonization as a chance to overcome the GDR's political isolation" (Poutrus 2005: 248, own translation), claiming that the GDR's support for the Algerian liberation movement (and its corresponding marginalization of the Algerian Communist Party) served this purpose.⁵⁴ Further, Poutrus argues that the shift in the GDR's solidarity policy towards the support of anticolonial liberation movements instead of national communist parties (where the latter existed) can be seen as a concession based upon its understanding of international developments: independent postcolonial nation states became a preliminary and, thus, unavoidable stage towards the communist world revolution the GDR hoped for (Poutrus 2005: 253). Once again, he underlines that the SED's primary interest was not decolonization as such but its desired international recognition as a sovereign nation state. Hence, Poutrus overemphasizes the struggle against the West German *Hallstein-Doktrin*, established to isolate the GDR internationally, at the expense of investigating any other interests—such as a feasible belief in the moral damnability of and need to overcome Western colonialism and racialism, for instance—that the GDR's leadership might have had in decolonization. His emphasis on the GDR's national interests is undoubtedly a result of his methodological approach, with its focus on GDR archives. This becomes particularly problematic when he looks at the South African example.

Given his comparative approach, the section on South Africa within Poutrus' contribution consists of less than six pages and is, thus, considerably shorter than Ngidi's or Singh's articles. A critique of capitalism, such as in Pennybacker's study on the ANC's exile in London, appears in a rather vague and ambiguous form. For instance, Poutrus writes of the "Western major enterprises' pre-eminent influence on the South African economy" (Poutrus 2005: 254, own translation) without further specifying it. Instead, he uses this observation to situate the GDR close to this sphere by focusing on the economic relations that the GDR maintained with apartheid

54 SED is the acronym of the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, the GDR's ruling party.

South Africa until the mid-1960s. As he shows by quoting from archival records, the SACP demanded that its East German counterpart put an end to the GDR's economic ties with the South African regime and made it a precondition for any closer relations between the two communist parties. In this context, Poutrus also highlights South Africa's exceptionality and meaning for the GDR as a highly industrialized African state with a considerable Communist Party. Thus, while emphasizing the self-conscious behavior of the SACP towards its East German counterparts, at the same time his article creates the impression that the GDR's commitment to the anti-apartheid struggle was only half-hearted, since it needed the SACP's explicit intervention to end the existing economic relations between the GDR and South Africa. However, he rightfully sees therein one of the GDR's core conflicts but, again, without further clarifying its full implications for South-North relationships involving the Second World:

Ideologically, the GDR saw itself as a part or even at the center of a worldwide independence movement. Meanwhile, economically, the GDR's state-directed economy was far from being independent from the imperial West, including South Africa. (*ibid.*, own translation)

Based upon the files he had found, Poutrus then lists in a short paragraph the support the GDR offered to the SACP: material support for the SACP's own propaganda, between ten and fifteen places for vocational training and studies in the GDR as well as two opportunities for recreative stays in the GDR and, of course, providing the SACP with the GDR's own propaganda. The remaining part of his article consists of a longer account, drawn from archival records as well, describing a brawl between male African students—among them a South African—and male East Germans over an East German women, which leads him to a sustained reflection on racist stereotypes about African sexuality that, as the records reveal, persisted in the GDR.

Poutrus' article certainly does share some of Ngidi's experiences, such as the latter's description of the GDR as a society characterized by mistrust. However, reading Poutrus' article together with Ngidi's, Singh's, and Simon's texts creates quite different pictures of the GDR with regard to its commitment to the South African struggle and its corresponding accommodation of exiles. One would hardly conclude from Poutrus' article that Black Africans in the GDR could have "a lot of fun" with their white East German fellows, in the way Ngidi remembered. The same counts for the idea that an African's move to the GDR could read like a social and educational advancement interrupted only by the FRG's impact and an increasingly violent articulation of racism during reunification. Or, as Singh argued perhaps a little too euphorically, that "millions of people" including South Africans were grateful that the GDR existed, or that some of the ANC's most eminent figures frequently stayed in the East Berlin apartment of a couple of ex-

iles who lived in the GDR for almost three decades, as Simon's account reveals. Again, this is not to say that Poutrus' article is fundamentally wrong or lacks important insights. Observations like the following are particularly convincing with regard to my Malawian case study, for instance:

The individual lack of rights of asylum-seeking foreigners in the GDR, and their dependence on the SED leadership's foreign policy interests, stood in sharp contrast with the significance that these persons could have for the SED's propagandistic means. (Poutrus 2005: 259, own translation)

Nonetheless, Poutrus clearly emphasizes only *conflictual or negative* points at the expense of any positive aspects that the GDR's support for the SACP could be said to have from a Black or communist South African perspective. In a certain sense, his text confirms a critique raised by the white East German editors of a volume on Mozambican migrant workers in the GDR, among them the already-mentioned Ulrich van der Heyden. Germany's post-reunification scholarship, they argued in 2014, would focus predominantly on the "destructive" sides of the GDR's migration and solidarity politics, rely mainly on selected archival sources which illustrate these sides, and neglect oral history accounts (van der Heyden/Semmler/Straßburg 2014: 10).⁵⁵ An author's personality and biography undoubtedly play a role in how he/she interprets historical and political events or selects evidence and examples to support or counter a thesis. While Singh's focus on the GDR's role in printing *Sechaba* highlights the positive sides of the GDR's support for the anti-apartheid struggle, Poutrus' focus on the GDR's late breakup of its economic relations with South Africa and on brawls between Africans and East Germans highlights its negative sides. But, contrary to Singh or Ngidi, whose articles remained at the margin of German knowledge production, or to Simon's biographical account which belongs to the genre of popular literature, Poutrus writes with the reputation of a professional historian—a public figure provided with the aura of objectivity—and can potentially reach a more influential audience.⁵⁶

55 For my review of this book, see Pampuch 2015.

56 In his monograph on Chilean exiles in the GDR, Sebastian Koch (2014) provides a brief overview of different groups of political emigrants who were exiled in the GDR. With regard to South Africa, he relies solely on Poutrus' article (Koch 2014: 97–99), criticizing that "Poutrus has only little to write about the South African emigrants (coming to the GDR, their function within the ANC and occupation in the GDR, return to South Africa)" and that he is "moralistic and judgmental" (Koch 2014: 99 & 12, own translation). However, this does not lead him to question Poutrus' corresponding findings, which is striking since Koch's analysis of the Chilean case often contradicts Poutrus' own assumptions in this respect. While the latter suggested that the decentralized housing of Chileans served to isolate or immobilize them, Koch argues that in the cities Chileans

Most German historians keep their personal lives strictly apart from their scientific writing. Only in 2018, against the backdrop of increasing right-wing populism and an increasing number of “opponents of the German variant of Soviet-style dictatorships, for whom the evolution and the development of the SED state is part of the German people’s tale of woe” (Heitzer/Jander/ Kahane/Poutrus 2018: 11–12, own translation), Poutrus broke with this practice. He wrote a contribution titled “Another past that does not pass: My difficult path from being a contemporary witness to a contemporary historian” (Poutrus 2018, own translation).⁵⁷ Since I am a white West German interested in biographical narratives from Blacks and PoC with an East German background, I wondered if Poutrus would thematize therein his corresponding experiences in the GDR, given that his father is from North Africa.⁵⁸ In the article, however, he does not make any mention of his father’s background. Instead, he describes his development “from a loyal defender of the ‘first Workers’ and Peasants’ State on German soil’ into a contemporary historian who now engages with topics such as migration, xenophobia, and racism in the GDR” (Poutrus 2018: 276, own translation). Poutrus was 29 years old when the GDR disappeared. Until then, he had been a member of the SED, served for three years as a staff sergeant in the GDR’s military, and become a full-time functionary of the FDJ. He further writes of the deep disappointment that his former party’s incapacity to incorporate democratic reforms and the ultimate GDR’s dissolution sparked in him. These two aspects, together with the realization that he did not belong to the victors of history as he had always learned it in the GDR, has led him to classify his life in the GDR as a bitter lesson (Poutrus 2018: 278).

In other words, Poutrus articulates here a crushing self-evaluation of a formative part of his life *only* because it unfolded in the GDR, the political system of which he had supported. Paradoxically, this also reminds us of Simon’s depiction of the late GDR as a disillusioning place with no future, just as Poutrus’ critical and arguably selective view on the South African exile echoes a certain perplexity within Simon’s approach to the GDR’s corresponding politics. The main difference is that Poutrus’ case points towards a deeper conflict between the contemporary witness during his GDR live and the contemporary historian now, two figures that Poutrus both represents, as he writes in the beginning of the article (2018:

were concentrated in an apartment building or in the same street; furthermore, the GDR in no way sought to hinder their political self-organization (Koch 2014: 370).

57 The second part of Poutrus’ article deals with how the Soviet military administration treated the communist German exiles after their remigration to East Germany following World War II.

58 My implicit assumption that Poutrus would emphasize biographical aspects related to his father’s background because the latter is African may follow the logic of a specific white imagination.

276). This may explain his reluctance towards the former within his professional work as well as his incomprehension of affirmative accounts of the GDR. In a review he wrote about Quinn Slobodian's generally well acclaimed volume *Comrades of Color: East Germany and the Cold War World*, Poutrus admitted that he "could not avoid the impression that some of the authors see the decline of the SED state with a certain regret" (2017, own translation). The striking gap between Germany's post-reunification scholarship and non-German views on the GDR has probably never been articulated in a more pronounced manner than in this passing mention. As I intend to show with my two final examples here, it needed a younger generation of German scholars and migrants to look with different eyes at the South African exile in the GDR.

1.5.5 The Affirmative-biographical Approach: Anja Schade on the African National Congress in Exile

At the time when Poutrus' contribution appeared, Anja Schade had just finished her studies at the formerly West German Free University of Berlin's Otto Suhr Institute for Political Science. During her studies, she had attended a seminar given by Ulrich van der Heyden, who had taught at her institute as a private lecturer. As Schade, a white German and of almost the same age as myself but of East German origin, later told me, it was through one of van der Heyden's seminars on the GDR and Africa that she became aware of the former's support for the ANC.⁵⁹ She decided to write her 2004 diploma thesis on the topic and has just recently published her doctoral dissertation on the ANC's exile in the country of her birth (Schade 2022);⁶⁰ her PhD project has led to several articles so far as well as her curating a permanent exhibition on the GDR's support for the ANC, inaugurated in 2019 in the South African Liliesleaf museum.⁶¹ That she learned about the topic through van der Heyden points to the logics of Germany's post-reunification academia; even today, these logics make such a knowledge transfer into a quasi-counterhegemonic

⁵⁹ Personal talk with Anja Schade on 11 March 2015 in Berlin.

⁶⁰ I could not include Schade's dissertation in the following discussion of her work due to its late publication date.

⁶¹ The Liliesleaf Farm was a secret meeting place for anti-apartheid activists and is now a heritage site. For a brief article from the German Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (RLS), which funded the exhibition see Leidecker, Jörn-Jan: East German Solidarity with South African Liberation, Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, News 23 April 2019, <https://www.rosalux.de/en/news/id/40327/remembering-east-german-solidarity-with-the-south-african-liberation-struggle/> (accessed 2 October 2023). The RLS is a political foundation with close ties to *Die Linke*, the SED's successor party.

act, because elder scholars from the GDR are largely absent from the humanities departments of German universities. Their West German peers, in contrast, generally know little of the GDR or, in the event that they work on the latter, normally focus on its dictatorial aspects or on politically less captious ones such as everyday culture. This deeper conflict also echoes through the title of Schade's diploma thesis: *'Solidarity helps us win!': The GDR as seen through the eyes of the ANC—A change of perspective as a contribution towards the inner-German debate regarding how to reappraise Germany's past* (Schade 2004, own translation).⁶² This reveals Schade's awareness of the post-reunification discourse's tendency to highlight the GDR's negative features and silence or relativize any positive features which the state-socialist country might have had as well. Thus, her own biographical background cannot be ignored: as a young East German confronted not only with a hegemonic discourse which downplays positive features of her and her family's country of origin but also, as recent scholarship shows, with discriminatory practices against East Germans, Schade sought with her work to interfere in the discourse's dominant stream.⁶³ Aware of the risk that such a scientific approach necessarily bears, she wrote in her introduction that

it is not the aim of this work to improve the GDR's negative image through revealing the country's solidarity practices with liberation movements and young nation states. On the one hand, everyone—particularly if she/he has been socialized in the GDR—who, in the eyes of the beholder, paints a too positive picture of the GDR is put under general suspicion of falsifying history. This is hardly surprising, given the long-standing confrontation between two systems on a political as well as on a scientific level and taking into consideration the real power structures in Germany. On the other hand, it is impossible to write only about the state's disinterestedness with regard to these politics: such altruism never existed, even though the SED's propaganda tried to make its people believe that it did (Schade 2004: 3, own translation).

Instead, Schade's declared aim was to "broaden the debate of how to reappraise East Germany's past via an external perspective which has thus far been neglected and which, moreover, is an important political force in today's South Africa" (*ibid.*, own translation). Accordingly, her thesis contains longer chapters

⁶² The thesis is accessible at the Free University's Otto Suhr Institute's library. Schade's second supervisor was the West German scholar Franz Ansprenger. To my knowledge, Toni Weis was the first to quote Schade's diploma thesis (2011: 366).

⁶³ Recent scholarship has pointed out that the underrepresentation of East Germans in higher positions – also at universities – cannot be explained anymore with the need for personnel familiar with West German structures, as had been argued during the transformation period (Kollmorgen 2011: 319–325; see also Pampuch 2018b: 242–244).

on the GDR's Africa policies, on the relationship between the ANC and the GDR, and on the latter as a host country for ANC exiles.

In her introduction, she points to the gap in the scientific literature that existed on GDR–ANC relations at the time when she wrote her thesis. Hence, the main body of German literature she relies on there consists of studies written by two of the three East German authors already mentioned: Ilona Schleicher and Hans-Georg Schleicher (Schade 2004: 5). In this respect, she rightfully argues that German scientific literature written before 1990 can be consulted only with reservations, given that “in both German states, scientific publications often served as a mean of propaganda” (Schade 2004: 4, own translation), thereby pointing to a weak spot within the self-conception of Western academia. Just like Poutrus, Schade emphasizes the Hallstein-Doctrine's effects on the GDR's Africa policies and the SED's partial instrumentalization of its solidarity politics to challenge West Germany. Moreover, she dedicates several pages of her work to the economic relations between the GDR and South Africa as well (Schade 2004: 18–27). One difference here is that Schade relies on a scholarly article by Ilona Schleicher which Poutrus—who relied instead almost exclusively on archival sources—must have overlooked (Schleicher 1993). This is striking in so far as Schleicher had already shown in 1993 that, contrary to official statements, economic relations between the GDR and South Africa continued at least until 1980, even though they were not really economically significant for each other by that time, as Schade writes. Poutrus' article, in contrast, leaves the impression that the GDR completely broke with these relations after the SACP's intervention. Schade, however, argues that the ANC/SACP most likely did not become aware of their continuation (2004: 26). She further writes that the first relations between the ANC and the GDR were established in 1961 in Cairo (Schade 2004: 43),⁶⁴ demonstrating again the relevance that Nasser's Egypt played as a space for such encounters. In a section on *Sechaba*, Schade relies strongly (though not exclusively) on Singh's article; in other parts of her thesis, she quotes from email correspondence she had with him, as well, and even ends her work with a quote from Singh. Unsurprisingly, Singh's statements all highlight the positive sides of the GDR's support or argue that the former clearly outweighed the negative aspects of the GDR (Schade 2004: 89) and, thus, mirror the general tenor of his article.

In her chapter on exile, Schade writes of an estimated number of between 150 to 200 South Africans who entered the GDR *every year* (2004: 64), most of them of course only temporarily for education, vocational training, medical care,

⁶⁴ Relations between the SACP, which later allied with the ANC, and the GDR had been established earlier.

or military training. To gain further information about how South Africans experienced their exile, she led two interviews herself—one via personal conversations with a South African woman who wanted to remain anonymous, described as a member of the ANC exiled in the GDR beginning in the 1970s and still living in Germany today (Schade 2004: 67), and a second one via telephone with Indres Naidoo, who served as the ANC's official representative in the GDR from 1988 until 1991, before eventually returning to South Africa. Researching and coming into contact with them was difficult for Schade, as neither of these exiles were known to a wider public nor did the South African embassy in Germany or the ANC's headquarters in South Africa show enthusiasm to support her research. Consequently, she additionally relied on several life-story interviews which Hilda Bernstein (1994) had conducted with South Africans who had also spent some years of their exile in the GDR and which were later published in *The Rift*. It is in the context of how to make contact with feasible interview partners where Schade makes her own socialization in the GDR explicit, reflecting that “the reappraisal of Cold War events is never neutral but determined in the present by the respective bloc-socialization of the beholder” (2004: 66, own translation). Schade suspected that, if her interviewees were to know about her background, it might have an impact on what they would tell her and what not. That this was a reasonable assumption seemed to confirm another exile's reaction to her request: fearing that she could use the interview in a selective manner to one-sidedly criticize the GDR, she/he rejected being interviewed.

Such difficulties in finding interviewees notwithstanding, Schade's small and non-representative sample does reveal differing views on the GDR. Higher ANC representatives, for example, tended towards a quasi-diplomatic narrative that silences conflicts or problems. Schade concluded that the experiences ANC members had in the GDR might depend on their status within the movement. It may also have made a difference for (South) Africans in the GDR if they came into contact with white Germans at official gatherings as members of a renowned political movement or if whites merely perceived them as ordinary Blacks or PoC in everyday life. Schade dedicates a whole section of her thesis to racism in the GDR. Despite these critical dimensions of her thesis, the broader picture Schade creates reveals the considerable public awareness which the ANC's struggle must have enjoyed in the GDR given—as the exiles' testimonies reveal—the many public appearances which ANC representatives had in schools and factories. In this regard, churches also played an important role. Schade thus concludes that the ANC was a very prominent organization in the GDR: even children aged three to five were able to learn through age-appropriate media about the struggles of the Nicaraguans, Vietnamese, or South Africans and the need to support them, thanks to the centralized state's capacity to create propagandistic means at all levels. ANC

members also particularly highlighted the importance of the GDR's material support. Schade argues here that the GDR offered types of support which only a state could provide: particularly military training but also medical care, financing the ANC's quasi-diplomatic mission in East Berlin, and the printing of propaganda material (Schade 2004: 85). On the other hand, similarly to Poutrus, she argues that the GDR's lack of natural resources made the country dependent on foreign currency and resources from non-socialist countries, a matter of fact which stood in contradiction with its solidarity politics. She nevertheless writes that the ANC's judgement of the Federal Republic's support for the apartheid state is supposed to be unflattering but that, in the comparison, "categories such as 'social integration' or 'racism'" (Schade 2004: 86, own translation) have to be critically examined with regard to the GDR, as well.

In her conclusion, Schade creates a strong image by paralleling the GDR's dissolution and accession to the FRG with South Africa's lifting of the ANC's banishment in 1990, with the latter decision making a return for exiles theoretically possible (2004: 83). At first glance, things were coming to a good end. Her following description of the *immediate effects* which these developments had for South African exiles, however, tarnishes any teleological retrospection. Instead, it parallels Vladimir Shubin's description of what Perestroika meant for the ANC in the Soviet Union: an end of support on the state level and an increase of violent racism on the society level, in the Soviet case further accompanied by an increase of racist media coverage and a rapprochement between the new Russian and the (old) South African government still in power (Shubin 2008: 315 ff.).⁶⁵ Schade further stresses this image of a state-socialist European society turning into a more hostile environment for Blacks and PoCs during its absorption into the Western capitalist sphere by highlighting a poisoning attack against Naidoo and his wife in their East Berlin apartment in 1988. While the perpetrators could never be found, it occurred just at the time when (presumably white) South African businesspeople, in search of new opportunities, happened to be visiting the Leipzig trade fair undercover (Schade 2004: 25 & 84). The point I want to make is that a German thesis written as early as 2004 already evokes the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc as a "Revolution of Whiteness," as the historian James Mark would put it during a conference presentation fifteen years later.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Vladimir Shubin, a social scientist specialized in Africa, headed the African section of the Soviet Union's Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee in Moscow as well as the African Section of the CPSU's International Department.

⁶⁶ James Mark titled his presentation *A Revolution of Whiteness? 1989 and the Politics of Race*. See the program for the conference *Historicizing 'Whiteness' in Eastern Europe and Russia*, Bucharest,

But there was a price to pay for such insights, as Schade ended up working on her doctoral dissertation even though all the German funding institutions where she applied for a scholarship rejected her applications. This rejection is remarkable: Schade's diploma thesis had already been highly innovative in taking up a subject—the ANC's exile in the GDR—on which no research at all existed and whose wider topic—the anti-apartheid struggle and a state-socialist country's commitment to it—undoubtedly is of broader interest. Moreover, Schade's level of argumentation in her thesis and how she approached her subject clearly demonstrates an ability for undertaking scientific work. That several German funding institutions nevertheless found her PhD project not worthy of being funded cannot be explained easily. I would also dismiss the argument that applicants always outnumber available scholarships, as Schade's experiences mirror my own. I rather see therein the structural logics of Germany's academic system at work, which make certain types of research on Germany's state-socialist past more difficult to realize than others.

Fortunately, Schade continued with her PhD project on her own. In 2016, she presented initial results of her work at the conference *International Solidarity in East and West Germany: Global Engagement in the Cold War* (own translation) at Potsdam's Center for Contemporary History.⁶⁷ Against the backdrop of the Syrian civil war and “the Germans' great solidarity with refugees, which surprised the world” (own translation), as the conference announcement reads, the conference's aim was to historicize the solidarity which Germans showed in 2015 by discussing earlier manifestations of international solidarity by both German states. Schade's presentation was unique in so far as it was the only one which focused on recipients of the GDR's solidarity work, as the panel's moderator Detlef Siegfried acknowledged. She later wrote a chapter for the conference volume, titling it “Solidarity and everyday life in the GDR as seen from the perspective of exiled members of the African National Congress” (own translation).⁶⁸

25–26 June 2019. <https://socialismgoesglobal.exeter.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Program-Whiteness-conference-Bucharest-Final-2.doc> (accessed 2 October 2023).

67 <https://zzf-potsdam.de/de/veranstaltungen/globales-engagement-im-kalten-krieg-internationale-solidaritat-ost-westdeutschland> (accessed 2 October 2023).

68 The volume's thorough introduction, however insightful, reveals a (white) West German scholar's difficulties to adequately contextualize and assess the GDR's solidarity politics in general and Schade's contribution on the ANC's exile in particular. Its author, Frank Bösch, pays considerably more attention to the old FRG's leftist and Christian solidarity groups (including its conservative streams), even though the former represented only a small minority of the FRG's population, whereas in the GDR international solidarity was the official state doctrine. Meanwhile, (anti-)capitalism is mentioned only once and only in the context of the US (Bösch 2018: 29).

With exile now at the heart of her argument, Schade's contribution resembles Pennybacker's on the ANC's exile in London in a crucial way that her diploma thesis still lacked: a pronounced *critique of capitalism*. Furthermore, Schade also responded to the conference's framework and linked her study to current forms of migration to Western countries. Although in a more cautious tone than Pennybacker, this move transfers the latter's argument regarding Great Britain's ambiguity—in terms of having been a Western host country for refugees and, at the same time, an imperial power—into the twenty-first century by drawing on the case of the new FRG after reunification. Contrary to Pennybacker, however, who exclusively relied on the interviews conducted by Bernstein and Kodesh, but also contrary to her own diploma thesis, this time Schade complements Bernstein's interviews and autobiographies of former ANC exiles with a much greater number of interviews conducted by herself—interviews with eleven South African exiles of two generations. She differentiates between those South Africans who were politically active and exiled (or first imprisoned) already in the early 1960s and those who left South Africa in the late 1970s and the 1980s, in the wider context of the Soweto uprising (Schade 2018: 195). Schade summarizes her findings from these interviews as follows:

Despite appropriate criticism [towards the GDR], both generations emphasized the advantages which socialism has in comparison with the capitalist system. Socialism as a feasible social formation for post-apartheid South Africa was the alternative to the abhorred apartheid regime. [. . .] This inversion of the local [i.e. German] perception, in which the majority sees the capitalist system as the more desirable one, also raises questions with regard to the Western system's failures from the perspective of immigrants. In the face of the present day's conjunctures, such as flight, migration, and asylum, and if the claim is to make 'Western' values and standards attractive for other societies, it seems all the more important to reflect upon the Western system itself. (Schade 2018: 208, own translation)

As if this critique of capitalism were not enough, Schade added that “in the eyes of many ANC members, Western states had discredited themselves with their foreign and economic policies” (ibid., own translation). “The development of these policies,” she continued, “together with their asylum and admission policies, are therefore fields whose effects on the propagation of one's own system's advantages can hardly be overestimated” (ibid.). Considering the experiences of these exiles in East and West—a comparative aspect articulated within the interviews but being beyond her main research interest—Schade noted that “interestingly—and without an explicit request—the capitalist system often served as a negative point of reference” (2018: 208, own translation). In light of such a critique of capitalism, Schade's description of what three exiles of the second generation thought about the GDR's dissident scene is interesting. One of them, a stipend recipient of a missionary church, concluded that the church might become a hub for dissidents and critics of the system

in which anti-communist and subversive *resentments* would flourish. Another one remembered that some of the GDR's conscientious objectors criticized the ANC for propagating the armed struggle against the apartheid regime. A third one, however, initially participated in the anti-regime protests in Leipzig in 1989 (Schade 2018: 199–200). All three examples implicitly point towards certain tensions and a rather ambiguous relation between (South) African exiles and the late GDR's growing dissident scene.

Worth noting is that Schade's recent contribution reveals two differences to her diploma thesis. First, she does not thematize her own subject position as a (white) East German anymore. Second, and with only one exception in a footnote (Schade 2018: 204–205), she substitutes the term racism with the terms xenophobia and hostility towards foreigners. Both moves would seem to have consequences: mobilizing her own East Germanness in her diploma thesis enabled Schade to criticize the post-reunification discourse on a more profound level. In her 2018 contribution, this important critique is reduced to moderate arguments such as “studies of the socialist states and the GDR's solidarity are still marginal” or that “the recipients of solidarity⁶⁹ remain at the margins” (Schade 2018: 186 & 187, own translation). The tendency to substitute racism with xenophobia or hostility towards foreigners, in turn, is problematic because the latter terms cannot capture the phenomenon of being attacked and/or discriminated against primarily because of one's physical appearance. Mark Terkessidis writes about this point that, in the old FRG, “racism had been reserved for the Nazi Period” (2018: 212), a fact which made it almost impossible to name the outbreaks of racist violence in the new FRG following German reunification. His similarly West German colleague, Manuela Bojadžijev, reflects on the terms xenophobia and hostility to foreigners as follows:

Central actors in Germany made great efforts to introduce the concept of racism into the German discussion, opposing the dominant but generic concept of *Fremdenfeindlichkeit* (xenophobia, or literally ‘hostility to foreigners’) in the early 1990s. Essentially, this was in opposition to a largely psychological notion of xenophobia as a generalized fear of ‘foreigners’, i.e. as an anthropological constant. Alongside the assumption of the existence of the ‘foreign’ on principle, which seemed to presuppose an ‘actually identifiable’ quality of the ‘foreign’ and proved unable to identify differentiations within said ‘foreign’ [. . .], xenophobia conceived of the non-recognition of difference as a subjective individual misunderstanding, interpreted as ‘prejudice’ and referring it back to the individual as their own ‘problem’ (of being prejudiced). (Bojadžijev 2018: 269–270)

⁶⁹ In other parts of her contribution, Schade uses the German word couple “*Solidaritätsempfänger_innen*” (solidarity recipient), which unfortunately recalls the (West-)German term “*Sozial-/Transferleistungsempfänger*” (social welfare recipient), thus turning exiled African freedom fighters discursively into needy and passive recipients of East German solidarity.

To exemplify how the term xenophobia fosters an inability to “identify differentiations,” it suffices to look again into Schade’s own text. In the explicit context of “experiences of hostility towards foreigners” (Schade 2018: 204, own translation) she creates an oxymoron by writing that “children of (white) German-(Black) South African couples were beaten and insulted because of their skin color” (ibid.). It is obvious that these children—born in the GDR and citizens of the socialist German state—were attacked because their physical appearance or ‘racial features’ allowed the attackers to differentiate them from their white peers. Moreover, Schade not only relies on the experiences of South African exiles who were labeled by the apartheid regime as Black, ‘coloured’, or Indian; she also refers to the experiences of Arnold Selby, the white South African SACP member, husband of the ‘coloured’ South African Jeannette, and (step-)grandfather of Felix S. as described in Simon’s book, which Schade does not seem to have considered as a source. Therein, Simon narrates that Arnold Selby once came to blows with some white East Germans because the latter had insulted his Black friends (2010: 209). These attackers obviously made a difference between white or Black “foreigners.”

Considering German academic writing on the GDR, using xenophobia or hostility towards strangers instead of racism within studies emphasizing the positive sides of the GDR’s migration or solidarity politics, or using it solely with regard to the country’s commitment to anti-racism while downplaying any serious racism among its white population, is also problematic in that it hinders the wider reception or acceptance of such studies within critical German scholarship on racism, migration, and postcolonialism. Studies in this field often neglect capitalism’s racializing effects and would probably benefit most from the epistemological insights gained from studies on the *positive* sides of the GDR’s solidarity politics. However, using “hostility towards foreigners” as Schade did in her contribution from 2018 at least allows the thematization of racist experiences, as a comparison with her most recent publication shows.

In 2019, Schade co-authored an English book chapter with Ulrich van der Heyden on the GDR’s solidarity with the ANC, containing a section on the ANC’s exile in the GDR which summarizes the findings from her earlier writings. In stark contrast to the latter, the co-authored text renounces any discussion of racism or xenophobia. Instead, it brings the post-reunification discourse back into the debate. The two authors argue that “some politicians and historians from the FRG, after 1990, spoke of a ‘prescribed Solidarity’ enforced by the state party, which was apparently not supported by the population” (van der Heyden/Schade 2019: 83)—a generalizing statement that they convincingly reject. They similarly argue that “post-factual, ideologically informed views often determine the present-day picture of the solidarity efforts of the GDR population” (van der Heyden/Schade 2019: 84). Although I fully agree with this critique, it nevertheless becomes problematic when they fur-

ther write that the “idea of solidarity was, however, not as pronounced and indelibly ingrained in every GDR citizen as the official GDR propaganda liked to proclaim” but that “relevant surveys immediately after German unification showed that foreigners were ‘warmly welcomed’, especially in the 1960s and 1970s” (van der Heyden/Schade 2019: 84). Similarly, when the labor migration from Mozambique and Vietnam is uncritically subsumed under this line of argument (van der Heyden/Schade 2019: 88), and even though I would not reject from the outset the idea that this type of labor migration and the GDR’s support for national liberation movements could both be put under the same umbrella of the GDR’s solidarity politics, this threatens to blur the different statuses (and experiences?) of migrant workers and exiles. Hence, the text unnecessarily risks instrumentalizing the GDR’s solidarity with the ANC for an undifferentiated defense of the GDR’s white majority population against reunified Germany’s tendency to distort the GDR’s history. Hopefully this will not hinder the text’s reception too much because, once again, it does show that the GDR’s support for the ANC and other anticolonial movements is, first of all, a *positive feature* of Germany’s divided past and one which the Federal Republic’s political establishment still has problems dealing with, as indicated by a German newspaper article recounting discomfort at Germany’s South African embassy caused by the Liliesleaf exhibition, which Schade helped to create.⁷⁰

According to the article, Nicholas Wolpe, founder and CEO of the Liliesleaf Trust, was astonished about the feeling of hostility which representatives of the German embassy in South Africa showed towards the exhibition project.⁷¹ If this feeling of hostility is true, a brief reflection which Martin Schäfer, the German ambassador to South Africa (and of West German origin), has written about the exhibition could be read as a late attempt to correct it. Schäfer writes therein that he had the honor to co-open the exhibition and admits that, “in supporting the anti-apartheid struggle, East Germans certainly found themselves on the right side of history.”⁷² He further speaks of the paradox that the GDR “wholeheartedly

⁷⁰ Selz, Christian: *In der DDR war täglich Weihnachten*, Neues Deutschland, 2 October 2019, p. 7. See also idem, *Recht auf Anerkennung*, junge Welt, 14 September 2019, p. b4. *Neues Deutschland* as well as *junge Welt* are two small and left-wing German newspapers originally from the GDR. The Liliesleaf team organized a discussion on the occasion of the exhibition’s inauguration in which Martin Schäfer, three former South African exiles, and the East German director of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation participated. For documentation and analysis of this discussion, see Pampuch 2024 (forthcoming).

⁷¹ Nicholas Wolpe is the son of South African anti-apartheid activist and sociologist Harold Wolpe, who was exiled in Great Britain.

⁷² Schäfer, Martin: Are we drawing the right reasons from the past? German Missions in South Africa, Lesotho and Eswatini, 24 April 2019, https://southafrica.diplo.de/sa-en/04_News-/2239504 (accessed 2 October 2023).

supported anti-colonial liberation movements abroad” but “denied its citizens democratic and human rights at home”; meanwhile, the FRG “guaranteed the democratic rights and political freedoms of its citizens” at home but, “in its stance on South Africa, Cold War allegiances long prevailed over the just cause of the freedom struggle” (Schäfer 2019). Why exactly these allegiances had to collide with South Africa’s struggle for freedom, and what the West’s political economy had to do with it, he does not further elaborate—just as he remains silent about whether he sees any chance for such an exhibition appearing in Germany.

1.5.6 The South African Diasporic Approach: Thabo Thindi and *Exile Faces*

Although Schade’s work has, to my knowledge, been the most comprehensive scholarly approach towards the South African exile in the GDR to date, it also points towards certain difficulties which a white German junior researcher might face in choosing it as the topic for a degree thesis. First, there is the problem of finding funding from German institutions. Second, there is the problem of finding Africans willing to speak about their exile experiences. Third, there are the many pitfalls of post-reunification discourse in Germany. My final example is different: it shows how *migrant agency* can sidestep most of these problems and create an exhibition within Germany itself which, although rather as a subplot, similarly highlights the GDR’s solidarity by simply letting the exiles speak for themselves. It testifies to the outstanding ability of migrants to reveal and multiply hidden knowledge of entangled histories between home and host countries—knowledge which previously has tended to be silenced or distorted by the prevailing ideology of the host society.

Thabo Thindi, a 1980-born Black South African artist, migrated to reunified Germany in the 2000s to reunite in Berlin with his Black German girlfriend—the two had met during the latter’s stay in South Africa. Soon after his arrival in Germany, work on a cooperative film project confronted him with a part of South Africa’s history hitherto unknown to him: the entanglements between his home country’s liberation struggle and Germany’s former socialist part. It is a story which he had never learned about in South Africa, just like most of his German peers had never learned about it in the old FRG and reunified Germany. I met and talked to him first in March 2014, at Eric Singh’s memorial ceremony in the South African embassy in Berlin. Thindi had conducted a biographical video interview with Singh, the screening of which formed part of the ceremony’s program. The next time I heard of his work was only a few months later, in August of the same year. A biographical video documentary titled *Exile Faces*, which named Thindi as its author and of which Singh’s interview had only been a part,

was exhibited during a several days long event marking the occasion of twenty years of democracy in South Africa, hosted by (West) Berlin's famous cultural institution *Haus der Kulturen der Welt* (House of World Cultures, HKW).⁷³



Fig. 1: Video installation *Exile Faces*, HKW 2014 (permission granted from HKW).

Eight huge TV screens with headphones were placed in the HKW's foyer (fig. 1). On each of them, a South African talked about how he/she had left South Africa during apartheid and ended up living in divided and reunited Germany.⁷⁴ Most of them appeared to me to be Black Africans, with Jeannette Selby ('coloured') and Eric Singh (Indian) being the only exceptions. All were men, except Selby and one other woman. Only two of them had come to reunified Germany via the old FRG or other Western countries—one via the Netherlands and the other via Austria.⁷⁵

⁷³ For the event's website, see https://archiv.hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/2014/suedafrika/suedafrika_1.php; for the announcement of *Exile Faces* within the event, see https://archiv.hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/2014/suedafrika/exile_faces/veranstaltung_105779.php (accessed 2 October 2023).

⁷⁴ If I remember it right, all narratives were in English.

⁷⁵ One of them, a woman who had not been involved in anti-apartheid politics, fell in love with a white West German whom she had met in South Africa; they first migrated to Austria and then

The remaining six were all former ANC members and exiles from the GDR: Selby, Singh, and four younger exiles who fit into Schade's concept of the second generation. I had already come across Selby and Singh through my own research but had only read about one of the latter four exiles through a small publication from an East German NGO.⁷⁶ The other three were completely unknown to me. All of them had remained in Germany after 1990 and still lived there. During all the years of my research, I had never seen anything similar: the narratives of Africans who invoked the GDR's anticolonial politics in an affirmative way had finally found their way into a renowned (West) German institution. It was not as if life in the GDR was at the heart of the narratives; instead, it was the experience of having been forced to live outside of South Africa, the exiles' home country. I will return in upcoming chapters to some key figures from *Exile Faces* who are relevant to my overall analysis. What interests me here is Thindi's approach as such: how did Thindi, who, as he told me, had never dealt with political issues in his artistic work before, come to taking on such a project?⁷⁷

After his coming to Germany, Thindi had the idea of starting *jozi.tv*—a TV channel on the World Wide Web—that aim of which was to counter the often-stereotyped representations of Africans in the German mainstream media. He mainly wanted to portray Africans in Berlin and tell their stories. After some time, he met T.S., a Black South African and former MK member who lived in Germany and worked at the South African embassy in Berlin. T.S. had a film project in mind and found in Thindi the appropriate partner for technical support. The original idea was to make a movie about one of the ANC's attacks against infrastructural targets in apartheid South Africa—it is here where their research for former MK members in South Africa as well as in Germany began. Thindi told his project partner that, beside providing the technical support, he also wanted to

to the (old) FRG. The other one first migrated to the Netherlands in 1969, before moving to reunified Germany in 1990, and was politically active in both countries.

⁷⁶ The one I had read about before in a publication from Solidaritätsdienst-international e.V. (SODI) was Sacks Stuurman/Bert Seraje (see Schleicher 2012). SODI, founded in 1990 as an NGO, is the legal successor of the GDR's Solidarity Committee. Its foundation was preceded by a conflict between the Solidarity Committee and East German NGOs about how to secure several million euros which were left from donations of GDR inhabitants to the Solidarity Committee before 1990, against the FRG authorities' intent to simply seize the money. The money was split, and a part of it remained with SODI while the other part was given to a newly created foundation called *Stiftung Nord-Süd-Brücken*, with the objective of supporting smaller East German NGOs. Publications from SODI normally cannot be found in libraries.

⁷⁷ This information as well as the following on the project's history stem from several personal talks which I had with Thindi in 2015–2016. To secure the anonymity of his former project partners, I use acronyms.

create material which he could later reuse for documentary purposes. T.S. knew another former MK member in South Africa, A.G., whom he thought he might be interested in financing the project. The latter was already working on a government-sponsored digitalization project about South Africa's liberation history, focused on a national perspective. The idea was born to expand this project by taking a broader perspective that included the international level and, thus, the South African exile community.

In the meantime, two more South Africans, one of them residing only temporarily in Germany, joined the project: a journalist, who not only became the only woman but also the only white member of the team, as well as a PhD student. Thus, five South Africans, four of them living permanently or temporarily in Berlin, were initially involved in the project. T.S. and Thindi, who was also doing the editing work, were to conduct the interviews while the journalist and doctoral student were to do the necessary research. A.G. asked for exemplary material from the project's expanded perspective on exile—four or five documentary videos—so that he could show it to those responsible from the South African government to secure its financing. What happened then must have been an internal conflict about money, which broke up the group and left Thindi with some hardware and the videos he had already edited. From then on, he continued with the project alone,⁷⁸ produced several more interviews and began to present them at cultural institutions such as the HKW in Berlin or the *Iwalewahaus* at the University of Bayreuth as well as at several South African embassies within Europe. Something what Schade and also myself have needed years of research for—to generate and spread knowledge about the African exile community in the GDR—Thindi and his former project partners achieved with relative ease.

1.6 Conclusion

If we compare only the examples of those who have written about or artistically worked on the South African exile in the GDR presented above, a noteworthy feature appears. Half of the authors—Jana Simon, Patrice G. Poutrus, Anja Schade, and Ulrich van der Heyden—are of East German origin. Additionally, we have Yoliswa Ngidi and Eric Singh, South African exiles themselves; Thabo Thindi, who belongs to a younger generation of migrants from post-apartheid South Africa; and May Ayim, as the one who transcribed Ngidi's life story and secured its publi-

⁷⁸ Thindi told me that the conflict within the group also negatively affected the idea of putting on an exhibition supported by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.

cation. Curiously, Ayim is the only *West German* among these authors, and she has an African parent, a feature she shares with the East German Poutrus. The two could, thus, be additionally described as Black Germans, even though Poutrus would probably never thematize this identity in the same way as Ayim did. Hence, the South African exile community in the GDR is approached exclusively either by South African exiles and migrants or by East and/or Black Germans, with *white West Germans* being strikingly absent from this discourse (I could add myself as the exception to this rule). That we owe one of this discourse's earliest manifestation to a Black German activist and another to a group of South African migrants, points to the creative potential of marginalized migrant and/or minority communities. Similarly, the outstanding role of East Germans in approaching this topic can be linked back to the latter's own contested status of being a minority group within reunified Germany. The minority status of both groups and the partially contradicting stories they tell us about the same topic reveal, once again, that reunified Germany has experienced a huge problem in coming to terms with its socialist past, even when such a marginal theme as the (South) African exile community is concerned.

However, as Carpenter and Lawrance's volume *Africans in Exile* and older writings of African intellectuals such as Paul Zeleza or Es'kia Mphahlele show, exile is a highly relevant issue in the context of Africa, one that unsurprisingly takes colonization by the West as its main starting point. *Africans in Exile* highlights exile's political dimensions, such as the fragility of postcolonial nation states. Though generally focusing on the West, it evokes the African exile in the Eastern bloc in an exclusively positive way that is closely linked to social and educational advancement as well as Black liberation and—in the case of South Africa—to a pronounced *critique of capitalism*. Zeleza, in turn, while also pointing towards some liberating or emancipatory effects exile might have, underscores its tragic dimensions by examining a large corpus of popular literature by African authors. Correspondingly, he problematizes an uncritical celebration of mobility in Western academia, which he attributes to postmodern thinking and Edward Said's influential figuration of the exiled intellectual, among other things. Mphahlele, who wrote his article already in the early 1980s and, thus, several years before the Cold War's end, equally highlights the tragic dimensions of African exile but departs from taking a literary approach by strongly mirroring the political circumstances of his time, with the high hopes raised by African independences dashed, displaced Africans spread around the globe (though Mphahlele too has a Western focus), and the apartheid regime still in power. He identifies an older discourse on exile, marked by diasporic and spiritualistic African thought which came from the Caribbean, took roots in West Africa, and became intertwined with a more "bodily" socialist discourse—a critique of capitalism—the more it moved southwards, where white

settler rule went hand in hand with industrialization, racialized processes of uprootedness and pauperization, and corresponding forms of resistance. Given this observation, it comes as a surprise that African exile in the Second World has received so little attention. I have suggested reading Christopher Lee's 2017 edition of the exiled South African writer Alex La Guma's *A Soviet Journey* (1978) as a suitable approach for contextualizing this field, though still centered within a more familiar setting that echoes the Black Atlantic. Moreover, La Guma's exile points even further East, not only through his strong communist beliefs and various travels to the Soviet Union but also due to his children's migrations from British exile to the GDR and the Soviet Union.

I began this chapter by broaching the current anthropological discussion about exile as a key figure of mobility, as proposed by Andreas Hackl, whose reflections resemble Zeleza's in many respects. Additionally, I looked at examples of the concept's usage in other academic fields such as history, literature, political science or in the essayistic work *The Anatomy of Exile* by Paul Tabori. There is a general difficulty in defining exile, perhaps best exemplified by the striking differences between the more metaphorical usage in anthropology and the more rigid definition in political science, where exile appears to be necessarily tied to oppositional engagement against the politics of one's homeland. Concerning the strained but close relationship between the exile and the refugee, a relationship which is of particular importance with regard to my subject, Liisa Malkki has shown that the refugee became a figure associated in the West with Third World collectives, whereas Bhupinder Chimni specifies that, during the Cold War, the West welcomed a very different kind of refugee: the white (and predominantly male) anti-communist fleeing the Eastern bloc, a figure against which the Black (but again predominantly male) African exile who found refuge in the Eastern bloc stands in utmost contrast.

Hackl's argument that exile, as a type of forced displacement as well as a prolonged condition, always contains a historical dimension and combines subjective and socio-political aspects of displacement, seem particularly important to me. This perspective not only implies that studying African exiles can retrieve a marginalized or—as Hackl calls it—lost history of the wars and colonialism which provoked massive displacements; together with my assumption that the kind of displacement I am concerned with is the clearest manifestation of African exile as a critique of capitalism, it also implies that studying Africans who were exiled in the GDR can enable a historically informed perspective on South–North migrations that takes the *political-economic* processes which continually shape these displacements seriously. Moreover, exile's conceptual entanglement with the modern

nation state, be it in its older European or in its more recent African forms, makes a thorough consideration of concrete political processes on a transnational level mandatory. That there were two separate German nation states, of which the one conceived here as the primary host country ceased to exist by being taken over by its Western counterpart, only adds to this complexity, as my following two case studies of a Malawian and a South African political exile seek to show.

2 Mahoma Mwaungulu: Ethnography of an Intra-German Expulsion

2.1 The Guest who turned into the *Knowledge Man*: Tracing Exile on Film

On a Friday night in May 2007, I attended the XXII Black International Cinema Festival in Berlin. It was short before midnight when the movie began—a documentary titled *People, Places, Neighbors & Things: Conversations with 'Berlin Cool People'*, directed by the festival's main organizer, the African-American Prof. Donald Muldrow Griffith.⁷⁹ At such a late hour, only a handful of people were waiting to watch this film together with its director and, considering how some of them looked at me when I entered the small cinema's entry hall, most of them knew each other. In five separate episodes, the film portrayed five Black people who (had) lived in Berlin: two African-Americans and a woman from Eswatini, all unknown to me; the late Black German activist and author May Ayim, who had written down Yoliswa Ngidi's life story and committed suicide in 1996; and my late neighbor, the Malawian Mahoma Mwaungulu, who had passed away in 2004 as a result of a stroke and was announced here as a "Dr." In accordance with the academic designation that Griffith had put in front of his name, his episode was titled *Knowledge Man*. Griffith filmed it in 1988, when his protagonist was in his mid-fifties, in Mwaungulu's sparsely furnished apartment, located in the shady backyard of an old apartment building in West Berlin, right at the former frontier with East Berlin. I knew it so well because I had moved into the same building in 2002, when I met Mwaungulu for the first time.⁸⁰

In the dim light of an old desk lamp, Mwaungulu sits at a big table with some books and documents on it, as well as an ashtray and a small black and white TV (fig. 2). On the wall behind him, decorated with wallpaper resembling the antique charm of Berlin's inexpensive and trendy cafes of that era, hangs a large world map; it looks as if some parts of the continents have been cut out. The camera moves slowly from Mwaungulu's face to the burning cigarette in his hand and back to his face while he patiently explains the arduous task of trying to live a healthy life from the small amount of money which the West German social welfare system provides for its recipients. He then switches to the commonalities between

⁷⁹ Griffith, Donald M.: *People, Places, Neighbors & Things: Conversations with 'Berlin Cool People'*. Documentary, Germany 2007. The screening took place on 4 May 2007 at the Nickelodeon cinema in Berlin. For a German account of the screening, see Pampuch 2013.

⁸⁰ This section was also published separately and in German translation (Pampuch 2023a).

the African diaspora on both sides of the Atlantic and to pan-Africanism, only to return to the precarious life of asylum seekers in the FRG and the administrative arbitrariness of differentiating between economic and political reasons for seeking asylum. To illustrate this, he recalls his experience with asylum seekers from Ghana, arguing that, despite all the military coups which made life there at least partly dangerous, they were often sweepingly classified as economic refugees,⁸¹ an administrative practice he comments on laconically: “You can’t separate the economic from the political. That’s simply impossible.”



Fig. 2: Different movie, same setting: Mwaungulu in *Black People, Black Berlin* (Documentary, FRG 1988, dir. Donald M. Griffith), containing another interview excerpt from *Knowledge Man* (permission granted from D. Griffith).

Knowledge Man is one of several documentaries that Griffith filmed with Mwaungulu during the second half of the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s, and captures pretty well Mwaungulu’s ambiguous personality.⁸² While the episode’s title and the academic designation before its protagonist’s name points towards the complex knowledge Mwaungulu accumulated during his life, the episode’s cinematic

⁸¹ The first Ghanaian government was overthrown in 1966, followed by a period of political instability which lasted until 1981, when a new military government took power and was confirmed via elections in 1991.

⁸² Griffith recorded these documentaries independently and broadcast most of them under the label *THE COLLEGIUM – Forum & Television Program Berlin* via *ALEX – Offener Kanal Berlin*, a participative-public TV channel that started its transmission in 1985 in West Berlin. For the media migration of *THE COLLEGIUM* into the World Wide Web, see <http://www.fountainhead-tanz-theatre.de> (accessed 2 October 2023). I thank Chris Hanks for informing me about the online screening of *Black People, Black Berlin* on 13 June 2021.

language and rather dystopian message implies that this knowledge did not prevent him from enduring a difficult life. Or, one could say that the rather miserable state Mwaungulu was living in as a middle-aged man was the price he had to pay for this knowledge.

Before being invited to the *Theater des Westens* (Theatre of the West) as a performing artist and moving to West Berlin in 1979, Prof. Griffith had also worked as a psychologist and therapist. He first met Mwaungulu in 1986, when he and his colleagues from his founding organization Fountainhead Tanz Théâtre® organized the first three-week Black Cultural Festival Berlin in Europe (see also Koppenfels 2014: 122). In a conversation we had a few months after the screening of *Knowledge Man*, he remembered Mwaungulu as an extremely capable, brilliant and outspoken person “who was trying to organize the African migrants here in West Berlin so that they would be able to survive. And in trying to help them, he explained what had happened to himself and hence, what they needed to do in order to survive here.”⁸³ When I asked Griffith how he would assess the psychological issues Mwaungulu obviously also had, he answered that Mwaungulu “was continuously denied the opportunity to accomplish the positions that he thought he should reach and to engage seriously with the issues which were important to him. This seemed to be an ongoing situation—from East to West.”

To get an idea about what Griffith was specifically talking about, let us change the setting back to the East Berlin of the 1970s and look at another movie, this time directed by the white East German Klaus Grabowsky. *Der Gast* (The Guest) was broadcast on prime-time East German television on a Tuesday evening in April 1978.⁸⁴ With minor modifications from Hedda Zinner’s original short story (1965), it tells the fictitious story of white East German journalist Eva Reifhardt, who falls in love with Black South African communist Philip Koimbo during the latter’s temporary stay—or exile?—in the GDR. The crux of the plot is that Reifhardt is already married, and her white German husband generously offers Koimbo, played by Mwaungulu, to stay with them in their apartment. Hence, when the husband departs on a long business trip to Accra, fate takes a hand. A happy ending for such a love triangle is hard to imagine. After the husband’s return, the two lovers confess to him their affair and, true to their political commitment, all of them—but particularly the male rivals—try to handle the emotional

⁸³ Interview with D.M. Griffith, Berlin, 31 January 2008.

⁸⁴ *Der Gast*. TV adaptation by Klaus Grabowsky. GDR 1978; for the official announcement of the movie’s first transmission on 17 April 1978, 8 pm, see Fernsehdienst 17/1978, TV DDR, 17 April–23 April 1978, p. 7–9. I thank Lusako Karonga for tipping me off to this movie and the German Broadcasting Archive in Potsdam-Babelsberg (*Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv Berlin-Brandenburg*) for providing me with a copy of it.

conflict in a rational manner. Koimbo returns to his country of origin to continue the struggle against apartheid and—here the movie most strikingly departs from the book—is finally killed by security forces. The closing scene shows a sequence of authentic-looking photographs, presumably from South Africa: First, the violent suppression of Black political protesters by white security forces; second, a Black man, surrounded by security forces of which only their heavy military boots and a part of their uniformed legs can be seen, lying dead on the street. The camera zooms closer to the victim's blurred face until it is slowly superimposed by the face of Mwaungulu, the movie's only Black actor (fig. 3).



Fig. 3: *Der Gast*, closing scene (permission granted from Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv Berlin Brandenburg).

Der Gast was repeatedly broadcast on East German TV, with the last time being in October 1982, two months after Mwaungulu had disappeared from East Berlin and six years before he eventually reappeared in West Berlin as the *Knowledge Man*. To my knowledge, *Der Gast*—not a cinematic masterpiece but special because of its topic—was never retransmitted in the reunited Germany, as has happened to so many unconventional movies from the GDR which do not fit into the Western imagination of what the socialist German state was like. The commitment to the anti-apartheid struggle which the movie evokes, as well as Koimbo/Mwaungulu's critical discussion of racist language in one scene, directed towards a white female cleaner who—in the absence of better knowledge—uses the n-word, challenges Germany's currently dominant discourse about politics and race in the GDR.

The original book's author, Hedda Zinner (1905–1994), was a communist Jewish writer who had lived in exile in Moscow from 1935 to 1945, before remigrating

to Germany (Combe 2021). Although she had written her short story already in 1965, and the GDR had supported the ANC's struggle continually from the early 1960s onwards, the year the movie was made suggests a correlation with the Soweto uprising in 1976, which not only increased international awareness of the apartheid regime's racist violence but also the number of ANC exiles in the GDR. Accordingly, the East German press bulletin *Fernsehdiens*t appealed to its readers that, "with the television play *DER GAST*, Hedda Zinner underlines how much international solidarity has become an everyday practice for the GDR and how important it is for every citizen to be aware of their own stance."⁸⁵ Hence, by adapting Zinner's short story for TV, it seems that authorities within the GDR were trying to strengthen the population's faith in solidarity campaigns within a socio-political climate characterized by growing discontent with the socialist regime, an increasing number of Blacks and People of Color coming to the GDR—the labor migrations from Mozambique and Vietnam eventually began in 1979—and latent racism among white Germans.

Against this backdrop, *Der Gast* took up the explosive topic of sexual relationships between white women and Black men in the GDR, to promote international solidarity and non-racialism. That the South African communist was presented to a huge TV audience just like he was portrayed in the short story from 1965—as a comrade with moral failures—is remarkable, since it is often argued that in the GDR's solidarity discourse, "Africans in particular appeared as 'moral constructs' rather than fellow citizens" (Weis 2011: 366; Slobodian 2015: 32). On the other hand, the latter observation is partly confirmed, since *Der Gast* depicted Blacks in the GDR as *noncitizens*—as a people coming from abroad, connected to anticolonial and nationalist struggles whose presence in the GDR is only a temporary phenomenon. Whereas a heterosexual relationship between a white German and a Black African in the GDR necessarily evoked the possibility of Black Germans as their children, *Der Gast* discreetly avoided touching upon this sensitive topic by reducing such a liaison to an all-too-human but undesirable side effect of international solidarity—an affair that only created personal problems for the protagonists but had no real future.

However, beyond the movie's principle themes—romantic relationships between whites and Blacks in the GDR and solidarity with the anti-apartheid struggle—its most intriguing aspect to me is the underlying metanarrative or hidden prosopographical approach linked to its sole Black actor's life story. To make a living, but also because of the fascination which the East German acting and art scene felt about having a real freedom fighter among its ranks, Mwaungulu had responded

⁸⁵ *Fernsehdiens*t 17 (1978), TV DDR, 17 April–23 April 1978, p. 7–9, here p. 9 (own translation).

to the GDR film industry's need for Black faces and played in various movies during the 1970s, for East German television as well as cinema (DEFA). What makes *Der Gast* special is that its South African protagonist resembled Mwaungulu in so many ways: in real life, Mwaungulu had come to the GDR in 1960 as a Marxist-inspired member of the Malawian independence movement and fallen in love with a white German student of journalism. After his return to independent Malawi in 1964 and the country's rapid transformation into a pro-Western dictatorship, he came back to his East German wife in 1967 as an exiled opponent of the one African regime that a contemporary European observer had called "White Africa's Black Ally" (Ross 1967). That Mwaungulu was expelled to West Berlin in 1982 after his wife had divorced him mirrors Koimbo's fatal return to his homeland in *Der Gast*. Provided by the GDR with nothing more than an identity document that denied his fatherhood of three East German children, Mwaungulu was not only expelled from the GDR but—if the family is understood as a core unit of society—his former life in socialist Germany was literally wiped out (fig. 4).

In the memories of East Germans who had known Mwaungulu in the GDR, it sometimes sounded as if he had just disappeared from one day to the other, and some of them did not even know that he had simply been expelled to the Western part of the town. Moreover, Mwaungulu's appearance in *Der Gast* reflects the preponderance of attention being given to the anti-apartheid struggle and its corresponding exiles within the GDR's solidarity policies and, by contrast, the marginalization of minor struggles and exiles such as those from Malawi, as we will see. Mwaungulu was befriended by various South African exiles in the GDR, but it was up to him—the only Malawian who lived in the country for a longer period of time—to play a South African destined to die. Whatever else might be interpreted from this film, *Der Gast* provides further evidence of an African diaspora within the Eastern bloc—from which Griffith's *Knowledge Man* has been excluded and passed over in silence.


2.2 Biographical Encounter, Interviews, and Other Sources

The life story of Mahoma Mwaungulu stands at the center of the present study. He was the first African exile whom I personally met and the one who attracted me to the topic.⁸⁶ His socialist-solidarity biography, damaged through his expul-

⁸⁶ For critical reflection on the challenge of whom to choose for biographical research and the implicit need to justify this decision, see Harders 2014. For discussions of biographical research in the context of global-historical (or similar) approaches, see e.g. Marcus 1995: 110; Hermann/Röttger-Rössler 2003; Hausberger 2006; Rothermund 2006; Schweiger 2012; Depkat 2015.

Vermerke
Gebührenfrei
VISUM
Nf. 10
10.08.1982
zur
maligen
AUSREISE
für Tage
und Wiedereinreise in die DDR
bis 10.08.82
03. Aug 1982
Deutsche Demokratische Republik
Platzamt der Volkspolizei
Berlin

Deutsche Demokratische Republik
IDENTITÄTS-
BESCHEINIGUNG
3053925


MAHOMA MWAUNGULU
Unterschrift
groß
Körpergröße schwarzbraun
Augenfarbe keine
Besondere Kennzeichen
Dieses Dokument gilt gemäß den Rechtsvorschriften in Verbindung mit den erteilten Genehmigungen für das Gebiet der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik.

Mwaungulu
Name, auch Geburtsname
Mahoma
Vorname
03. Januar 1932
Geburtsdag
Kilwa
Geburtsort
Malawi
Staatsangehörigkeit
Wohnanschrift
Kinder
02.08.1982
ausgestellt am
Gebührenfrei
Unterschrift

Fig. 4: The identity document issued to Mwaungulu by the East German authorities before he was expelled. The copy was given to me by a social worker from the refugee center for asylum seekers, where Mwaungulu was temporarily living after his expulsion.

sion to the West, had an impact on how I looked at other Africans exiled in the GDR, whom I met later. Moreover, it was only through my research into his life that I became aware of South African exiles in the GDR. For instance, I came into contact with Eric Singh and Jeannette Selby because both had been friends with Mwaungulu at some period of his life, just as I first learned of Thabo Thindi's *Exile Faces*—which brought me into contact with younger South Africans such as Asaph Mohlala—through Singh's farewell party at the South African embassy. Together with the historical intertwinement between Malawi and South Africa, these exilic entanglements made it obvious to me to contrast Mwaungulu's life story with that of South Africans. But whereas I was able to simply approach the South Africans presented here to ask them for interviews, collecting biographical information on the late Mwaungulu was a more lengthy and complicated process. The largely posthumous character of my research notwithstanding, anthropologists rightfully stress the importance of encounters between researchers and their biographical subjects for the unfolding of the research process and its findings (e.g. Spülbeck 1997: 94–105). Mwaungulu and I knew each other, so I want to at least briefly characterize our relationship before coming to the biographical sources which I have collected posthumously.

As I have already indicated, I got to know Mwaungulu by chance in 2002, after I moved within the newly created Berlin district of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg from its previously East Berlin part Friedrichshain to its previously West Berlin part Kreuzberg. Before the city's administrative reform in 2001, Friedrichshain and Kreuzberg were two separate districts with very different postwar histories: geographically separated by the Spree river, Friedrichshain had been a part of the GDR while Kreuzberg had been a part of West Berlin and, thus, the FRG. Accordingly, an eye-catching difference between the district's two formerly distinct parts, even today, is the composition of their respective populations with regard to migration and ethnicity. Whereas Kreuzberg is clearly a Western space and home to a large number of Black people and PoC, particularly of Turkish origin, Friedrichshain is still the more (socio-politically) Eastern and white space, with the rather small group of descendants of former Vietnamese migrant workers from the GDR being the most visible ethnic-minority group.⁸⁷ When I moved from Friedrichshain to the migrant district Kreuzberg and found Mwaungulu as my new neighbor, I was thus quite surprised to learn that he had come to this place only after having been expelled from the GDR.

⁸⁷ For a comparative history of the two districts in the second half of the twentieth century, which unfortunately only pays very little attention to migration, see Hochmuth 2017.

At the time we met, Mwaungulu was almost 70 years old while I, a student of anthropology and literature with a white West German middle-class background, was in my late 20s. Though I had already developed an intellectual interest in migration and the GDR, what Mwaungulu told me in our various small talks was something new for me. Until then, I had known literally nothing about the GDR's support for anticolonial movements and the many educational opportunities the socialist German state had offered to non-Germans, particularly to Africans. At that point, I had never even heard of Mwaungulu's homeland of Malawi. Hence, convinced that it could provide valuable insights, three years after his death I decided to reconstruct his life story, from which the present study emerged.⁸⁸

My initial impression of Mwaungulu was just as ambiguous as the juxtaposition of Griffith's *Knowledge Man* and Landowsky's *Der Gast* suggests. First of all, I saw in him a friendly and somehow exotic senior who, as Damani Partridge argues with regard to the (white) perception of Blackness in northern Europe, must have "traveled from somewhere else in order to come here" (2009: 344) and was now living alone in a cheap apartment while revealing a fine sense of humor and keen insights. That he additionally expressed what Edward Said calls the "crippling sorrow of estrangement," according to him a characteristic feature of exiles (Said 1994: 137), resonated with my own condition as a young man with a physical disability and disposition that had just brought me a second year of hospitalization and surgeries. Having a heightened sensibility for those considered outsiders, I felt a natural sympathy for Mwaungulu and was curious to learn from him more about how to get along with feeling out of place in a broader sense.⁸⁹

Mwaungulu's obvious economic problems were a different matter, made evident not only due to the cheap and run-down apartment he lived in but also through various other circumstances. One day, after we already had become friends, he asked me for a small amount of money; another day he could not pay his electricity bill, using instead the collective power supply from the staircase via a long cable which—visible to everyone—passed through his ajar apartment door. When he went out and forgot his apartment keys, he hoped that he had also forgotten to close his window so that a neighbor could climb into his apartment to avoid the cost of a locksmith service. When I visited him in his apartment, I was struck by the sparse furniture and paucity of personal things a person of his age would likely have. Another thing I remember quite vividly was his an-

⁸⁸ This project began with my M.A. thesis: Pampuch, Sebastian: *Afrikanische Migrationserfahrungen mit zwei deutschen Staaten. Rekonstruktion eines migratorischen Lebensweges über die Grenzen zweier deutscher Staaten hinweg*. Department of European Ethnology, Humboldt University of Berlin, 2008.

⁸⁹ For an analogy between illness and exile, see p. 45, n. 34.

nounced intention to remigrate to Malawi; even though he did not succeed in doing so in his lifetime, he was seriously preparing for it.

It was only after Mwaungulu's death when I realized that my initial impression of him being a rather isolated person was not the whole truth. In the public spaces of Berlin's African community, which organized a big farewell party after his death, he had been a local celebrity: "We people of African descent in Berlin," as the event flyer announced, "have lost a great personality. For all his life, Mahoma has worked for the cooperation of all African nations. Mahoma Mwaungulu was committed to the needs of African immigrants in Berlin and did a lot for the African community. We will miss him forever."⁹⁰ In a eulogy read during the event, its author John W. Long, like Griffith an African-American professor from the US, called Mwaungulu "the dean of the African Community." Even the Malawian embassy honored him by letting one of its staff members read an official eulogy. Obviously, Mwaungulu was well respected as a political thinker and activist, so I had no more doubts that reconstructing his life story would likely be quite rewarding in terms of the historical and political knowledge to be gained.

The biographical rupture caused by Mwaungulu's expulsion from East to West Berlin cut cleanly through my group of informants, as only in a very few cases did his social networks in the GDR and the old/new FRG overlap. With regard to Mwaungulu's post-expulsion life in the old and new FRG, a period only of secondary concern here, I conducted interviews with, among others, Griffith, Long and two white West German women who both had been romantically involved with Mwaungulu. One of the latter had been a social worker in West Berlin's first privately run refugee center for asylum seekers, where Mwaungulu was living in the first months after his expulsion.⁹¹ Moreover, I had the chance to interview a Malawian who had migrated to West Germany in the late 1960s with a scholarship, studied there, and eventually remained in the FRG because of the Malawian dictatorship. He and Mwaungulu had known each other already from their homeland and came into contact again in the divided Berlin. This compatriot and friend also acted as Mwaungulu's first port of call after his expulsion to the city's western part.

With regard to Mwaungulu's life in the GDR, his ex-wife Gisela Mwaungulu became my most important informant.⁹² Interviewing her not only helped me to find more informants from the GDR but also gave me access to Mwaungulu's private

⁹⁰ Event flyer for Mwaungulu's farewell party in Berlin, 8 January 2008, *Evangelische Zwölf Apostel Kirchengemeinde*, Berlin (see p. 190, fig. 20).

⁹¹ The no longer existing refugee center was named *Blumeshof*, located along the *Lützowufer* in Berlin-Tiergarten.

⁹² I first contacted and interviewed Gisela Mwaungulu in Berlin on 14 March 2007.

estate: two boxes filled with old letters and documents. With the additional knowledge of two former party members from Malawi, whom I researched and contacted via the internet, these sources enabled me to reconstruct the history of The Socialist League of Malawi, a largely forgotten exile movement of which Mwaungulu had been a member. The boxes further contained the manuscript of his incomplete PhD thesis from the time spent in the GDR, which I discuss below. Beside Mwaungulu's three East German children, the informants that I additionally contacted with the help of Gisela Mwaungulu were the former director of an East German missionary church and a former staff member of the GDR's solidarity committee. By telling me about her ex-husband's friendships with Eric Singh and Arnold and Jeannette Selby, Gisela Mwaungulu also directed my attention, at an early stage of my research, towards South African exiles. Most importantly, however, she informed me of several biographical interviews with her ex-husband, all conducted in the early 2000s by white West German women and all written in German.

First among these accounts is a life story of almost 30 pages, written by Inger Theuerkauf (2000), then a student of African Studies. Theuerkauf had met Mwaungulu in a Swahili class at Humboldt University of Berlin, to which Mwaungulu had been invited as a native speaker. In January and March 2000, she interviewed Mwaungulu and recorded his life story as a homework for an oral history seminar, additionally attaching the interview transcriptions to the final text.⁹³ Just as Griffith suggested with the title *Knowledge Man*, Theuerkauf saw in Mwaungulu a wise “*mzee*,” a Swahili term for an elder which is often used to show someone respect, as she explained to me.⁹⁴

Second in importance for my purposes here are audio files of two shorter biographical interviews, which complement Theuerkauf's more comprehensive life story in some important details. One was conducted in May 2000 by journalist and author Ursula Trüper, who created a portrait of Mwaungulu for a German newspaper out of it (2000),⁹⁵ whereas the other was conducted in July 2003 by radio journalist Renate Schönfelder for *DeutschlandRadio* Berlin (today's *Deuts-*

93 Theuerkauf, Inger: “‘Die Schule ist meine Frau’. Eine Lebensgeschichte von Mahoma M. Mwaungulu” and “Interviews mit Mahoma M. Mwaungulu. Transkription von 2 Interviews vom 17.01. und 08.03.2000 zur Erstellung einer Lebensgeschichte,” in Schmidt, Heike (ed.): *Afrika Erinnern – Hauptseminar Mündliche Geschichte*. Asian and African Studies Branch Library, Humboldt-University Berlin 2000. The life story and the interview transcription have page numbers, but the edited volume in total does not. Unfortunately, in this published version, every second page of both the transcription and the life story are missing. Fortunately, Gisela Mwaungulu gave me a copy of the complete life story.

94 Personal correspondence between Inger Theuerkauf and the author.

95 Trüper, Ursula: “Irgendwo zwischen Nord-Süd und West-Ost.” *taz* (die tageszeitung), 2 October 2000, p. 12, <https://taz.de/!1209354/> (accessed 2 October 2023).

chlandradio Kultur).⁹⁶ The audio files of these interviews proved of particular value for hearing Mwaungulu speak about his life in his own voice.

Additionally, I found relevant information on Mwaungulu, his political party, and the relations between the GDR and Malawi in various archives, among them the German Federal Archive (SAPMO-BArch), the German Federal Foreign Office Political Archive (PA AA), the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF), the archives of the University of Leipzig (LUA), the University of Applied Sciences Berlin (HTW ZA), the German Broadcasting Archive in Potsdam-Babelsberg, and the press clippings archive of the library of the Film University Babelsberg Konrad Wolf.

This chapter on Mwaungulu's life story is divided as follows. First, I outline Mwaungulu's childhood, education and politicization in colonial (south/central) eastern Africa and the Gold Coast/Ghana, with Theuerkauf's interview being one of my primary sources. This biographical stage reveals an African's thirst for education against the European colonizers' attempts to hinder the political emancipation of their colonial subjects. Mwaungulu's early connection to the future Malawian exile community, his participation in the struggle against the Central African Federation and later encounters with prominent pan-Africanists like Kwame Nkrumah and George Padmore in Ghana are of particular interest here. Second, through adding archived sources to my analysis, I look at his first migration to the GDR in 1960, paying special attention to how the GDR's relations with African trade unions facilitated Mwaungulu's wish to marry as well as to his involvement as a political activist in an African student organization and, as a victim, in a racist attack in Leipzig. Third, I look at his remigration to independent Malawi in 1964, his escape to Tanzania—where his life in exile really begins—and his involvement in the organized Malawian exile community. Fourth, I read and comment on Mwaungulu's incomplete PhD thesis about Malawi's economic development, which he began writing after his return to the GDR in 1967. Fifth, I reconstruct the history of The Socialist League of Malawi, an exile movement of which Mwaungulu became a member during his East German exile period, thereby telling the story of Malawi's radical Left and the exiled opposition's struggle against Malawi's dictatorship. Ultimately, I reconstruct Mwaungulu's last years in the GDR and his expulsion to West Berlin before ending with a brief outlook on how his life in the FRG unfolded thereafter.

⁹⁶ *Im Gespräch*, Renate Schönfelder interviewing Mahoma Mwaungulu, DeutschlandRadio Berlin, 14 July 2003. I thank Ursula Trüper for providing me with both audio recordings (own transcription). The former DeutschlandRadio Berlin is today's Deutschlandradio Kultur.

Certain life stages explored here have also required extensive use of historical literature.⁹⁷

2.3 Prologue

When I rummaged through Mwaungulu's private estate for relevant documents, I was surprised to find a well-preserved copy of Godfrey Wilson's *The Constitution of Ngonde* (1939). A classic of political ethnography, it drew me back into the early days of British social anthropology in colonial Africa. Wilson was the first director of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, established in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) to carry out anthropological research in Africa, but became a tragic figure after resigning from this position because of his disagreement with the exploitive practices of the European mining industries, suffering from depression and, finally, committing suicide in 1944 (e.g. Brown 1975; Morrow 2016). *The Constitution of Ngonde* describes "the traditional political constitution of a Bantu tribe in the extreme North of Nyasaland, and [. . .] the profound changes which modern conditions have made in that constitution" (1939). Wilson's study is said to have become "an important document in Ngonde historiography, influencing the idea of Ngonde identity" (Morrow 2016: 152). In my reading, it created the picture of a form of local African rule that became increasingly unjust through its transformation by the British so that it would better serve the colonizer's interests. That Mwaungulu, a Ngonde who spent most of his life in exile in Germany, kept this study among his private things made me think about his high degree of self-reflexivity and my own situatedness as a German student of European Ethnology. It seemed to testify to the invasive character of Western knowledge production, making me aware of the hegemonic powers Mwaungulu constantly had to grapple with and raising the awkward question whether I, however well-intended, was simply continuing this practice by posthumously researching his life. Not even the seven decades that separated Wilson's study from mine could protect me from this moral conundrum.

⁹⁷ Two English essays that I have previously published have also contributed towards this study (Pampuch 2021 & Pampuch 2023b).

2.4 Growing up in Colonial Africa: Thirst for Education and Early Politicization

Mahoma Mwaungulu's relationship to the country from which he was to be banished was marked from the start by a certain distance. The child of two Ngonde from Nyasaland (Malawi), he was born in 1932 in Kilwa, a city in Tanganyika (Tanzania), situated between Dar es Salaam and the Tanzanian border with Mozambique. Once a center of the Arab-Islamic influenced Swahili coast, Kilwa regained some importance as an administrative center during German colonialism, a period that similarly belonged to the past by the time Mwaungulu was born there. He thus grew up in Tanganyika and learned Swahili as his first language. And, because the family of a colonial migrant worker had to move a lot—his father worked as a medical assistant for the British—he declared to Theuerkauf in 2000 that he knew Tanzania even better than Malawi. It was not before 1939–40, when he was around 8 years old, that his parents moved with him to Nyasaland. Because his father was recruited by the British army to serve as a nurse in World War II, Mwaungulu had to learn Ngonde-Nyakusa as a new language. In his interview with Theuerkauf, Mwaungulu speaks only very little about his mother, the father's first of two wives. Instead, his early memories are dominated by the father's war experiences, and the way he evokes them seems to anticipate his own later migrations and exile.

Recruited by the British army, the father first had to fight against the Italians in Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, Egypt, Israel—Mwaungulu does not speak here of (British Mandatory) Palestine—and, eventually, Italy. From Italy back to Egypt, the father then was sent to France, where Mwaungulu adopts his father's voice for a telling reference to German history.⁹⁸ Given that postcolonial perspectives are sometimes criticized for neglecting Jewish suffering, it is worth quoting his own words at length:

When he was in Paris, he saw people that looked like skeletons, in concentration camps. My father then was told to move with the British army to Hamburg. He said: "No, I'm not going there, if the people look like this. I can't do this. This is not human anymore. I've seen enough of this misery, of these fascists. This is too much for me. I can't go to Germany." Then he rubbed pepper in his eyes so that he would become sick. (Theuerkauf 2000: 3–4)⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Mwaungulu's story of his father's war travels includes the struggle against the non-Western Japanese: "The British army sent him back to Nairobi. From there, he boarded a ship to Madagascar to fight against the Japanese. With their submarines, the Japanese came up to Mozambique, from Burma to Africa. Madagascar was my father's last site during the war" (Theuerkauf 2000: 4).

⁹⁹ For a discussion of postcolonialism and anti-semitism, see e.g. Cheyette 2018.

Mwaungulu creates here a rather grotesque but unknowingly prescient picture: the father needed to use hot pepper to make the country disappear which turned humans into skeletons but also, eventually, became a host country for his son. Mwaungulu further mentions the many brothers and sisters he had, for his father had married a second wife after returning from war. At the time the interview was conducted, his father and older brother were already dead, meaning that Mwaungulu was now the oldest son and thus the head of this family clan, a position which earned him the title *Mwakipunda*. He translates its meaning as the one who belongs to the *nguruwe* family, further explaining that *nguruwe* means pig in Swahili; his family belongs to a specific totem system, and the animal his family is related to within this system is the pig. Correspondingly, they were not allowed to eat pork. In this context, he again sets his father into a relation with his own migrations. Before Mwaungulu would leave for Ghana, his father informed him that the ban not to eat pork was only part of a spiritual system and that he could eat it if he ever came to a country whose people offered it to him.

A *leitmotif* in the life story written down by Theuerkauf is Mwaungulus' thirst for education, and she rightfully titled her work after a quote from Mwaungulu, "*Die Schule ist meine Frau*" (The school is my wife). It is in this narrative strand that Mwaungulu's life story most clearly connects to the arguments from my introductory chapter about the unique educational opportunities which the socialist world offered to Africans, even though he first had to travel to other African countries for such an offer. As Robert I. Rotberg wrote in *The rise of nationalism in Central Africa*, "the colonial regimes succeeded in fostering an indigenous demand for further schooling," but "when Africans were willing to accept fully the logic of Westernization by improving their educational and professional skills, many avenues remained closed to them" (1965: 53).

One such avenue closed for Mwaungulu in 1949, when he was 17 years old. He had entered primary school for the first time in Nyasaland in 1940, in Karonga, his home district on the northwestern shore of Lake Nyasa, close to the Tanganyikan border. Four years later, when he was around twelve years old, he changed to the Overtoun Institution, a prestigious boarding school in Livingstonia founded by Scottish missionaries at the end of the nineteenth century, where he completed the 6th grade and obtained his primary school leaving certificate.¹⁰⁰ He was told by the missionaries, however, that he could not change to the secondary school because he had entered primary school at too late an age and was now already too old. Whereas he stresses in his interview with Renate Schönfelder that the Scottish missionaries' relative open-mindedness towards socialist think-

¹⁰⁰ On the history of the Overtoun Institute, see McCracken 2000: 161–196.

ing brought them into trouble with the British colonizers, to Theuerkauf he says that the missionaries' argument about his age was only a pretext. For them, he was already too politicized. Thus, he claims that the missionaries tried to curb his process of political emancipation by directing him towards a theological education so that he could eventually work as a primary school teacher afterwards. Mwaungulu therefore quit this career path and migrated to Uganda to attend a private school.

In his interview with Ursula Trüper, Mwaungulu recalls that among his tutors in Uganda there was Kanyama Chiume, who later became a minister in Malawi's first cabinet—an early reference to the future Malawian opposition. Chiume was a veteran of Malawi's independence movement who, just as Mwaungulu, would be forced into exile after the country's independence. His autobiography *Kwacha* (1975) confirms Mwaungulu's narrative. In the early 1950s, Chiume was studying at Makerere College in Uganda. In close connection with the Nyasaland African Congress (NAC)—the Malawian independence movement—and together with several other students from Nyasaland, Chiume had established there a branch of the Nyasaland Student's Association (1975: 51). When he mentions some of the members by name, he also mentions Mwaungulu, calling him by his second forename, Leonard. Chiume tells of the kind of school Mwaungulu attended in Uganda and even provides a glimpse of the path he would take thereafter:

In our branch of the Nyasaland Student's Association we also had Dunduzu Kaluli Chisiza, Leonard Mwaungulu and Guthrie Mwambetania, who had travelled all the way to Uganda to look for second[ary] education which their own country could not provide. They had gained admission to the Aggrey Memorial School, where conditions were pretty tough. They had to build their own huts to live in and to grow their own food. They studied under very difficult circumstances. I was, however, very impressed by their determination and, during weekends, I cycled the seven miles to their school to help them with Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and Biology. In the branch association, they contributed vigorously to our discussions and it was a relief for all of us when they finally passed the Cambridge School Certificate exam. I helped Mwaungulu [. . .] later to go to West Africa via the Congo. In 1959, he managed to get Mwaungulu a scholarship to go to East Germany from Ghana. (1975: 51–52)

Situated north of the Lake Victoria in Bunnamwaya, near the Ugandan capital Kampala but more than 1,500 kilometers away from Mwaungulu's home district of Karonga, the Aggrey Memorial School exists to this day. At the time when he was attending this school, around half of the school's pupils came from other East and Central African countries. According to John C. Ssekamwa (1997), these type of schools “first appeared in the country in 1925 on the initiative of African teachers,” “were getting no assistance from the colonial government in terms of money, professional supervision and advice until 1953,” and initially “developed under great

opposition by the missionaries.”¹⁰¹ Mwaungulu recalls about his time there more or less the same as what Chiume had written in *Kwacha*, only that planting their own crops, corn and potatoes took on a more positive undertone in Mwaungulu’s memory: “The land in this area is very fertile. You only need to plant something and it will grow, very fast. We even got some money for it, and with this money we were able to buy clothes, shoes, and pay our [school] fees,” which were relatively low (Theuerkauf 2000: 6). Unfortunately, however, the school was situated in an area plagued by tropical diseases, and Mwaungulu became sick with Malaria and dysentery from the water they were drinking so that he had to return to Nyasaland in 1951.

2.4.1 Struggling against the Central African Federation and Traveling to Ghana

It was the time when the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland—also known as the Central African Federation (CAF), formally established in 1953 and consisting of Southern and Northern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe/Zambia) and Nyasaland—was beginning to take shape, accompanied by increasing protests among the African populations, who rightfully feared that the logics of apartheid were spreading to Central Africa:

We were against this federation because we were afraid to get apartheid like in Southern Africa. It had already started, too. The whites were the supermen and we were always the dirtiest. The problem was that they brought such apartheid practices also into this area. For instance, someone wants to go into a store. [. . .] A white goes into the store and buys everything he wants. The Indian can also enter, but he must take care not to touch anything. But he can enter. The Black must stand outside at a window and ask for what he wants. After the federation was established, it also became like this in these three countries; before, it was not like this. But then they applied this practice from South Africa. And we fought like crazy against it. (Theuerkauf 2000: 6–7)

To Schönfelder, Mwaungulu explained this a little bit more by illuminating the entanglements between Malawi and South Africa created through colonial migration: “There exists no family in Malawi without a member who had not been a migrant worker in South Africa. That’s why we’ve heard so much about the political system of apartheid with its racial discrimination” (Schönfelder 2003). Although Malawi’s northern part, economically less developed than the rest of the

¹⁰¹ I used the electronic version of Ssekamwa’s book, from The New Zealand Digital Library’s East African development library, which shows the full text chapter by chapter but without page numbers: <http://www.nzdl.org/cgi-bin/library.cgi> (accessed 2 October 2023).

protectorate, had been particularly affected by the emigration of young and able-bodied men, beginning in the 1930s it became characteristic for the protectorate as a whole (McCracken 2012: 178 ff.; Mitchell 2014: 2, 11). What the returnees had experienced under white settler rule in Rhodesia and South Africa made them question racial hierarchies at home and fueled their resistance against the federation (Mitchell 2014: 3; Boeder 1974: 245).¹⁰² The rise of the Nyasaland African Congress to a popular mass movement can, thus, largely be attributed to the struggle against the Central African Federation undertaken by Nyasaland's Black population (Power 2010), which was basically considered a source of cheap labor for the economically much more flourishing Rhodesias.

In 1953, Mwaungulu's membership in the Youth League of the Nyasaland African Congress, and his participation in the protests against the federation, brought him into prison. Though he had to be released after only two weeks because of a lack of evidence, he remembers the conditions as being pretty bad, the food was awful and he and the other inmates were frequently subjected to physical abuse. After being released, his party decided that it would be better for him to leave the country and, as the NAC's representative, travel to the Gold Coast (Ghana), almost 6,000 kilometers away from Karonga. It took Mwaungulu more than nine months to achieve this goal. Starting in Karonga, he first traveled to Tanganyika and, after traversing Lake Tanganyika, then crossing both the Belgian and French Congos to reach Gabon.¹⁰³ From there, he took a ship to Cameroon and Nigeria and subsequently passed through Benin and Togo before reaching Ghana—the country from which he would depart to the GDR in 1960:

Going on this journey as a youngster was very important for me, because I had a lot of experiences and learned how Africans there were living. I crossed the whole continent. I did not fly. I just rode in cars, took a bus, a train, a ship or whatever until I reached Ghana! And this was interesting! Moreover, it was also very important for me to be able to come to the GDR via Ghana. For the first time ever I came to Europe. (Theuerkauf 2000: 8)

102 In 1961, labor migration from Nyasaland to South Africa became a quasi-institutionalized mass phenomenon via the activities of “the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association, the recruiting arm of the South African Chamber of Mines” (Mitchell 2014: 2), whereas in the 1930s, Southern Rhodesia and not South Africa had been the main destination for male labor migrants from Nyasaland (McCracken 2012: 181). Apartheid was officially established in South Africa in 1948. This is not to say that the Africans living in Nyasaland had been sedentary previously; as F.E. Sanderson argues, “probably the majority of Africans resident in Nyasaland at the turn of the century were from tribes which had migrated during the nineteenth century to the regions around Lake Nyasa” (1961: 259).

103 During colonial times, separate French and Belgian Congos existed. In 1971, the latter became Zaire; since 1997, it has been the Democratic Republic of Congo, whereas the former French Congo is today's Republic of the Congo or Congo-Brazzaville.

Passing so many colonial frontiers was a risky task and led to his incarceration in Kinshasa, where followers of Patrice Lumumba, the Congolese independence leader, helped him to be liberated from prison and to continue his trip. While Mwaungulu's father is said to have sold a good part of his cows to support the son's journey to Ghana—a loss of fortune which provoked some family conflicts—Mwaungulu claims in his interviews that his father only gave him a small amount of money. Instead, he financed his journey with occasional jobs on the way, such as painting a church's fence, translating business letters from English to Swahili and vice versa for a French company, or doing manual work in the ports. On one occasion, he even worked for several days for the German missionary Albert Schweitzer in Lambaréné, Gabon. According to Mwaungulu, the employment was ended after he started a political argument with Schweitzer, saying that helping the lepers is not enough if one does not oppose colonialism at the same time. Notwithstanding this criticism, Mwaungulu presents his journey across Africa above all as a nostalgic story of human solidarity:

This is unique in Africa, you could never do something like this here in Europe. But in Africa back then, it was possible that one simply picks you up, you become a part of the family, and this family helps you without asking any questions. It's not like this anymore. There's too much corruption, Europe has messed us up. Nowadays it only exists in the villages. (Theuerkauf 2000: 9)

2.5 Ghana 1954–1960: Center of Pan-Africanism and Hub to the Socialist World

A young and ambitious man in his twenties, Mwaungulu could hardly have chosen a better time for his stay in Ghana. He lived there during the heyday of pan-Africanism, which accompanied Ghana's independence in 1957 as the first sub-Saharan country liberated from colonial rule (Ahlman 2011). Supported by the Convention People's Party—the Ghanaian liberation movement—Mwaungulu attended the Accra Academy, a boys boarding school for secondary education which supported needy students. In this section of his life story, Mwaungulu reveals a fascination for a bourgeois European education, complemented, though, by a decidedly political and African one, given that he was also a member of the Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah's National Association of Socialist Students' Organisation:

I had finished the 10th grade, but because my Latin was bad I said that I wanted to start again with the 9th so that I can really learn Latin. We never had Latin in East Africa, South Africa or Malawi. There existed no Latin, but at that school in Ghana it was obligatory. Not

even French, it had to be Latin. And I learned a lot. After four years I did my high school graduation. Thereafter, I worked for the party [the NAC]. But during my school days I did not only do schoolwork. I also completed political training under the guidance of Nkrumah himself. I was one of the few who went through Nkrumah's ideological school. Every weekend he was personally teaching us. He knew all ideologies of the world, all! Up to the religions of the whole world! He also had a PhD in theology, so he knew all sorts of things about theology. I learned everything, from Buddhism to I don't know what else. And all sorts of ideologies, not only communism. (Theuerkauf 2000: 11)

Turning Ghana's charismatic independence leader and first president into an omniscient genius and arguably exaggerating Nkrumah's own educational achievements, Mwaungulu emphasizes that communism was only one of "all sorts of ideologies" they had been taught about. It can be read as an attempt to defend Nkrumah against accusations of having been a communist—Nkrumah, of course, had his own vision of African socialism—as well as against the backdrop of Mwaungulu's later expulsion from the GDR and the Soviet Union's demise, which turned communism into a failed utopia. However, one also has to keep in mind the interview situation. Mwaungulu, aged 68, told these events to Theuerkauf, a considerably younger person. He had to keep things simple so that his interlocutor could follow him. Mwaungulu's radio interview with Schönfelder, in contrast, included playing some of his favorite songs as musical interludes. One of the songs he had chosen for this occasion was "Ol' Man River," performed by the African-American singer Paul Robeson. He comments on it by saying that he first met Robeson in 1958 at the All-African People's Conference (AAPC) in Accra, thereby informing the listeners about a historical event which definitely brought the pan-African spirit from the diaspora back to the African continent (e.g. Grilli 2018: 103–108) while historicizing it by mentioning the pan-African congresses in the diaspora that preceded it.¹⁰⁴

104 Since 1900, diasporic intellectuals such as Henry Sylvester Williams and W.E.B. Du Bois had organized in Europe and the US a Pan-African conference and five Pan-African congresses to promote the struggle against anti-Black racism and colonialism (Geiss 1968; Adi 2018). Mwaungulu mentions to Schönfelder a music group of African students in Leipzig to which he belonged named *Schwarzer Kanal* (Black Channel), adding that the group consisted of Ghanaians, Kenyans, Malawians and South Africans and was occasionally joined by Paul Robeson when the latter visited the GDR. Perhaps this is the same group of African students from Leipzig that accompanied Robeson on a performance in Berlin in the fall of 1960 (see Lorenz 2020: 96 & the newspaper article *Old Man River*, Neues Deutschland, 07.10.1960; for Robeson's close ties to the GDR, see Schubert 2018: 81–142.).

2.5.1 Interwar Communist Internationalism Meets Postwar Anticolonial Internationalism: Working in George Padmore’s Bureau of African Affairs

Having graduated from the Accra Academy in the same year, Mwaungulu wanted to return to Malawi to continue with the struggle. Again, it is his father who keeps him away by sending a letter to Ghana, declaring that he does not want his son to return and that he should continue his studies instead. Nevertheless, Mwaungulu wanted to work before beginning to study, and he did so in the East African section of George Padmore’s Bureau of African Affairs in Accra. Padmore was a prominent pan-African activist and—from 1957 until his death in 1959—Nkrumah’s political adviser. His Bureau of African Affairs was the perfect working place to participate from abroad in the anticolonial struggles:

This was only political work. It was an office for the African liberation movements, headed by George Padmore from Trinidad. All the freedom fighters had representatives in this office. It had different sections for Africa: a section for East Africa to which Nyasaland belonged, a section for Southern Africa, one for West Africa and so on. I was in the [East African] section, headed by a Kenyan who had studied in the US before. (Theuerkauf 2000: 12)¹⁰⁵

Mwaungulu then speaks to Theuerkauf about the uprisings that started in Nyasaland in 1958, following the future Malawian president’s return to the country and—in an attempt to liquidate the independence movement through mass incarcerations—prompting the British to declare a state of emergency in early 1959 (McCracken 2012: 345–365; Power 2010: 136–155). This section is interesting in how it contrasts a western European power’s attempt to put down an anticolonial struggle with the practice of the socialist states of offering scholarships to Africans:

I was a young man in Ghana and heard this in 1958, so I worked like crazy because I wanted to return. But the people said: “No, you are not going. You’ll only get into problems and be imprisoned. You stay here and work.” So I did. But then other countries realized this problem, saying we have to take some of these youngsters out of these countries so that they can come to us to study. One of these countries was the GDR. There were many more countries, actually all of the socialist countries: Yugoslavia, GDR, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, and China. These were the first to send us scholarships. But they could not send them directly to the [African] countries because these countries were ruled by dictators. That’s why they sent scholarships to Ghana, and Ghana knew how to smuggle people into these [socialist] countries [. . .]. That’s how I was able to come to the GDR. [. . .] I distributed the ten scholarships to people from Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia and South Africa. Seven of the ten scholarships we used to come to the GDR. (Theuerkauf 2000: 12)

105 Mwaungulu speaks here of the Kenyan Peter Mbiyu Koinange (Grilli 2018: 128).

Mwaungulu creates here a dichotomy between independent Ghana and the socialist bloc on the one hand and the colonies of the West on the other, which he describes as being ruled by dictators, exemplified already by the British colonizer's attempt to bring down the anticolonial struggle in Nyasaland. In doing so, he counterposes the postcolonial Ghana of the late 1950s (eventually turned by Nkrumah into a one-party state in 1964) and diverse European/Asian socialist regimes to Western colonialism, while additionally linking the latter to dictatorial rule. From his point of view, the socialist countries did the right thing at the right time, while the GDR stands out as the country to which most of the ten students departed. How exactly these socialist regimes governed their own populations is not his concern here; what matters, instead, is that "Ghana knew how to smuggle people into these countries," thereby pointing to the Western colonial powers' fears of communism and their corresponding attempts to hinder African migration to Second World countries.¹⁰⁶

Beside being the country from which Mwaungulu would depart to East Germany, Ghana is also a place where Mwaungulu left some archival traces that found their way into scholarship. In his study *Nkrumalism and African Nationalism*, Matteo Grilli mentions Mwaungulu in a section on scholarships that Ghana provided to African students by referring to two letters that he found in the George Padmore Research Library in Accra (218: 138). In one of them, dated 9 July 1959, Padmore wrote to the GDR's Acting Trade Counsellor in Accra, Alfred Mühlmann, to inform him that the Ghanaian Minister for Economic Affairs "will make arrangements for the selection of students for the scholarships which your Government have so generously offered to Ghana" while "keeping in mind that your academic year begins in September."¹⁰⁷ The students' arrival should ideally coincide with the start of their studies in the GDR—no easy task, as we will see. According to Padmore, the GDR had offered five scholarships to students in territories outside of Ghana, and Mwaungulu was among the first two applicants (*ibid.*). Grilli's second reference is a letter that Padmore's Ghanaian advisor,

106 On the British attempts to hinder African migration to socialist countries, see e.g. Pugach 2019. Partially relying on A.E. Ohiaeri's semi-biographical novel *Behind the Iron Curtain* from 1985, Pugach outlines the obstacles which the first African students, all from the future Nigeria, were facing during the 1950s on their way to the GDR.

107 Mühlmann, who had worked in the GDR's trade mission in Colombia before, was only for a brief period in Ghana. In the letter, Padmore regrets Mühlmann's early departure, writing that "during your short stay in this country you have made us feel that your Government could not have had a more worthy representative." George Padmore Research Library, BAA/RLAA/390, letter from Padmore to Alfred Mühlmann, Acting Trade Counselor, Trade Representation of the GDR, Accra, 9 July 1959. I thank Matteo Grilli for this and the following document and Eric Burton for tipping me off to Grilli's book.

James Markham, wrote to Mwaungulu in August 1959, informing him about the scholarship.¹⁰⁸

From a global-historical perspective, however, the most noteworthy aspect here is that Mwaungulu's life story frames Padmore's bureau as a hub for freedom fighters to migrate to socialist countries like the GDR. In the same way that it links Padmore to post-1945 communism, it links Mwaungulu to the radical internationalism of the interwar period, an internationalism largely made possible by the emergence of the Soviet Union but also manifest in the German communist movement of the Weimar Republic. In the early 1930s, Padmore—until his break with the Comintern in 1933 an active communist—lived and worked in Germany, while in 1956 he authored *Pan-Africanism or Communism? The coming struggle for Africa*, in which he criticized the Soviet Union's anticolonial policies.¹⁰⁹ That, only three years later, Padmore put Mwaungulu forward to the GDR's trade mission in Accra as a candidate to study in the GDR reminds us that the entanglements of the Soviet bloc with decolonizing Africa were simply a renewal of earlier entanglements (and already ambiguous ones) between Black revolutionaries and anticolonial communism under the new conditions of the Cold War. This complicated web of relationships survived the ruptures provoked by the Soviet Union's foreign policy changes during the Stalinist period and World War II that had upset Padmore so much, and they became even more important thereafter.

Though slightly cynical in his overall argument, Padmore described the German Communist Party in *Pan-Africanism or Communism?* as a relatively credible ally in the anticolonial struggle because Germany had already lost its colonies in World War I, meaning that the anticolonial positions of the German communists could not come into conflict with the country's national interests as was the case in France, for instance (1956: 321 ff.). Padmore had a particularly high opinion of Willi Münzenberg, a communist agitator from Thuringia and a "likeable German" in which "the colonial peoples lost a sympathetic friend" through his violent death in French exile in 1940 (1956: 326). Münzenberg had broken with the German Communist Party and Stalinism before his death and, posthumously, became a persona non grata in the GDR "as late as in the 1960s, whose legacy the SED

108 George Padmore Research Library, BAA/RLAA/390, letter from Markham to Mwaungulu, Accra, 6 August 1959.

109 For Padmore's work in Hamburg, see Weiss 2014: 298–610; for his departure from the Comintern in 1933, see James 2015: 22–28. While Western scholarship has tended to adopt Padmore's critique that the Soviet Union completely abandoned its anticolonial policies during Stalinism in order to appease the Western colonial powers and gain them as possible allies against Nazi-Germany, recent studies partly disprove this critique (e.g. Weiss 2014: 589–610; Adi 2013: xiii–xviii).

appropriated but whose name was erased from history” (Leo 2018: 493, own translation). This later neglect notwithstanding, learning about Padmore’s anticolonial work in the Weimar Republic and his high regard for a German communist like Münzenberg made me wonder if such early ties between a Black revolutionary and German communism could help to explain the GDR’s strong commitment towards Southern Africa’s decolonization.

Mwaungulu, of course, has his own explanation regarding why he wanted to go to the GDR and not to the Soviet Union. To Schönfelder in 2003, he argued as follows:

It was a capitalist country before and during the war, and thereafter they wanted to build up socialism in the GDR. So it was interesting for me to see what kind of mistakes would be committed on that new path.

You expected them to make mistakes?

Of course, this is nothing unusual. If you change a system from capitalism to socialism, you necessarily make mistakes, and in Africa we also had a reason to build up socialism. That’s why I came here, to see how people are doing it, what kind of mistakes they make so that later we might be able to avoid them in Africa.

To Theuerkauf, Mwaungulu had extended this argument by claiming that Nkrumah first wanted him to go to the Soviet Union but that he rejected it, for “the socialism there was too advanced” (2000: 27). Significantly, more than two decades after the demise of the Soviet Union as the main driver of the communist project, and more than three decades after his expulsion from the GDR, Mwaungulu held on to the idea that independent Africa had a reason to develop its postcolonial economies according to socialist and not capitalist principles.

Mwaungulu further claims that, during the last weeks before coming to the GDR, the Ghanaian government employed him as a messenger. He remembers this transitory period as a particularly positive experience: “This was the time when I lived like a king, only in amazing hotels and so on. Ghana paid for everything” (Theuerkauf 2000: 12). He had to deliver letters with official documents to various consulates, a task that brought him to France, Italy, Great Britain, Belgian, Finland and Sweden, as he recalls. From Sweden, he went back to Paris and, in January 1960, from there finally took an aircraft of the Polish airline Lots to West Berlin: “Besides Aeroflot, this airline was the only one that could fly anywhere, even to America. I could not travel from Paris to Berlin with a plane from the GDR” (Theuerkauf 2000: 13).

2.6 First Stay in the GDR 1960–1964: Student Years in Leipzig

While the life story from Theuerkauf reads as if Mwaungulu arrived alone at Berlin-Tempelhof in West Berlin, in Trüper's interview it sounds as if he arrived together with several other Africans, members of South African, Zimbabwean and Zambian liberation movements who had all been in Accra, where they received scholarships to study in the GDR. According to this narrative, this group of freedom fighters would represent a good part of the African resistance against British colonialism and white settler rule in Southern Africa; meanwhile, the German airport where they arrived would stand as a symbol for Western solidarity, due to the role it played during the Berlin blockade in the late 1940s, when the Soviet Union blocked all land routes between the western zones of occupied Germany and Berlin as a response to its growing tensions with the Western Allies. That the South African Air Force participated in the western airlift to carry supplies to West Berlin (Byrnes 1997: 338; Polakow-Suransky 2010: 124) would then be part of the broader history explaining why the group of freedom fighters was received by a representative of the GDR and brought to East Berlin. Mwaungulu does not comment on the airport's history, and all that he has to say about the city's division is that "at that time, there were no walls." Instead, it is the city's East and the GDR which he focuses on, a socialist German space that welcomed Africans like him:

I arrived here exactly on the 25th of January 1960. In Berlin I slept only a few nights before I was sent to Leipzig. But not alone. I was always escorted because I was a newcomer and knew nothing, not even the language. I knew no one, and the only thing I could say was "Guten Tag" [good afternoon], that was all. Schiller had written a book, *Wilhelm Tell*, this book was the only thing I knew; I had already read it [. . .] when I was a student in Ghana. (Theuerkauf 2000: 13)

During their first nights in East Berlin, they slept in the dormitory of the *Hochschule für Ökonomie* (University of Economics, HfÖ)—an institution that would become important for Mwaungulu again in the future—before they were brought to Leipzig. To Trüper, Mwaungulu erroneously calls the *Institut für Ausländerstudium* (Institute for International Studies) at the *Karl-Marx-Universität Leipzig* (KMU), where he started to learn German in 1960 and which was renamed the *Herder-Institut* in June 1961 (Mac con Uladh 2005: 41; Gramkow 2006: 23–45), *Lumumba-Institut*; at first he even wants to say *Lumumba-Universität* before correcting himself to *Institut*. This slip of the tongue suggests a positive association Mwaungulu had with European institutions or streets named after prominent Africans. In Moscow, The Peoples' Friendship University in Moscow (*Universitet Druzhyby Narodov*, UDN), established in 1960 to provide higher education especially for students from Africa, Asia and Latin America, was renamed after the assassinated Patrice Lu-

mumba in February 1961, a name which it kept until 1992 (Rupprecht 2010; Katsakioris 2019).¹¹⁰ Likewise, the street in Leipzig where the Institut für Ausländerstudium was originally situated was renamed after Lumumba in April 1961, and a sculpture of the Congolese politician was erected in November of the same year in front of the institute's building (Gramkow 2006: 29; Pöllmann 2011).¹¹¹ A contemporary East German witness and member of the *Deutsch-Afrikanische Gesellschaft* (German-African Society, DAfriG), who successfully campaigned for the sculpture's re-erection after it had been damaged in reunified Germany, still remembers in an emotional way the magnitude of its original unveiling back in 1961: "Crowds have gathered, people streamed out of the factories, loudspeaker trucks drove through the streets" (Pöllmann 2011, own translation).¹¹² All this happened in the second year of Mwaungulu's stay in Leipzig.

Constantin Katsakioris rightfully speaks of political symbolism with regard to the renaming of Moscow's UDN as the Lumumba University (2019: 285), and the same can be said about the street name and monument in Leipzig.¹¹³ Nonetheless, for an African like Mwaungulu, who once had been released from a Belgian-Congolese prison with the help of Lumumba's followers, such symbolism had an even deeper meaning, for he knew firsthand what Lumumba had stood for and that these renaming campaigns went hand in hand with a concrete political practice that—among other things—provided him with higher education. Ultimately, Mwaungulu's slip of the tongue might point to a certain nostalgia: the interview

110 The university was renamed in 1992 to The Peoples' Friendship University of Russia.

111 Pöllmann, Alexander: *Ein Denkmal und seine Geschichte. Patrice Lumumba, Leipzig und die Deutsch-Afrikanische Gesellschaft*. kreuzer online, 1 February 2011, <https://kreuzer-leipzig.de/2011/02/01/ein-denkmal-und-seine-geschichte/> (accessed 2 October 2023).

112 The original sculpture was damaged in 1997. In 2011, the university finally gave in to the long-lasting pressure of several associations, above all the DAfriG (I return to this organization below), and allowed the erection of a new sculpture (see Pöllmann 2011; Ling, Martin: *Lumumba-Denkmal in Leipzig? Jürgen Kunze über die Ehrung des anti-kolonialen Politikers aus Kongo*. Neues Deutschland, 17 December 2010, <https://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/186677.lumumba-denkmal-in-leipzig.html> (accessed 2 October 2023).

113 Katsakioris (2019) further points to the problematic side of the Soviet idea of establishing a university exclusively for students from the Third World. Rupprecht (2010) argues that the main Soviet interest behind its engagement in the Third World was "a feeling of superiority, the missionary thought to let the rest of the world participate in one's own achievements" (2010: 96, own translation), thereby obscuring the positive impact which the Soviet engagement in the Third World had on the life trajectories of many Africans. Perhaps Rupprecht's critical tenor is also a result of the lack of support which the university gave to his research (2010: 95); it also stands in striking contrast to most of his findings, like the predominantly positive experiences of the university's graduates (2010: 102–103).

took place in the FRG, where the official honoring of African freedom fighters has been a rather unknown practice.

Mwaungulu arrived in Leipzig at the end of January 1960. With his arrival in a bureaucratic state like the GDR, his archival traces increased (fig. 5). His nationality was specified on the Karl Marx University's check list as "Tanganyikan" while his citizenship was specified as "Nyasaland." The German language course he needed to attend had already been running since September 1959.¹¹⁴ He thus stresses with pride the pressure put upon him and the other newcomers to close the gap with the other students and keep up with them. Otherwise, he would have had to repeat the whole course starting in September 1960, a delay that would have prolonged his stay in the GDR for a full year, which he did not want at that time. Further, he explains his eagerness to acquire the language skills without waiting as being due to the unfamiliar climate, emphasizing his wish to return to Africa: "I did not want to stay in this cold, no. I need to learn the language as quick as possible so that I can attend the Karl Marx University already this year. And I succeeded" (Theuerkauf 2000: 13). Apart from him, only two of the ten newcomers achieved this goal, as Mwaungulu proudly adds.

File memos from the teacher of Mwaungulu's group at the Institut für Ausländerstudium attest that he was of high intelligence and had exemplary work habits, that he once reported in class in a very interesting manner how he attended the All-African People's Conference in Accra, and that he was elected as the group secretary by his fellow students, even though in the eyes of the teacher he once failed in this function when the group decided one time not to come to class.¹¹⁵ The GDR's fragile societal base on which the country's relationship with decolonizing Africa was built is already inscribed into Mwaungulu's university files. Reading them creates the picture of an ambitious African student who had to work hard for his European university degree—he was frequently ill and missed classes, as one of his certifications notes—but whose graduation ceremony ended in an extramural final act that threatened to overshadow all the positive which the GDR had enabled him to achieve so far. Before I come to this incident, however, several other aspects mentioned in the files are noteworthy.

¹¹⁴ LUA, student file Leonard Mwaungulu, university check list, 26 January 1960. For the importance of this archive for researching the life of Africans in the GDR, see Pugach 2016.

¹¹⁵ LUA, student file Leonard Mwaungulu, memos from 11 February, 13 March, and 22 April 1960. The third memo mentions a report about the groups' decision not to attend the class; unfortunately, this report was not part of Mwaungulu's KMU files; hence I could only speculate whether the group's refusal to attend class was a reaction to some negative experiences (e.g., paternalistic or racist behavior of the institute's staff) or had other reasons.



Fig. 5: Portrait photo from Mwaungulu's student book, 1960 (permission granted from University Archive Leipzig).

First, Mwaungulu's case is an example of a foreign student who could freely choose his field of study in the GDR, for the university's check list explicitly mentions economics as Mwaungulu's declared wish.¹¹⁶ Second, and contrary to what he later eventually claimed in his interviews, he lacked a high school diploma when he came to the GDR. This was nothing unusual for a foreign student, as a letter from the study director informed; according to one of the memos, in Mwaungulu's case it happened because he had failed in biology during examinations in Ghana.¹¹⁷ He thus had to attend extra classes in the evenings in preparation for a graduation test in July 1960, a date until which his stipend was reduced from 280 to 240 marks a month.

At this point, Mwaungulu reveals his extraordinary agency and networking ability. Instead of simply accepting the temporary reduction in his stipend, he wrote a letter to comrade Mühlmann, the GDR's former acting trade counselor in Ghana to whom Padmore had suggested Mwaungulu as a candidate for a scholarship. Mühlmann was now heading the Africa section within the GDR's Ministry for Foreign and Inner-German Trade, and he and Mwaungulu had met again at

¹¹⁶ LUA, student file Leonard Mwaungulu, university check list, 26 January 1960.

¹¹⁷ LUA, student file Leonard Mwaungulu, memo from 11 February 1960 and letter from study director Pallas to the State Secretariat for Higher Education and Universities of Applied Sciences, 14 July 1960.

the Leipzig trade fair. Written in a warm and friendly tone, Mwaungulu was “extremely sorry to have delayed in writing” to Mühlmann; he mentioned that he had missed the Guyanese pan-Africanist Ras Makonnen, Padmores’ second advisor and personal collaborator in the Bureau of African Affairs, who must have been in Leipzig during the time of the trade fair, too, and that he hoped Mühlmann had had a chance to meet with Makonnen in Berlin. Mwaungulu then informs Mühlmann that his journey from Ghana to the GDR “was a hurried one,” that he “just left without documents and without clothes,” and that the 240 marks he obtained every month was not enough to buy clothes. He asked Mühlmann if he could help him “with some money so that I should at least buy one suit.”¹¹⁸ Forced to react, the study director explained to the GDR’s State Secretariat for Higher Education and Universities of Applied Sciences (*Staatsekretariat für Hoch- und Fachhochschulwesen*) that Mwaungulu had already received an extra payment of 290 marks for clothes in February, that the “current state of his clothes does not make another extra payment appear necessary,” that he would obtain 280 marks after he passed through the extra graduation test that month, and that, last but not least, “because of the many cases in which such support becomes necessary, the institute has only 800 marks left for the planning year.” This was in July 1960.

2.6.1 Falling in Love at the Workers and Peasants’ Faculty

Three months later, Mwaungulu was invited to the *Arbeiter- und Bauernfakultät* (Workers and Peasants’ Faculty, ABF) to hold a speech, as he explains to Schönfelder. He describes the ABF as a faculty for young people who lacked a high school diploma and who had to prepare themselves via this faculty to eventually attend university. Hence, two innovative educational concepts of the socialist world make an appearance together here: one intended to increase the number of foreign university graduates from (former) Western colonies and another intended to increase the number of German university graduates with a non-bourgeois family background.¹¹⁹ In Mwaungulu’s life story, these two concepts manifested themselves in the form of two soulmates, as it was at the ABF where

¹¹⁸ LUA, student file Leonard Mwaungulu, letter from Mwaungulu to Mühlmann, 17 April 1960.

¹¹⁹ Nonetheless, Ingrid Miethé concludes rather critically about the ABFs that, if “the social restructuring of the universities had been the only goal, a recourse to the German tradition of the *Volkshochschulen* [adult education institutions, S.P.] would have been a much more obvious strategy,” further arguing “that the principal function of the ABFs was primarily to exert political influence in the universities” (2019: 135–136).

Mwaungulu met his future wife, a twenty-year-old student. In his interview with Theuerkauf, however, Mwaungulu provided very little information about her:

In Leipzig, I married a German woman. That's also why I came back later. [. . .] I married a woman that I liked, not because she was white but because she was politically active like myself, and she was young and naïve. And that was the right woman for me, because she was not complicated. [. . .] In 1979, my wife and I got divorced because my wife wanted it that way. (Theuerkauf 2000: 14)

In the rest of this section of the interview, Mwaungulu preferred to inform Theuerkauf about the three common children that resulted from this marriage. Meanwhile, in his interviews with Trüper and Schönfelder—two female interviewers much closer to the age cohort of his ex-wife than the considerably younger Theuerkauf was—Mwaungulu gave some more information by stressing that she became a very important source of support for him. Still using her ex-husbands' surname, Gisela Mwaungulu wrote to me regarding her perspective on their first encounter:

I was a smart pupil, and the teacher urged my mother to send me to secondary school. Her heart must have bled because she could not enable me to do this. As the daughter of a white-collar worker (even though he had passed away already), I wouldn't have obtained any subsidies, and so I had to pursue vocational training as an industrial clerk instead. Thereafter, I worked at the company's internal radio station and, as an employee, attended a night school, delegated by the company to Leipzig's Workers and Peasant's Faculty, to obtain my high school diploma. There I met Mahoma in October 1960. He fascinated me from the beginning, and I instantly fell in love with him. As a girl from the village, for me it was an extraordinary event to meet such a well-traveled and smart young man. As a young communist, I considered all objections related to different kinds of cultural socialization to be racial prejudices and considered myself to be naturally free of them.¹²⁰

To Trüper, Mwaungulu additionally emphasized the positive meaning which his new family must have played for him back then. He did so in an almost feverish tone that seems to echo the exilic despair which Zeleza wrote about in his analysis of African exile literature:

That was my life when I started here with a family. Perhaps, or rather fortunately, having a family might have . . . protected me from the foreigners' strange way of living here. And this was a good development for me. I became more engaged with political work, also with my studies. I took it really seriously. In the Bureau of African Affairs they had put it into our heads that we had only come here temporarily, that when you had finished your studies

¹²⁰ Paper written by Gisela Mwaungulu in response to my questions, Berlin 2007 (own translation).

you must return to Africa. That was my soul, that was my goal, and I also achieved this goal. By that time I had really achieved it.¹²¹ (Trüper 2000)

Mwaungulu uses here his founding of a (East) German family to distance himself from the “strange way of living” of other foreigners in Germany—a remark most likely directed towards the FRG’s difficulties in integrating less-privileged migrants into its society. In Kreuzberg, the district Mwaungulu moved to after his expulsion to West Berlin, even today it is possible to find migrants who, despite having lived in the FRG for decades, speak almost no German. Second, he stresses the initial purpose of his studies in the GDR, a purpose that was hammered into him already in Padmore’s Ghanaian office: he was to return to Africa to help build up viable nation states there and not use a scholarship simply for his individual fortune and a permanent stay abroad. Ultimately, Mwaungulu stresses that, back then, he “had really achieved” this goal already, thereby suggesting two things: First, he thought that his German family would accompany him to independent Malawi; second, something unforeseen must have occurred—something which ruined these plans and eventually turned him into an exile.

The first child, a girl, was born in November 1961. The couple’s request for marriage had been approved by the GDR’s Ministry of Internal Affairs only two months before—but not without forgetting to mention that the marriage did not include the right for Gisela to leave the country.¹²² According to Damian Mac Con Uladh, the procedure for binational couples to marry in the GDR was considerably tightened and centralized in 1968; prior to that, the whole process must have been more easy, given that it was handled on the district level (2005b: 206). However, Mwaungulu recalled to Schönfelder that, at the time when he wanted to marry, there were many foreigners in the GDR who were already married in their home countries but who did not say so. He cites this as the main reason why GDR officials demanded an affidavit from a foreign applicant’s family or political party, confirming their unmarried status. The manner in which Mwaungulu obtained his own affidavit reveals another of the GDR’s various efforts to establish contact with future African nation states.

¹²¹ Ellipses points without brackets indicate short pauses in speech; ellipses points within brackets indicate text omissions.

¹²² SächsStA-L, 20237, Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirks Leipzig Nr. 2441, Erfordernisse bei der Eheschließung von Leonard Mwaungulu, letter from the GDR’s Ministry of Internal Affairs to the District Council of Leipzig, 14 September 1961.

2.6.2 Getting Married: Contact between the GDR and Nyasaland's Labor Unions

Again, it is difficult to obtain a clear picture of exactly how things happened at this point. According to Mwaungulu, he wrote to his party—which had already reconstituted itself as the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) after its forerunner, the Nyasaland African Congress, had been banned—for permission to marry as well as to obtain the affidavit. Then the MCP, together with a trade union from Nyasaland, was invited to a conference of the British Labour Party in Blackpool:¹²³

There was a young man who knew me, a trade unionist. He was told to go to Berlin and hand over a document to the ZK [the SED's Central Committee]. In Berlin, he spoke to Herbert Warnke,¹²⁴ who was still the principal there back then: "All right, that's good. Take this man to Leipzig." At that time I wasn't in Leipzig, I was on a work assignment. During vacations, students had to help with the potato harvest, so I was somewhere in Frankfurt, Frankfurt Oder. Then suddenly came a car: "You need to go to Leipzig." "Why, what's going on?" "Someone from Malawi is waiting for you." "What?" When I arrived, I saw Mkandawire. We already knew each other from home. He said: "Banda sent me with these documents here. The party agrees to the marriage." (Trüper 2000)

Hastings K. Banda—note that Mwaungulu evokes him here in a positive way—was the leader of the MCP and, thus, the future Malawian president, whereas the young trade unionist is Chiza D. Mkandawire, then the general secretary of Nyasaland's Commercial and General Workers' Union (CGWU) as well as the education officer of the Nyasaland Trade Union Congress.¹²⁵ In Mwaungulu's version, Mkandawire's visit to the GDR is intimately connected to—if not the direct result of—his effort to obtain an affidavit to marry his East German partner, a version which is supported by the existence of the document itself, which Gisela Mwaungulu gave to me. Written by Mkandawire in the guesthouse of the *Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (Free German Trade Union Federation, FDGB) in East Berlin on 13 August 1961, the day the GDR started building the Berlin Wall, it additionally emphasized

¹²³ The annual Labour Party conference took place in the English coastal town Blackpool from 2nd to 6th October 1961.

¹²⁴ Herbert Warnke was friends with the famous Nigerian labor leader Michael A. O. Imoudu (for a biography, see Ananigie 1957). In 1962, when Imoudu was imprisoned in Nigeria, Warnke adopted Imoudu's teenage son Wilfred and brought him to the GDR. Wilfred Imoudu later obtained his PhD in engineering and became a close friend of Mwaungulu.

¹²⁵ Mkandawire is mentioned as the CGWU's general secretary in United States Department of Labor 1962: 30.24. For some historical accounts on Nyasaland's labor union's activism during the 1950s and early 1960s, see e.g. McCracken 1988 & 1998.

Mwaungulu's national belonging and acknowledged what he had done so far for the Malawian independence movement:

This is to certify that Leonard Mwaungulu is a citizen of Nyasaland. He is a well known person and has a very good name with both the Trade Union Movement and the African Nationalist Party in the country. In 1959, when all political and trade union leaders, including myself, were locked up in detention camps, Mr. Mwaungulu continued with the struggle from Ghana, by sending out information to various countries about the situation in Nyasaland. Indeed his work was appreciated by all. Mr. Mwaungulu is not married, and as far as I am aware there is no law in Nyasaland that would prohibit him marrying anyone, in any country.¹²⁶

Hence, Mwaungulu's version of Mkandawire coming to the GDR lends the story of an African trade unionist's visit to the socialist camp a romantic touch—thanks to his affidavit, a young African man and a German woman could fulfill their heart's desire and marry. This part of the story gets lost if one relies only on official files from the GDR, where the story about Mkandawire's visit reads more ideologically. In early August 1961, a document from the FDGB contained information about Mkandawire's stay in the GDR. It did not, however, further specify what the driving force behind his visit was, stating only in this regard that Mkandawire had attended a conference of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in West Berlin before and that he was now “our guest.”¹²⁷ “This colleague,” as the document continued, “is even more valuable given the fact that, up to now, we have no connection at all with Nyasaland's union organizations” (ibid.). Thus, while Mwaungulu was harvesting potatoes near the German-Polish border, Mkandawire was provided with the full socialist program during a two-week-long excursion. The first week included a sight-seeing tour through East Berlin; a talk with the head of the GDR's central pedagogical institute about the education system; visits to state-owned companies and agricultural production cooperatives;¹²⁸ discussions about problems of gender equality, wage policies and worker's organization as well as about problems of the GDR's African policies; a visit to the trade union college Fritz Heckert in Bernau and a talk about the school's study program for foreign cadres, followed by a visit to the Nazi concentration camp Sachsenhausen in Oranienburg and “the clarifying of the problems

126 Affidavit written by Chiza Mkandawire from the Commercial and General Workers' Union, Blantyre, Nyasaland, East Berlin, 13 August 1961.

127 SAPMO-BArch, DY34/2508, Allgemeiner Schriftverkehr zu Malawi, letter to Walter Tille, 2 August 1961 (own translation).

128 The acronym for state-owned companies was VEB (*Volkseigener Betrieb*) while the acronym for agricultural production cooperative was LPG (*Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft*).

Fascism–Militarism–Neocolonialism;” on Sunday, accompanied by a delegation from Guinea, more relaxing visits to the Pergamon Museum, the *Tierpark* (zoo), and, in the evening, to the *Friedrichstadt-Palast* (famous entertainment venue).¹²⁹

Mkandawire was obviously impressed by this excursion. From East Berlin, he wrote to the general secretary of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) in Prague about whether he could be invited to Czechoslovakia, because he felt that “if I visited one or two more socialist countries I would get more acquainted with the situation in this part of the world. This I believe would be a great direct help to our young movement in Nyasaland.”¹³⁰ In another letter that he wrote to the FDGB after his return to Nyasaland, Mkandawire confessed that he

gained great experience not only about the activities of your movement but also the politico-economic and social organisations of your country, including the Berlin problem, of course. As you are already aware, it is very difficult for us here to have a balanced picture on any problem that brings about conflict between West and East, as all our newspapers here are capitalist-owned and controlled. All they write is from the western point of view. But having been to Berlin myself, where I had the chance of seeing with my own eyes, it is now possible for me to reject at first hand any western propoganda that comes out.¹³¹

Moreover, the GDR had invited some union members from Nyasaland to attend the trade union college Fritz Heckert; the file volume, however, does not indicate whether these temporary migrations ever materialized (see also Angermann 2018: 53). Mkandawire wrote to the FDGB that “the three tickets you gave me for three students to come and study trade unionism did not work” because the “Imperialist (British) here wouldn’t allow our students to leave the country” (*ibid.*), thereby pointing again to the British attempts to frustrate any closer connections between its subject people and the communist world. Slightly inconsistent with that information, Mkandawire continued that “we are still willing to have some of our students sent to your country for training,” asking the FDGB for new tickets. While also considering an alternative air route via Tanzania, he preferred

129 SAPMO-BArch, DY34/2508, Plan für den Aufenthalt des Delegierten aus Njassaland vom 1.–14.08.1961. A paper from another file volume specifies the corresponding key ideological aspects of the FDGB’s work with Mkandawire. SAPMO-BArch, DY 42 1307, Gewerkschaftsbeziehungen zu Njassaland (heutiges Malawi), Schwerpunkte für die Arbeit während des Aufenthaltes des Generalsekretärs der Gewerkschaft der Handelsangestellten und Hilfsarbeiter von Njassaland, 1 August 1961.

130 SAPMO-BArch, DY34/2508, letter from Mkandawire in East Berlin to the general secretary, World Federation of Trade Union, Praha, 4 August 1961. In this letter, Mkandawire also states that he attended the Congress of the International Federation of Commercial and Clerical Employees in West Berlin as an observer.

131 SAPMO-BArch, DY34/2508, letter from Mkandawire from the CGWU in Blantyre to the FDGB’s International Department in Berlin, 8 March 1962.

tickets “from Blantyre to London and return. And others would have to be from London to Berlin. Of course, it will be easy for us to say here that these people are going to London; and from London they would have to come to Berlin” (ibid.). The correspondence ends with a copy of the FDGB’s answer to Mkandawire. Beside informing him about West Germany’s provocations in now-divided Berlin, the FDGB representatives wrote that they would provide Mkandawire with new means of passage, “as soon as a new course is due to start at our high school.”¹³²

Given the tragic development of Malawi’s trade union movement beginning in the early 1960s, increasingly limited in its political action by the Malawi Congress Party—it “was rendered toothless and its more radical leaders forced into exile, detained, or ‘disappeared’” (Power 2010: 179)—it seems rather unlikely that this contact between the CGWU and the FDGB was more than a brief episode, even though the GDR’s files reveal another rapprochement between a left-leaning Malawian labor union and the FDGB as late as 1966.¹³³ Considering Mkandawire’s stay in the GDR, it is of course possible that he would have visited a socialist coun-

132 SAPMO-BArch, DY34/2508, letter from the FDGB in Berlin to Mkandawire in Blantyre, 5 July 1962.

133 Power as well as McCracken mention Suzgo Msiska, “the Marxist leader of the [. . .] Transport and General Allied Workers Union” (McCracken 1988: 283), as one of those Malawian unionists who went into exile. While McCracken (1988: 289) writes that Msiska was said to have gone into Soviet exile in 1963, Power only writes that Msiska “left the country around the time of independence” (2010: 283). Complicating Power’s claim that the trade unions organized by the Blantyre’s labor leaders “did not revolve around notions of economic class solidarity in the Marxist sense” (2010: 89), the GDR’s file volumes on Malawi contain a letter to the FDGB from 1966 signed by a S.E. Msiska, then the secretary general of the National Movement of Labour (NAMOLA) and residing in Blantyre. I cannot say if he is identical with the [Suzgo] Msiska that both John McCracken and Joey Power wrote about. However, according to this S.E. Msiska, NAMOLA “was founded in September 1960 when some of the trade unions broke away from the then Nyasaland Trade Union Congress which was dominated by the ICFTU and now this body is defunct. At that time the name of our Organisation was known as ‘National Council of Labour’ and since 1964 we have changed the name into the National Movement of Labour.” S.E. Msiska claimed the new organization had “a paid up membership of 125,949 out of the working population of 135,000” and further stated that NAMOLA first tried to establish contact with the FDGB at the annual conference of the National Union of Tanganyika Workers held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in March 1965, and that they would like to send a delegation to the GDR. Moreover, S.E. Msiska wrote that “we do not have International Affiliations but we have so far established fraternal relations with all Labour Centres of the Socialist Camp including the W.F.T.U. and as for the trade unions in the Capitalist Camp, we have made very little progress in this field of relations just because some of the trade unions and Labour Centres have accused us as Communists; thus these unions and labour centres have directly interfered with our internal affairs.” SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 IV A 2/20, Information zu Malawi (p. 192–199), letter from S.E. Msiska in Blantyre to the FDGB in Berlin, 30 June 1966.

try anyway and that his coming in no way depended on Mwaungulu's being in Berlin or need for an affidavit. But what can be said for sure is that Mkandawire's visit, still taking place within the framework of an undamaged and not yet exilic Malawian nationalism—as the independence movement there was still united in its political cause—helped to establish a legal bond (of marriage) between a compatriot and a citizen of the GDR. By the end of August 1961, Mwaungulu and his pregnant girlfriend were allowed to live together in a room for married couples in the KMu's residential home in Leipzig.¹³⁴

2.6.3 Activism in the Union of African Students and Workers in the GDR

In two of the interviews, Mwaungulu mentions an *afrikanische Studentenunion* (African Students' Union) of which he claims to have been the secretary for African affairs, and on both occasions he does so in the context of anti-Black racism (Trüper 2000; Theuerkauf 2000: 26). Known under its full name as the *Union der afrikanischen Studenten und Arbeiter in der DDR* (Union of African Students and Workers in the GDR, UASA), this was a supranational student organization established in the GDR by a group of Africans in 1960 which attempted to serve as an umbrella to the African *Nationale Hochschulgruppen* (National Student Organizations; Mac Con Uladh 2005b: 192–193; Pugach 2019b).¹³⁵ Pan-African in its outlook, in the first half of the 1960s it was headed by the Sierra Leonian Sheku Magona (fig. 6). That Mwaungulu, predestined for this task because of his work in Padmore's Bureau, served as UASA's secretary for African affairs from 1961 to 1963 is additionally confirmed by files from the GDR.¹³⁶ Sara Pugach writes about this organization that “it was theoretically where Africans could turn for assistance in all manner of situations, including affairs related to housing, acculturation in the GDR, and interactions with East German universities” (2019b: S90). The German authorities, however, considered UASA to be too independent and resistant to state pressure, even though the

¹³⁴ Saxonian State Archive, Leipzig (SächsStA-L), 20237, Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Leipzig, Nr. 24441, writing from Leipzig's civil registry office, 28 August 1961.

¹³⁵ A list of UASA's administrative board from the early 1960s, consisting of the organization's executive committee as well as of representatives from the national student organizations, mentions about 40 Africans from the following countries and colonies: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, Mali, Chad, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana, Cameroon, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Congo, Tanzania, Zanzibar, the Portuguese colonies, Central- and Southwest Africa, Madagascar, South Africa, and Nyasaland. SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/20/56 (1960–1963), *Union der afrikanischen Studenten und Arbeiter in der DDR* (microfiche), *Leiter und Sitz der Ländergruppen*, pp. 17, 18 & 31.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 17, 18 & 31.

Deutsch-Afrikanische Gesellschaft (German-African Society, DAfriG), an East German organization founded in 1961, tried to influence its activities (Pugach 2019b: S93–S94).¹³⁷ The pan-Africanism of UASA was an irritating factor in the GDR’s focus on independent nation states; moreover, the organization seems to have been more concerned with anti-racism than anti-capitalism and even established contact with a pan-African student organization in West Germany (Mac Con Uladh 2005b: 193; Slobodian 2013: 653).



Fig. 6: Sheku Magona (m.) together with his wife Kadu (f.), their child and an unknown person, GDR early 1960s (permission granted from Gisela Mwaungulu).

The UASA’s third congress took place at the Herder Institute in Leipzig in July 1963. A report from DAfriG mentions as the reason for Mwaungulu’s rejection to candidate there again in the elections for the secretary for African affairs that he wanted to concentrate on his studies instead.¹³⁸ Another document, written by a higher official body and yet before the congress took place, reports on DAfriG’s success in bringing “relatively progressive forces” into UASA’s executive committee, of which Mwaungulu was a member.¹³⁹ It also suggests that he was seen as such a force, al-

¹³⁷ On DAfriG, whose first president was the prominent historian Walter Markov, see the critical assessment of one of its former members (Sebald 1993).

¹³⁸ SAPMO-BArchiv, DY24/8755, Bericht der DAfriG über den III. Kongreß der Union der afrikanischen Studenten und Arbeiter in der DDR, 9 September 1963.

¹³⁹ SAPMO-BArchiv DY30/IV2/20/56, Union der afrikanischen Studenten und Arbeiter in der DDR (1960–1963), Information über die Lage unter den afrikanischen Studenten im Zusammenhang

though his commitment to an organization whose existence the GDR considered problematic is also an early hint that he never fully subordinated his political convictions to the interests of his host country.¹⁴⁰

2.6.4 Interactions with African-American Communists

In the interview with Trüper, after a long reflection on racism, Mwaungulu mentions the UASA in the context of a conference organized by Karl Marx University in the early 1960s. Given its differentiated character, this reflection also points towards different conjunctures of racism:

The first time in the GDR was different from now in the sense that the government of the GDR protected us foreigners very much. For instance, during the holidays we should only stay with our comrades. We had no real contact with the populace at that time. People were always afraid of us foreigners. But then we realized that it is not only this. They said that the foreigners are here all by themselves, without their parents, that's why they should go to family houses so that they can also live together with families. That was good. I think that's very nice! We really were very free to go wherever we wanted to, at any time. And it was very peaceful. Nobody could simply turn on us or attack us. This didn't exist! The comrades always told us: "There is no racism here." But sometimes we experienced it anyway. For instance, when we went to a restaurant to drink something with friends, we always felt very uncomfortable because some of the Germans often used certain words for us. For the Germans, we were always "Negroes."¹⁴¹ We always tried to explain: "We are not Negroes, we are Africans." Nevertheless, they always ignored this. Sometimes we were asked: "How did you come here, were you always dressed like this or did you only wear banana leaves? How do you live in Africa, in the trees?" This happened frequently in the 1960s, but in the 1970s it became a little better because we were organizing ourselves. We told ourselves that we need to do something, that we have to educate the people. We wrote a lot of articles, not only for newspapers but most of the time for scientific journals. One had to start from the top to explain the situation so that they [could] become aware of it, [. . .] so that the people on top [would] learn about it and explain it to those below. At first there was no resonance, but we nevertheless continued. (Theuerkauf 2000: 25–26)

mit der Vorbereitung zum III. Kongreß der Union der afrikanischen Studenten und Arbeiter in der DDR, microfiche, p. 50–53.

140 The writing also suggests that DAfriG did not fulfill its role as a tool to influence UASA to the full satisfaction of the GDR's authorities, pointing to UASA's resilience as well as that DAfriG was sympathetic to at least some of UASA's work which the GDR authorities disagreed with. That many of DAfriG's members must have been rather idealistic than dogmatic thinkers is also suggested by Sebald (1993).

141 Note that this is my translation and that, in the 1960s, the German term used by Mwaungulu had more negative connotations than the English term "Negro."

Mwaungulu then comes to the said conference as an example of how his involvement in UASA helped him initiate a discussion on racist language. Most likely, the KMU had organized the conference on the occasion of one of Henry Winston's visits to the GDR in the early 1960s (Theuerkauf 2000: 26).¹⁴² Back then, the African-American Winston was the national chairman of the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA). This time he came to the GDR via the Soviet Union, where he had received medical treatment. Having been one of several party members who were convicted under the United States' Alien Registration Act for their communist convictions, Winston had been imprisoned in the US from 1956 to 1961, a period during which he lost his sight as the result of a brain tumor and, as he claimed, the prison officials' failure to provide him with proper medical care (Marable/Mullings 2009: 499).¹⁴³

Mwaungulu's account revolves around the KMU's vice chancellor Georg Mayer's use of the n-word during the conference, to which UASA had also been invited. After Mayer's speech, Mwaungulu turned to Winston asking him to help convincing the vice chancellor that Blacks in the US have started to call themselves Afro-Americans, whereas Blacks from Africa simply should be called Africans, a request to which Winston naturally responded positively. Winston's reputation within white communist circles thus helped UASA to further sensitize East Germans about using non-racist language, thereby intertwining the activism of a pan-African student organization in the GDR with the struggles of the Black radical Left in the US.

Mwaungulu's mentioning of UASA in his interview with Trüper is a different story, with a less optimistic outlook. Revolving around his graduation from the KMU in July 1964—the same month when Nyasaland attained independence from

¹⁴² Mwaungulu did not remember Winston's real name, calling him Armstrong instead (Theuerkauf 2000, transcription p. 23). Perhaps he confused his name with that of the jazz musician Louis Armstrong, who toured the GDR in 1965. However, Mwaungulu's mentioning that the USCP's general secretary was African-American, together with the mentioning of the latter's eye problems and medical treatment in the USSR, indicates that he was speaking of Winston, who visited the GDR in the first half of the 1960s several times. For instance, Winston visited Leipzig in June 1962, when a locomotive brigade was named in his honor. See the newspaper article *Winston: DDR vermittelt auch den USA wichtige Lehren*. Neues Deutschland, Nr. 337, 8 December 1963, p. 7. On the relations between African-American activists and the GDR, see e.g. Rasmussen 2014 & Schubert 2018, which both mention Winston's visits, or the work of Sophie Lorenz (2020: 100), who mentions an article written by Winston that was published in an East German journal.

¹⁴³ See the entry on Henry Winston, *My sight is gone but my vision remains*, in Marable/Mullings (2009: 499–504). The Alien Registration Act from 1940, popularly known as the Smith Act, was a United States federal statute which, among other things, prohibited certain subversive activities; it also served as an anti-communist tool.

Great Britain and became Malawi—and his planned departure to his homeland on 17 September 1964, it points to anti-Black racism in its most vulgar form. Given that its earliest trace can be found within Mwaungulu’s examination records from the KMU, I want to look at least briefly at a more positive aspect related to this biographical stage—Mwaungulu’s final thesis and diploma in Political Economy.

2.6.5 Leipzig 1964: Degree in Economics and Target of Racist Attack

Titled *Schlußfolgerungen für die ökonomische Entwicklung des Nyasalandes auf Grund der Erfahrungen der jungen afrikanischen Nationalstaaten* (Conclusions regarding the economic development of Nyasaland, based on the experiences of the young African nation states), Mwaungulu’s final thesis was awarded the top grade of “very good” by the KMU’s future professor of economics, Günter Nötzold, who wrote that it is “a first attempt to look at the economic development of the African states from a comparative perspective.”¹⁴⁴ Mwaungulu had outlined the economic development of a variety of African countries, discussed their pros and cons by taking Ghana and Algeria as his main examples, presented the economic situation of Nyasaland, and reflected on whether the experiences from the two other countries could serve as a blueprint for Nyasaland’s own economic development or not. Nötzold highlighted that Mwaungulu had paid special attention “to the necessity of a complex economic development for achieving economic independence” (ibid.); like so many Africans of his generation, Mwaungulu believed in rapid economic growth as the only way to achieve real independence from the Western capitalist world.

He completed his studies as a whole with a grade of “satisfactory.” His best subject was Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism (“good”), followed by State and Law and Economic Geography (both “satisfactory”) and Political Economy, Planning of National Economy and Financial Economics (all “sufficient”).¹⁴⁵ Mwaungulu had read his Marx, as the popular saying goes, and it may seem tempting to think that it was only through his move to socialist Germany that he became an astute reader of Marx, Engels and Lenin. But as Gisela Mwaungulu assured me, he had studied these works already in Africa with great thoroughness and was always making fun of the East German students who did not understand them, for they were reading the classics only from page 1 to 10. What the diploma left

¹⁴⁴ LUA, PrüfA 14409, sheets 3–4 (this and all other translations into English, if not indicated otherwise, are mine). The final thesis has not been preserved.

¹⁴⁵ HTW ZA, student files Mahoma Mwaungulu, Certificate KMU, 24 July 1964.

unmentioned, however, were the two toddlers he and particularly his wife already had to care for—the second child, a boy, was born in 1963—noting instead that Mwaungulu had attended classes irregularly, was frequently ill and under constant medical treatment, which points either to a problematic physical condition related to his malaria infection, a lack of discipline, or both.¹⁴⁶

However, it is a handwritten report of two pages that casts the darkest shadow on these generally positive examination records. Written on 17 September 1964 in an alarming and seriously concerned tone, it reports on a violent attack that occurred in Leipzig in the night from the 15 to the 16 September 1964, the day before Mwaungulu's prearranged departure to Malawi. The injuries he had suffered from this attack must have disfigured his face in a way that his wife was unable to recognize him at first sight. Fearing that the incident might damage the GDR's reputation as an ally of independent Africa, the East German authorities decided to delay Mwaungulu's departure for a week even though they had to persuade him to do so, as the report's author noted, not without a certain perplexedly:

Mr. M. said that although he was the victim of the conflict, this in no way affects his friendly relationship with the GDR and its citizens. In spite of his damaged appearance, Mr. M. wanted to start his journey home the next day. If someone would eventually ask him, he wanted to say that he fell off a bicycle. I explained to him that for various reasons we would not be interested in him travelling in this condition (very severe, disfiguring swellings and lacerations on his face, etc.). Finally, Mr M. showed his understanding and agreed to postponing the trip.¹⁴⁷

What had happened? In his study on foreign students in the GDR, Mac con Uladh writes of a “wave of racist attacks in the years 1964 and 1965”; that students from sub-Saharan Africa or Blacks were its main targets, and that a good part of these attacks occurred in Leipzig and the surrounding area, given the relatively high number of Africans who studied there (Uladh 2005b: 212, own translation). Mwaungulu adds to these file evaluations a perspective which gives a voice to the victims. When in September 1964 some Africans met for a farewell party for the graduates who were returning to Africa, Mwaungulu, together with his friends from UASA, participated in this event. The party took place in the *Carola-Casino*, a restaurant in Leipzig nearby the dormitory where Mwaungulu lived, together with his wife and the two children. Several Germans, fellow students from Mwaungulu's faculty as well as from the veterinary faculty, also attended the party. When Mwaungulu left the restaurant and wanted to go home, a group of at least three of these Germans were waiting for him outside in the dark and started beating him. All he could do

¹⁴⁶ LUA, Stua 030408, sheet 20.

¹⁴⁷ LUA, Stua 030408, sheets 21–22.

to defend himself—this is at least how he remembers it—was calling for help and picking up a stone from the ground to hit one of the attackers with. Then the police arrived. Again, as in the section from the report quoted above, Mwaungulu's account reads as if he wanted to avoid making any inconvenience for the GDR authorities—in other words, he demonstrated his loyalty to the socialist German state (or his solidarity, as he called it to Trüper), even after several of its citizens had just beaten him up:

They were all arrested and brought to the police station together with me. And the people in the restaurant were not aware about what had happened. The police wanted to go there, but I said: "No, it's better if you don't disturb them. I'm in good hands now. If you go there, they will all come out and make noise. That's not good." At the station the police asked the perpetrators why they attacked me: "He was your fellow student. How can you do this to him?" (Trüper 2000)

For the perpetrators, the answers included that he had turned a German woman into a prostitute by marrying her, that one of them envied him for his good exam grades and, of course, that they all disliked foreigners, in particular Blacks. According to Mwaungulu, they were all expelled from the university and sentenced to prison for several years, where they had to do forced labor in the coal mining sector.¹⁴⁸ However, considering the permanent injuries Mwaungulu suffered from the attack, the GDR's severe punishment of his assailants was hardly more than a symbolic act of compensation: "Normally I'm right-handed, but since then I'm unable to fully coordinate my right hand. And because of the injury of my eye, I can no longer see correctly. Only with the other eye can I see properly. I got this from these students in Leipzig" (Theuerkauf 2000: 29).

The physical violence Mwaungulu had been subjected to might have been one of the reasons why the UASA, still headed by Magona when Mwaungulu was already back in Africa, sent a petition to the GDR's Ministry of Internal Affairs in January 1965 calling on the Ministry to do something against the increasing racism. The petition was taken somewhat seriously by the Ministry which, however half-heartedly, forced the local police in Leipzig to take some action. According to a letter from the Major General of Leipzig's police to his senior in the Ministry, the police organized a series of meetings between African students and police members at the Herder Institute, with lectures and discussions. Though ignoring or downplaying any misbehavior on the side of the police, the two other groups explicitly accused by UASA of racist behavior—restaurant operators and taxi

¹⁴⁸ The coal and copper mines are said to have been the only sector where convicts worked together with ordinary people (Sachs 2016).

drivers—were advised by that same police not to show “inappropriate comportment towards foreigners” anymore.¹⁴⁹

Fortunately, racism had not been the dominant factor structuring Mwaungulu’s life in the GDR to that point; otherwise, all that he did there from 1960 to 1964—acquiring excellent German language skills, starting a German family, engaging in the UASA and getting his degree in economics, just to mention some key achievements—would hardly make any sense. But even though he had encountered a sociopolitical climate in Europe that, generally speaking, appears to have been more welcoming than hostile to Africans, for racist Germans who rejected the communist regime and perceived the presence of foreigners as a symbol of its rule (Poutrus 2018: 280–281),¹⁵⁰ Mwaungulu was the perfect target. As a student from colonial Africa, he clearly profited from the SED’s authoritarian rule over the GDR’s white-majority population, and, to make things worse, he had even dared to marry a German woman. Thus, when he was speaking to Theuerkauf about the attack almost forty years later, Mwaungulu added his own explanation, including his view on East German racism after reunification:

This was racism. It existed. Usually, these people were always brought to justice. They were simply arrested and gone. They got long prison sentences, 5 to 8 years in prison, with very hard work to do. In Leuna, in the Hartz, they had to work in these lignite mines. However, there was no education from the government—it simply claimed there was no racism here. And people weren’t taught how bad racism is. These people were still racist inside, but they couldn’t say it out loud. If they would have, they would have gotten into trouble with the government. That’s why they were just meek and just said yes—these fears from the fascist era were still present in the GDR. And now, since the GDR no longer exists, we are so amazed how the people behave. Like a bird that was caged and is free now. It flies so wildly that it destroys one of its wings. This is the situation now. (Theuerkauf 2000: 29)

What else can be said about this racist attack? If we leave Mwaungulu’s life story as told to Theuerkauf aside,¹⁵¹ it was this attack or victimhood which brought Mwaungulu his first (anonymous) entry in Germany’s post-reunification scholarship: “For no apparent reason, a student from Malawi was beaten up by three East German veterinary students” (Mac Con Uladh, 2005b: 209, own transla-

149 Saxonian State Archive Leipzig, 20250, Bezirksbehörde der Volkspolizei Leipzig, Nr. 448, Vorkommnisse und Straftaten mit Ausländern, sheets 010–015. For a discussion of UASA’s petition, see Mac Con Uladh 2005b: 210–212. I thank Jörg Depta for sharing his research findings with me.

150 Poutrus originally formulated this thesis together with two colleagues (Poutrus/Behrends/Kuck 2000).

151 As I mentioned already in note 93, the only existing copy of Mwaungulu’s life story and interview transcript (Theuerkauf 2000) now available in a library is missing every second page, due to an apparent printing error.

tion).¹⁵² Published in the same volume which contains Poutrus' critical assessment of the South African exile, Mac Con Uladh's mention of this incident appeared at a time when global-historical and postcolonial approaches were still marginal streams in German academia. Back then, research on migration to the GDR sought more to understand the reasons for post-1990 racism than what might have made the socialist German state an attractive destination for Africans. That at least some of these migrations were driven by a concrete political interest in finding alternatives to racialized capitalism remained beyond consideration, just like Mwaungulu's role as a freedom fighter and later exile remained hidden behind the fact that he was the target of a racist attack.

Mac Con Uladh—whose English PhD thesis on foreign students in the GDR (2005) appears much more nuanced than the German contribution he wrote on its basis in the same year—came to a rather critical conclusion, not unlike the one that Poutrus drew from his study about the South African exiles. Such rather negative assessments of the GDR still dominate public debate in Germany today. Nevertheless, Mac Con Uladh also acknowledged in his German text that “there is no doubt that the GDR enabled many people to study who otherwise would never have had this chance” (2005b: 218, own translation). However much the racist attack affected Mwaungulu's life and put a stain on the largely positive balance sheet of his student years in the GDR, this observation is clearly confirmed when we remember all the migrations and hardships that he had to endure in order to be able to study at a European university.

2.7 From the GDR Straight into the Malawi Cabinet Crisis

Mwaungulu was 32 years old when he returned to Malawi at the end of September 1964. No matter that he had been born in Tanganyika and already spent more years abroad than in Nyasaland—he was a Ngonde, as a fellow countryman from Mwaungulu patiently explained to me; and the Ngonde, as the historian Owen Kalinga writes, had settled on the north-western shores of Lake Malawi for centuries (Kalinga 1985). Accordingly, the narrative of returning to his native land is a common theme in Mwaungulu's interviews as well as in the interviews that I conducted with Mwaungulu's wife and children. In 1964, the family's plan still was that the wife, as soon as she had graduated, would take

¹⁵² Mac Con Uladh (2005b: 209) became aware of the incident not through the file that I quoted but through its brief mentioning in another file: SAPMO-BArch, DR 3/1937, sheet 1, 4 February 1965, Informationsbericht über die Situation unter den ausländischen Studierenden, insbesondere in Auswertung von Vorfällen in der Öffentlichkeit.

their two children and her mother and follow her husband to Malawi so that she could use her journalism skills to help build up a media apparatus in the country. Given that “none of the former British countries started independence with genuinely Marxist or Leninist regimes” (Mazrui 2003: 755), however, the knowledge her husband had gained in the GDR was of little use for the postcolonial state he returned to. Much to contrary, Malawi turned to a Western-backed dictatorship, ruled by an autocratic president-for-life who understood any allusions to communism as a personal affront. Hence, the picture which Mwaungulu retrospectively draws about the return to his homeland, particularly in his interview with Theuerkauf, is an ambiguous one.

First, he claims that the new Malawian president, Hastings Kamuzu Banda (fig. 7), had sent an order to the GDR’s Central Committee which demanded his immediate return to meet the country’s need for economists. Second, he claims that the GDR likewise had an interest in his return, for his host country hoped to build a relationship with the newly independent country. Moreover, the East Germans wanted to use him as an informant, to find out more about Malawi’s government policies and its relationship with South Africa. The story goes that he was contacted in Leipzig by a recruiter who, in return, offered financial support for his German family—an offer whose rejection Mwaungulu recounts in a humorous way: “Listen, I’m a Marxist-Leninist and really in favor of this ideology, but I could never work as a spy. I’m way too revolutionary to spy. I would only blame you, and then you would eventually kill me. I can’t help you, no!” (Theuerkauf 2000: 14). Third, Mwaungulu claims that he already knew that Banda was a hardcore capitalist (*Hartkapitalist*) who would never ever want any relations with the GDR (Theuerkauf 2000: 14–15). Anyway, Mwaungulu had to return, and so he did. What exactly awaited him in Malawi?

At the time of Mwaungulu’s return in late September, just two months after independence, it was still unclear if Banda would be able to consolidate his power. A notorious anti-communist and rather exceptional in his interpretation of pan-Africanism (e.g. Short 1974: 239; Mhone 1992: 4; Kayange 2012: 17–23), Banda demonstrated a unidirectional Western orientation through eventually establishing diplomatic relations with apartheid South Africa and Portuguese-ruled Mozambique, while refusing to do the same with the People’s Republic of China.¹⁵³ These politics unfolded during a time when there was still a popular belief in a widespread African revolution that could barely tolerate the continuation of European settler regimes and colonial rule. Thus, in August and September 1964—around two weeks before Mwaungulu’s return—Banda’s authoritarian pro-Western style faced the re-

153 For an affirmative US perspective on Banda’s anti-communism, see Munger (1969: 27–28).

sistance of several of his ministers, a historical event later to be known as the Malawi Cabinet Crisis. Banda dismissed several ministers, while others resigned from their posts in an act of solidarity with their colleagues (Baker 2001; McCracken 2012: 429–453).

A report from the GDR about this crisis, written in early October 1964, saw Banda in acute danger of being overthrown. The hope was that, after such an overthrow, the progressive elite of Malawi's nationalist leaders would determine Malawi's future policies. Beside Yatuta Chisiza, to whom I will come later, the report mentioned explicitly Kanyama Chiume, who had taught Mwaungulu in Uganda, as being a part of this progressive elite. The events in Malawi should be closely observed, advised the report, and, in the eventuality that a mass movement led or organized by these progressives were to develop, the Solidarity Committee should be ready to support it. It also suggests that the East Germans did not arbitrarily send Mwaungulu into exile when they initiated his return to Malawi; instead, they were taking the political upheavals as evidence of a revolutionary situation which gave reason to hope for a political development in their favor.

The report also pointed towards another meaningful development—the generous support which the West Germans had already given to Malawi, manifested in 600 tons of fertilizer and a credit of DM 10 Million.¹⁵⁴ This is instructive insofar as the FRG indeed was to become an important supporter of the Banda dictatorship, rewarding both Malawi's anti-communism as well as its tolerant stance towards apartheid South Africa. In a little bit more than two decades, the West German development aid given to Malawi would amount to DM 770 Million.¹⁵⁵ In an earlier report from March 1964, the GDR, struggling with the effects of the *Hallstein-Doktrin*, had still hoped to build up a friendly relationship with Banda while similarly pointing to the extended relations which the FRG already had with the future Malawi, as the Malawian ambassador to the FRG had been announced as early as November 1963, when Banda visited the FRG for the first time.¹⁵⁶ These early relationships between Malawi and the GDR's German “class

154 SAPMO-BArchiv, DY30 IVA2/20 948, Informationen zu Malawi, Situationsbericht über die politische Krise in Malawi, 9 October 1964, sheets 193–195.

155 See the article *Hilfe für Malawi* (Help for Malawi), *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 10 November 1987 (newspaper clip from Mwaungulu's estate). The FRG also trained Malawian military pilots.

156 SAPMO-BArchiv, DY30 IVA2/20 948, sheet 192, Informationen zu Njassaland, Berlin 17 March 1964. The West German Hallstein doctrine, named after Walter Hallstein, who in the 1950s was the state secretary in the FRG's Ministry for Foreign Affairs, prescribed that countries which recognized the GDR diplomatically could be sanctioned by the FRG. It was used overall as a precondition that the FRG applied to Third World countries if they wanted to obtain West German development aid but was abandoned in 1970.

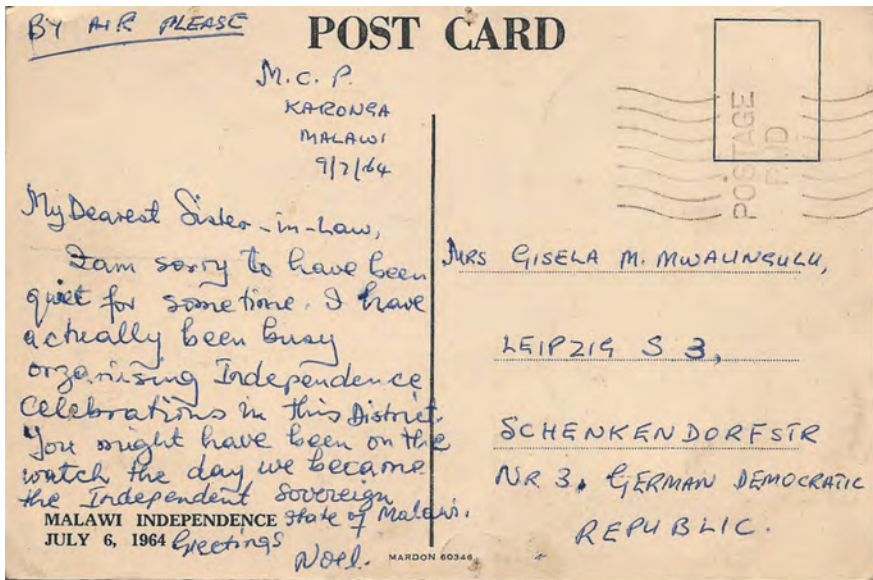
enemy” notwithstanding, the GDR administrators took it as a positive sign that, during this visit, Banda “could not be persuaded to explicitly take a stand against the GDR.” Moreover, the report quoted an unnamed student from Nyasaland who was studying in Leipzig at the time the report was written and, during a home visit, had been questioned by Banda about the GDR to obtain some firsthand information. This student was almost certainly Mwaungulu, of course, who had once visited Nyasaland to collect data for his diploma thesis.¹⁵⁷

For the period following his return to independent Malawi, Mwaungulu claims that he lived in Zomba, then still the country’s capital, and started to work there as one of four economic advisers to the government—beside him another Black Malawian, who had studied economics in Madras (now Chennai) in India where the Communist Party was strong, and two white Englishmen, who had both studied administrative management in Oxford—before he was put under house arrest at the end of October 1964 (Theuerkauf 2000: 15–16). In this section of Theuerkauf’s interview, he also says that he was a Marxist-Leninist but not a communist, without further explaining how to clearly separate the one from the other, thereby defending himself against the main accusation he was confronted with in Malawi of being a communist. The second reason why he was put under house arrest, as he claims, was his criticism of both the intensification of Malawi’s political and economic ties with apartheid South Africa as well as the government’s increasing tribalism—the privileging of one ethnic group above the other for political reasons (see Chirwa 1998: 52–69). He exemplifies how he brought himself into danger through recalling a scene in which he sits in a bar in Malawi together with friends, critically discussing the problems of South Africa in a loud voice, which could also be read as an implicit sign of the problematic role that alcohol would play in his later life.

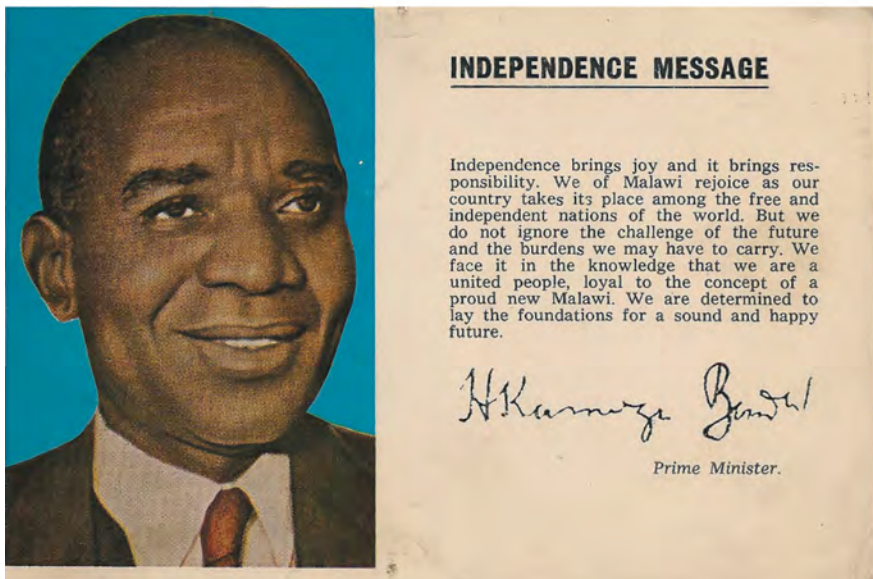
Kapote Mwakasungura, one of Mwaungulu’s fellow Malawian exiles in Tanzania, to whom I will return below, wrote me that, although it is true that Mwaungulu had a village mate who had studied in India and was with the Economic Development Department, Mwaungulu himself had no opportunity to work for the government, for the Cabinet Crisis was in full bloom at the time of his return, and he was a graduate from a communist country.¹⁵⁸ This actually being the truth would mean that, in the interview, Mwaungulu assigns himself a more meaningful role than he actually played. What can be said with relative probability, however, is that Mwaungulu—still lacking a passport or citizenship—found his way into Tanzanian exile before the end of 1964.

157 SAPMO-BArchiv, DY30 IVA2/20 948, sheet 192, Informationen zu Njassaland, Berlin 17 March 1964.

158 Kapote Mwakasungura’s answers to my questions, 14 March 2016 (see p. 158).



(a)



(b)

Fig. 7: Postcard showing a portrait of Malawi's first prime minister and later dictator Hastings Kamuzu Banda. It was sent to Gisela Mwaungulu in Leipzig by one of Mwaungulu's brothers at the occasion of Malawi's independence (permission granted from Gisela Mwaungulu).

In order to understand what Malawi's transformation into a dictatorship and the exiles whom it created meant at that time, beyond the individual scope of Mwaungulu's biography, it is important to stress the function which the Malawian independence movement had played as a role model up to this point. In the words of two white Europeans—one a historian, the other one an activist—the Malawi Congress Party had been “the most dynamic, united and successful nationalist movement in the region in the early 1960s” (McCracken 2009: 523); the party's success at the polls in 1961 had been accompanied by the hope that it “would strengthen the whole nationalist movement in central Africa; it would prove that government by consent was not a chimera and it would forge the tip of a spear thrusting into the Rhodesian, Portuguese and even South African heartlands of settler rule” (Mackay 2008: 119). In other words, the expectations had been that a Malawi governed by the MCP would not only help to bring an end to the Central African Federation—which it actually did—but that it would accelerate Southern Africa's decolonization as a whole. This hope became obsolete with the establishment of the Banda dictatorship. That “a high proportion of the best educated Malawians of the independence generation ended in exile” (McCracken 2012: 448) only bore further testimony to its failure.

2.8 Exile in Tanzania 1964–1967: The Pangale Refugees Settlement

Mwaungulu's exile begins with his flight from Malawi to Tanzania, which his interview with Trüper contains the most detailed recounting of. While under house arrest in Karonga, Mwaungulu and a friend were advised that Banda's henchmen were searching for them and that their lives were in acute danger. Though Karonga district shares a common border with Tanzania, they chose the longer route via Zambia by crossing the Luangwa river, passing through Isoka and the Tanzanian border town Tunduma to Mbeya, from where they finally took a plane to Dar es Salaam. Mwaungulu enriches the story with a telephone conversation that Isoka's district commissioner had about their flight with the Zambian president, Kenneth Kaunda, who in turn informed Mbeya's superintendent if not the Tanzanian president Nyerere himself about their coming—perhaps he wanted to give his flight story an extra thrill. It ends with the sober fact that, once in Tanzania, they found themselves among hundreds or even thousands of Malawian refugees

who had all fled Banda's repressions.¹⁵⁹ Said's "large herds of innocent and bewildered people requiring urgent international assistance" (1994: 144) come to mind here, and Mwaungulu, speaking of himself as a refugee, introduces the UNHCR into the story:

Now we not only fell under the responsibility of the Tanzanian government, we were real refugees under the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR]. We were sent to Tabora, but not to the city. To the bush, with tents, we had to have tents by ourselves, provided with these strange beans, med [i.e. whole] grains, canned fish and all kind of canned food. We had all this, and in one year we had to build our own houses. (Trüper 2000)

A Tanzanian identity certificate from Mwaungulu's private estate, dated December 1966, confirms the Pangale refugee settlement in Tabora as his address at the time (fig. 8).¹⁶⁰

Pangale is a rural ward in the Tanzanian midland nearby the city Tabora, once an important administrative center during German colonialism, located around 800 kilometers away both from Malawi's Karonga district to the South and the Tanzanian capital Dar es Salaam to the East. It became the shelter not only for Malawians but also for refugees from other neighboring countries, such as Rwanda, as Mwaungulu recalls. The harsh living conditions in the settlement—poor hygiene, tsetse flies and dirty water—put the many children among the refugees under a high risk of falling sick. Mwaungulu further claims that he served as an intermediary to the Tanzanian authorities to help solving these problems, thanks to his Swahili skills and some distant family relationships he still had back from his childhood years in Tanganyika. Yet, even in this context, his days in the GDR came in handy:

159 It is difficult to estimate the exact number of Malawians who fled the country in the aftermath of the Cabinet Crisis and the Banda regime's subsequent consolidation. Although there are studies on the more than 20,000 Jehovah's Witnesses who fled the Banda regime's persecution in the early 1970s, I could not find any study on this particular group of early refugees from the mid- and late 1960s. Mwaungulu speaks in the interviews of around 20,000 Malawians, one half of them fleeing to Tanzania, the other half fleeing to Zambia. Toby D. Mendel (1997: 37 & 40) only speaks of individual political refugees who fled to Tanzania, while Kapote Mwakasungura and Douglas Miller's *Malawi's Lost Years* (2016) points to a larger number but, similarly, lacks concrete numbers. Concerning the overall number of Malawians who fled the Banda regime until the early 1990s, Heiko Meinhardt (1997: 98) quotes from a letter by an oppositional umbrella organization which estimated the number at 50,000, speculating that most of them must have been rather migrants than political activists in exile, while a study by Flora Cornish et al. (1999: 268) on Malawian returnees speaks of an estimated number of 25,000 refugees, with the vast majority of them again being Jehovah's Witnesses. On the Banda regime's systematic human rights violations, such as torture and detention practices, see Karl Peltzer's chapter on Malawi (1996: 45–113).

160 On the Pangale refugee settlement, see also Mwakasungura/Miller 2016: 101.

Tabora District.
 Tel. No.56.
 Ref.No. B.5/28/15.

District Office,
 P.O. Box 30,
 TABORA.
 8th December, 1966.

Mr. Mwangula,
Pangale Refugees Settlement,
TABORA.

I have to-day received a copy of the letter addressed to the Consulate General of the German Democratic Republic by the Principal Secretary, 2nd Vice-President's Office D'Salaam replying the letter by the same Consulate about your post-graduat Scholarship to the D.R.G.

Paragraph 2 of the letter states that; "Whilst the ~~the~~ Government of the United Republic of Tanzania has no objection to his going to German, however, I wish to bring it to your notice that no guarantee would be given to Mr. Mwangula by the Government of Tanzania for a re-entry permit to Tanzania."

I am, therefore, directed to ask you whether or not you agree with the condition mentioned in para 2 above. In case you accept the condition with your present sponsor you are required to inform in writing the Principal Secretary, 2nd Vice-President's Office, D'Salaam so that he may recommend you for one-way travelling document.

Please confirm this as soon as possible by writing u.f.s. to this Office,

Mwanga
SETTLEMENT COMMANDANT.

c.c. The Principal Secretary,
 2nd Vice-President'S Office,
DAR ES SALAAM.

Your letter No. VI/P.30/93/15 of 30/11/66 refers.

Fig. 8: Letter from 1966 from Tanzanian officials documenting Mwaungulu's stay in the Pangale Refugees Settlement and explaining the conditions for his departure to the GDR (Mwaungulu private estate). It was sent to Mwaungulu by other exiled Malawians via Moscow in the early 1980s, when he needed a document to proof his refugee status to West German authorities (see p. 172).

Fortunately, someone from the GDR was in Tabora. I knew him from my time there; we were together in the German-African Society [DAfriG].¹⁶¹ It was Professor Hussel, a veterinarian! This man helped us a lot to clean the water—in three months we had already lost three children because of the water. I had heard that Hussel was there, so I went to him: “We have problems. The children are dying, the water.” So he brought his medicine. The water was actually drinkable, but it had to be cleaned of bacteria beforehand, so we had to clean it every morning. (Trüper 2000)

The veterinary professor that Mwaungulu remembers here in such a positive way is the same man that the East German Peter Sebald, himself a member of DAfriG, mentions in his article on that organization (1993). Sebald’s article was published in one of the earliest post-reunification volumes on the relations between the GDR and Africa that was edited exclusively by East Germans. Therein, Sebald sees Hussel as representative of all those members of DAfriG who interacted with Africans in the GDR “out of personal idealism,” further arguing that Hussel “is unforgotten by many African students, for they could come to Hussel’s private apartment in Leipzig at any hour, be it only to talk about personal problems that accompany the life of a foreign student in every host country” (1993: 85, own translation). And while Mac Con Uladh dismisses the argument that Sebald makes in the same article about “the generally good relationships between Africans and East Germans during the 1950s and 1960s” in the GDR by pointing to the long list of racist attacks (Sebald 1993: 82; Mac Con Uladh 2005b: 208 ff.), the picture which Mwaungulu, a victim of these attacks, draws here of Hussel seems to fully confirm Sebald’s assertion.

Whatever the deeper truth about Sebald’s text, Hussel was in Tabora between 1966 and 1967 to help in building up a veterinary center. It is thus entirely possible that Mwaungulu brought him to the refugee settlement or that he at least met him there again.¹⁶² On the stricter level of the narrative, however, it is noteworthy that, by mentioning Hussel as the one who solved the pressing water problem, Mwaungulu not only evokes the GDR in a positive way; by adding that it was he who brought Hussel to the camp, for he knew Hussel already from his studies in Leipzig, Mwaungulu strengthens his own agency by putting himself in such a direct relationship with the GDR (fig. 9).

161 To my knowledge, membership in DAfriG was only possible for East Germans, meaning that Mwaungulu refers here to the close interaction between DAfriG and UASA’s executive committee.

162 See LUA, Professorendatenbank, Lothar Hussel, https://research.uni-leipzig.de/agintern/CPL/PDF/Hussel_Lothar.pdf (accessed 2 October 2023).



Fig. 9: Mwaungulu together with Lothar Hüssel in Leipzig, early 1960s (permission granted from Gisela Mwaungulu).

2.8.1 Political Organization, Cuban Engagement, and failed Guerilla Campaigns

Before Mwaungulu told this anecdote to Trüper, he spoke about the self-organizing of many of these refugees in accord with their political principles, merging the figure of refugees in need of help with that of political exiles willing to fight. For instance, he mentions Henry Masauko Chipembere, Malawi's former Minister of Education, who failed in an attempt to overthrow the Banda regime by force in early 1965 (Baker 2001: 204–236).¹⁶³ Chipembere's Pan-African Democratic Party (PDP) is also said to have served as the main party uniting the Malawian exiles in Tanzania during the first years, whereas Mwaungulu says that he joined the Malawi Revolutionary Movement, a party whose name I found in no other source than in his interview with Trüper. According to Mwaungulu, a lack of unity among the ex-ministers and internal struggles were also the reason why the Malawian refugees were finally put under the responsibility of the UNHCR and ended up in Tabora.

¹⁶³ Chipembere was also one of the first non-South Africans to join the ANC's Youth League during his studies at Fort Hare University (Mackay 2008: 105).

Mwaungulu claims that his party sent him to Cuba for six months of political training. The only other information he gives about his stay on the Caribbean island is that he was trained there as a political commissar and that he worked in this function as a trainer himself, after his return to Tanzania. He evokes Cuba's strong commitment to the African cause again by mentioning a brief talk he once had with Che Guevara in Dar es Salaam as well as by paralleling Guevara's failed guerrilla campaign in the Congo with a smaller but similarly failed campaign carried out by a group of fewer than twenty Malawian exiles in 1967. Known only to some experts in Malawian history, this doomed struggle also had consequences for Mwaungulu's personal and political life.¹⁶⁴

I realized that my people tried to start a guerrilla campaign in Malawi, and I disagreed. So, my party told me that I was not suitable for violent struggle, that I was a reactionary and revisionist. Then they told me I should return to my children. [. . .] Hence, my party helped me to get a second stipend to return. They told the GDR's embassy in Tanzania that I should get a second stipend to do my doctorate. Simply because I did not agree with guerrilla warfare. Then they went directly to Malawi. And not one of them is still alive! Malawi murdered them all. Only one could escape to Zambia. He is still alive and at home. And I was told to come here [East Germany] and did so in '68. In January '69 I started my doctorate at the University of Economics. And, during this time, they all went to Malawi and were murdered there. And I only heard the news. At the same time, Che Guevara was in Bolivia. I first met Che Guevara in Tanzania, when he came back from Zaire. There I told him: "Listen, your guerrilla fights will not work here, because you don't know anything about the terrain and the traditions of the Africans. You can't come to Zaire with the whole world to fight together with the Zaireans. This is not the way it will work out. I give you six months, and then you are gone." And he remained for only three months. I then met him again in Dar es Salaam in 1968. He said: "O.k., you were right." And he had to leave for Latin America. He went back to Latin America with his wife Tanja, this woman from the GDR. They went to Bolivia together. It was in Bolivia where he was murdered. At the same time when Che Guevara died, these people in Malawi were also murdered. It must have been in September or October, when I was already here.¹⁶⁵ (Theuerkauf 2000: 17)

164 Mwakasungura and Miller write that this group of Malawian guerillas called itself the *Ufulu Umodzi* Malawi Party Brigade (2016: 176). *Ufulu* and *Umodzi* are Chichewa terms meaning freedom and solidarity. For the most detailed account on Chisiza's incursion, see Mackay 2008: 327–345. Guevara's guerilla campaign in the Congo was an attempt to intervene on the side of a Marxist-oriented Congolese movement in the aftermath of the political chaos created through Lumumba's assassination.

165 Full diplomatic relations between the GDR and Tanzania were established in 1972; during the period Mwaungulu is talking about, the GDR had only a consulate general there. With "Tanja" or "the woman from the GDR" Mwaungulu is referring to the East German Tamara Bunke. She took part in Guevara's fatal Bolivian campaign and was shot by Bolivian security forces in 1967.

Led by Yatuta Chisiza, Malawi's former Minister of Home Affairs, whom the GDR had considered as another progressively minded national leader, the incursion is said to have resulted out of a split between several of the ex-ministers—Chipembere, Chiume and Chisiza—and the various exiled opposition leaders, together with those of their own followers who were militarily trained, first wanted to participate in the guerilla campaign but later refused to do so.¹⁶⁶ It was the last attempt to overthrow Banda by force. What is illuminating about this failed incursion is that it provides evidence of early socialist involvement in the formation of a radical Malawian opposition—Chisiza and his small group had all received military training in socialist countries. Moreover, the total number of Malawian exiles who were trained in the second half of the 1960s by countries such as Algeria, China, or Cuba—Mwaungulu adds Egypt to this list—must have been much larger than previously imagined (Miller/Mwakasungura 2016: 193; Baker 2001: 279–284). Even the host country Tanzania is said to have offered such training for Malawian exiles to increase their capacity for self-defense against threats from Banda's forces.¹⁶⁷

The way in which Mwaungulu brings Chisiza's guerrilla campaign into play, however, is not only revealing because he parallels it with Guevara's one—Peter Mackay would do the same in his memoir (2008: 330)¹⁶⁸—but because he additionally connects it with his return to the GDR. Hence, it helps us to understand his ambivalent personality as a young family man involved in revolutionary change in Africa. Meanwhile, together with his earlier crossing of the African continent and political experiences in Ghana, it also explains why he is remembered by some political activists of Berlin's African community as a revolutionary figure himself—to be able to look back on a life full of encounters with anti-colonial celebrities like Nkrumah, Padmore or Guevara means something.¹⁶⁹

Does it matter that Mwaungulu confuses the exact year of Guevara's stay in Tanzania and of his own return to the GDR or that it cannot be proven whether he personally talked to Guevara and predicted the outcome of his Congo campaign or not? Just like Hüssel the year after, Guevara was in Tanzania between 1965 and 1966, when Mwaungulu was also there. Guevara recounts in his Congo

166 Unpublished interview transcript of Doug Miller interviewing Kapote Mwakasungura, *Lesoma History: the Missing Link*, 17 January 2010, Karonga, Malawi.

167 Unpublished interview transcript of Doug Miller interviewing John Jando Nkhwazi and Kapote Mwakasungura, 12 November 2013.

168 Peter Mackay, a native Scot who migrated to Southern Rhodesia in 1948, was a journalist who actively supported African liberation movements, particularly those from Malawi and Zimbabwe.

169 Conversation with Jonas Endrias at the demonstration *125 Jahre Berliner Afrika-Konferenz*, (125 years Berlin-Africa Conference), Berlin, 15 November 2009.

diary two meetings with African freedom fighters in Dar es Salaam around 1965, writing that most of them “lived comfortably in hotels and had made a veritable profession out of their situation, sometimes lucrative and nearly always agreeable,” and “generally asked for military training in Cuba and financial assistance” (Guevara 2000: 5). About the second meeting, Guevara writes in an equally disappointed tone that he fruitlessly tried to convince the heterogeneous group—among them possibly also some Malawian exiles—to join forces and fight together in the Congo against what he called “Yankee” imperialism, instead of dividing the forces and wasting them in national struggles: “I tried to show them that we were talking not of a struggle within fixed frontiers, but of a war against the common enemy, present as much in Mozambique as in Malawi, Rhodesia or South Africa, the Congo or Angola” (2000: 7).

Sarika Chandra and Neil Larsen have already pointed to the Eurocentrism inherent in Guevara’s Congo diary, and the hierarchic structure that it provides for “the revolutionary subjects of a ‘tricontinentalist’ national liberation movement” (2006: 109). By anticipating this critique and paralleling Guevara and Chisiza’s failed campaigns, Mwaungulu reminds us that, for a brief historical moment, the hardly-known Malawian exile had a say in Dar es Salaam’s internationalist scene, even if Andrew Ivaska’s entry on the Tanzanian capital in the *Routledge Handbook of the Global Sixties* mentions it only in passing as having been part of “a lower-profile network of leftwing opposition movements from more conservative neighboring regimes” (2018: 33).

2.9 From Tanzanian Exile Back to the GDR in 1967: Statelessness, Encounters with German-Jewish Exiles, and Rejection of the Armed Struggle

In his interview with Trüper, Mwaungulu creates a multilayered narrative about his 1967 return to the GDR. With several people involved, only the figure of his wife is missing. He refers exclusively to his own as well as his party’s agency, to corresponding talks with a Tanzanian politician as well as with the GDR and UNHCR’s representatives as the means which enabled his return. What he leaves unmentioned are any other efforts from abroad, where Gisela Mwaungulu, together with UASA and DAfriG, equally supported his return. Mwaungulu’s story goes as follows:

First, a Swiss UNHCR representative who visited the Pangale refugee settlement enters the stage. Mwaungulu surprised this representative with his German language skills and by asking if he could help him to return to the GDR, arguing

that he wanted to be with his children. Second, Heinrich Eggebrecht enters, himself a former exile from the time of the anti-fascist struggle (Schleicher 2016: 17–18); coming to Tanzania in his function as the secretary of the GDR's Solidarity Committee, he also worked on Mwaungulu's return as soon as he heard about the latter's wish. Third, Mwaungulu was called from Tabora to Dar es Salaam to meet there with Rachid Kawawa, Tanzania's second vice president, who also agreed to his return to the GDR. In an imitated dialogue with Kawawa, Mwaungulu explains why he opted for the Malawian instead for the Tanzanian side, as if he once had had the chance to become a Tanzanian citizen because of his birth and childhood there but that he rejected it, for he was politically committed to Malawi. The scene has something unsettling—sitting in Kawawa's office, Mwaungulu needs to explain why he is now a stateless refugee who is asking for permission to leave the country of his birth for the GDR. This impression is reinforced by Mwaungulu's faltering words to Trüper about his last three months in Tanzania, when he had already left the refugee settlement and was living, instead, in Dar es Salaam with a childhood friend: "I was with a friend who grew up with me. We have . . . we are like brothers, we are like . . . *there I really was at home now*" (Trüper 2000, my emphasis).

Ultimately, Yatuta Chisiza appears, the ex-minister and now-president of the Malawi Revolutionary Movement, who additionally persuaded Kawawa as well as the GDR's consul general to support Mwaungulu's wish to return. The consul general at the time was Gottfried Lessing, who had lived in Rhodesian exile during the Nazi regime, meaning that Mwaungulu's narrative now intersects the German and Jewish exile with the African one for the second time.¹⁷⁰ Illona Schleicher (2016) has shown that repatriated communists who had survived the Nazi regime in exile played important roles in the GDR's international solidarity and African policies. Maria Schubert, though slightly relativizing it as constructed identities, makes a similar argument with regard to the German and Jewish repatriates who established initial contact between the GDR and African-American activists like Paul Robeson (2018: 116, 134 & 400). Schleicher, in turn, highlights in particular the specific knowledge such former exiles had about key aspects of the organizational aspects of political exile, such as the importance of doing propaganda work and avoiding sectarianism. However, whereas some African exiles such as Pallo Jordan—an ANC member who never lived in the GDR—reveal a strong awareness about such historical entanglements,¹⁷¹ Mwaungulu remains silent about them

¹⁷⁰ Unlike the aforementioned Eggebrecht, Lessing had a partially Jewish background.

¹⁷¹ Pallo Jordan talked about these aspects in the panel discussion at the South African Liliesleaf Museum (see p. 69, n. 70).

here. Instead, he uses Chisiza's figure to lay out in more detail why he rejected the latter's plans for incursion into Malawi, arguing that they first had to explain to the Malawian population the reasons for it and proposing the use of propaganda material for this purpose. By making this argument, Mwaungulu implicitly admits that Banda enjoyed some support in Malawi or that the ex-ministers, in spite of the considerable number of refugees and political prisoners created by the Banda regime, could not rely on the unconditional support of the Malawian population. It makes the Malawian exile appear like an even more disturbing phenomenon, a problem that had no solution in the short run. This frustrating situation would lead Chisiza and most of his companions to their untimely deaths, whereas it would bring Mwaungulu back to his family in the GDR. In doing so, however, it would also detach him physically from the Malawian exile community in Tanzania, thereby lending a more individual character to his displacement and turning it into a condition he would essentially have to deal with by himself.

Equipped with an East German *Fremdenpass* (GDR passport for foreigners), Mwaungulu was waiting in Dar es Salaam for the right vessel that would bring him back to his family: "The problem was that I couldn't fly, because the airport in Cairo was damaged. It was the time when the Israelis attacked Egypt" (Theuerkauf 2000: 17). That he mentions the temporary closure of one of the main hubs of decolonization, which connected Africa with the Cold War East (Burton 2019: 30–40), is notable, for it further explains the loss of sympathy which Israel suffered due to the Six Day War in African countries such as Tanzania (Carol 2012: 209–216; Polakow-Suransky 2010: 45–47). The longer sea route—Mwaungulu recalls having spent 35 days on a GDR ship—led him from the Tanzanian capital via the Canary Islands to England. He argues that he was not allowed to go ashore, because his opposition to the Banda regime made of him an opponent of a Commonwealth member state and, thus, a *persona non grata* in Great Britain. Yet he did manage to enter London clandestinely to visit some friends. The story goes that he was caught by the police while on shore leave; confronted with the options of being imprisoned or sent back to Malawi, he successfully threatened to go to the International Court of Justice in The Hague, if they would not let him go. On the loose again, Mwaungulu boarded a vessel from Hull via Hamburg—where Padmore had once worked for the Comintern—to the GDR's main seaport in Rostock, where his wife eagerly awaited his arrival in 1967.

2.10 Reuniting with an Estranged Family

Leaving the Malawian exile community in Tanzania for his East German family in the GDR was an ambivalent undertaking for Mwaungulu right from the start. Now in a more peaceful setting, he was confronted by a partially estranged family and an intellectual task that would steadily remind him of what the Banda dictatorship prevented him from doing—putting his skills and abilities in service of the benefit of his country. His return to the GDR was linked to a new scholarship, this time to write a PhD dissertation at the HfÖ in Berlin-Karlshorst.¹⁷² Before I come to this challenge, I briefly turn to the memories of his wife and children, for in his interviews Mwaungulu remains rather silent about his family when it comes to this stage of his life.

Although the young couple had kept in touch via letters, the years of physical separation and uncertain future resulted in conflicts and problems that would negatively affect the course of their marriage, as Gisela Mwaungulu told me. Likewise, the two children—a third child, another boy, was eventually born in 1971—both remembered independently that they could not recognize their father in “this strange Black man.”¹⁷³ Unavoidably, Mwaungulu’s three-year absence and transformation into a political exile had not only thwarted the family’s plans to emigrate to Malawi but also alienated his German family from him. In 1968, Gisela Mwaungulu was assigned an attractive job in the English-speaking Africa section of Radio Berlin International and, keeping the family together, took the two children and followed her husband to the GDR’s capital. As she would later write in a brief sociological snapshot as a member of a women’s initiative, they were assigned an apartment “in a run-down, former working-class district” in Berlin-Lichtenberg, where “many ex-cons had been settled in the 1970s” (G. Mwaungulu 1992: 130, own translation). The appearance of these “long-haired, grubby guys” at first scared her, but they turned out to be warmhearted people who “outbid each other in caring for the children” (ibid.), accepting the German-African family in their neighborhood without reservations and protecting “Mahoma’s children,” as

¹⁷² In 1972, the university’s name was changed to *Hochschule für Ökonomie Bruno Leuschner*. Leuschner was a German communist and later politician in the GDR, who had been imprisoned during most of the Nazi period. The HfÖ was dissolved after German reunification and its properties and archived documents became part of the Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft Berlin (University of Applied Sciences, HTW), which was founded in 1994. For an East German post-reunification view on the HfÖ, see Kupferschmidt/Zellmer 2013; for the HTW’s awareness of its history before 1994, see Stieffenhoffer/Kamp 2014. I thank the HTW’s archivist, Christian Höcky, and its former president, Michael Heine, for helping me with my research.

¹⁷³ Interviews conducted on 15 June (with the first son) and 20 November (with the daughter) 2007 in Berlin.

they used to call them, against any stranger who dared to offend them. In a similar vein, she emphasizes that her children, “who today would be called Black Germans,” had the luck that the German mother and the African father were both present to stand up their children’s rights (*ibid.*).

Unfortunately, this did not save the daughter from the racism of her new school mates, for she was the only Black child there. The daughter contrasts this with her earlier memories of the multicultural environment of the KMU’s residential home in Leipzig, where she had grown up with other children of mixed couples, memories that are free from racist experiences. According to the daughter, Mwaungulu—whom she remembers from her childhood and teenage years as “a tough man, a really tough man”—left the children’s education to his wife while reserving the authoritarian part for himself. The first son, in contrast, recalls a more caring and patient side of his father, which only turned into incomprehension and severity when the son started school and, contrary to his sister, brought home poor results. On the other hand, the children just needed to report a racist assault and their father would walk straight into the school director’s office and push over the latter’s desk to express his indignation. As Gisela Mwaungulu retrospectively wrote in the early 1990s, the African father stood up vigorously for their children’s rights. The family’s new home in Berlin-Lichtenberg soon became a meeting spot for other Africans as well. With the male guests avoiding alcoholic beverages and the busy mother always being prepared to extend meals for spontaneous visitors, the children, sitting half-hidden under a big table, listened excitedly to the lively debates about global politics that were being waged in multiple languages above their heads in the small and protected world of their apartment.

Notwithstanding the many changes that the father’s return brought into the family’s life, one thing remained the same—like any “true” exile, Mwaungulu firmly believed that all that they did in the GDR was only transitory, for sooner or later everything would change for the better, and they would be able to emigrate to Africa. Studying Malawi’s economic development did little to shake this belief and become more settled in for a life in East German exile.

2.11 Writing a Doctoral Thesis at the University of Economics (1967–1973)

Unfortunately for Mwaungulu, although his doctoral research was well received, it brought on new dilemmas for him as well. As he explains,

I wrote my doctoral thesis about Malawi’s industrial development. This was very interesting for me and my professors, because it offered a lot of new insights. I criticized the capitalist

economy very much. For instance, I think that the theory of surplus value is very dangerous for any country, not only for Germany but for all countries. I learned how much we are being exploited through capitalism and this surplus theory. I criticized so much. I stayed at the *Hochschule für Ökonomie* until 1973. But then I was not allowed to continue. I could not work anymore and was not allowed to go anywhere. Then the university said: “We can’t let you defend your thesis; you have to work as a research assistant.” If I had taken the final exam, I would have had to leave the GDR, for as a foreigner I was not allowed to stay after finishing my studies. The GDR wanted to avoid a brain drain from the developing countries, meaning that no jobs were given to graduates from these countries because they should go home to serve their countries instead. The GDR stayed true to this logic until the very end. But I could not go to Malawi. (Theuerkauf 2000: 18–19)

It was the shared understanding of capitalism’s interrelatedness with Western Europe’s colonial expansion where the political interests of freedom fighters such as Mwaungulu most clearly overlapped with those of the socialist world. The *Institut Ökonomik der Entwicklungsländer* (Institute for the Economics of the Developing Countries, IfÖE), established at the HfÖ in the year of Mwaungulu’s failed return to Malawi in 1964 to adapt the training of African, Asian, and Latin American (PhD) students to the specific needs of their home countries, belonged to the GDR’s most important think tanks in this regard. International relations were not limited to institutions in the socialist world, such as with Moscow’s Lumumba University, but stretched out to the south and included the Institute for National Planning in Egypt or the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics in India. As Waltraud Schmidt, the IfÖE’s professor for foreign economics, wrote in 1974 about her students, the assumption was that “these cadres needed systematic skills to understand the specific economic problems of their home countries in order to elaborate appropriate measures to overcome economic backwardness and participate in their application” (1974: 779, own translation). In other words, the institute sought to provide the graduates with the necessary knowledge to promote their home countries’ economic development, ideally along Marxist-Leninist lines, while taking for granted that these graduates could actually return—a scenario or presumption that in Mwaungulu’s case had already once proven wrong. While Schmidt’s profile of the IfÖE might read as being paternalistic and Eurocentric in its purpose, it nonetheless points towards student agency by highlighting that the student body’s unique diversity made the work at the institute a particularly interesting task:

All of them have experiences from their home countries that occurred under very different social conditions. Many of them have a good knowledge about the economy and society of their country, and quite a few have already been engaged in politics at home. In many cases, working with them therefore stimulates new questions and perspectives in [our] research. (1974: 780, own translation)

Hence, the question was whether the IfÖE's faculty was capable of adapting its own premises and work flows to Mwaungulu's unsettling condition as a political exile. Ironically or not, a crucial point in this respect would be the economics of the training itself. As Schmidt emphasized in her article,

although the planned duration of the doctorate frequently has been exceeded in the past, the staff's improved abilities in supervising students and evaluating positive experiences have led to a significant reduction of overruns. Given that every overrun not only reduces the efficient use of the expended funds but also delays the beginning of the work of highly qualified personnel in the PhD student's home countries, overruns will be handled even more strictly in the future. (1974: 786, own translation)

Schmidt justifies the requirement of adhering to the timetable by pointing towards the economic viability of the funding program—which is of course understandable—but also with the firm assumption that the foreign graduates would return to their home countries. What if this was impossible right from the start? In order to better understand this dilemma as well as the reasons for the contradictory or even paradoxical explanations which Mwaungulu gave to Theuerkauf about his failed doctorate, let me begin with how Mwaungulu had come to this new research program.

2.11.1 Bringing Back Mwaungulu: The Role of the German-African Society

The earliest evidence that DAFriG actually helped bring Mwaungulu back to the GDR is the final document in Mwaungulu's student files from the KMU, suggesting that the initial assumption was that he would complete his PhD at his alma mater in Leipzig. In January 1967, DAFriG informed the GDR's State Secretariat for Higher Education and Universities of Applied Sciences about the planned "study visit" (*Studienaufenthalt*) that Mwaungulu was supposed to undertake. Funding for his scholarship was to be provided by DAFriG out of its quota for the academic year of 1966/67, though assuring that it would still be valid if Mwaungulu were only able to start his doctorate the year after.¹⁷⁴ In February, DAFriG sent Mwaungulu's application form, his study documents from Leipzig and his school certificates from Africa to the State Secretariat. Three months later, in May 1967, the Interior Ministry gave an approving response by sending official entry cards to the State Secretariat.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ LUA, StuA 030408, sheet 31, letter from DAFriG to the State Secretariat for Higher Education and Universities of Applied Sciences, 19 January 1967.

¹⁷⁵ HTW ZA, student files for Mahoma Mwaungulu, letter from DAFriG to the State Secretariat for Higher Education and Universities of Applied Sciences, 10 February 1967; letter from the Inte-

Mwaungulu had written in his application form that he was a citizen of Malawi; due to his adopting this desired but now erroneous self-attribution, DAFriG as well as the GDR's Interior Ministry needed to reveal a certain pragmatism in how to deal with immigration in the context of statelessness. A second letter from the State Secretariat explicitly presented Mwaungulu to the HfÖ in June 1967 as what he actually was: a foreign KMU graduate who “first went to his home country and tried to work there, which unfortunately was impossible; he had to leave his home country because of the political situation and has lived as a political refugee in Tanzania for more than two years now.”¹⁷⁶

Another letter from DAFriG informed the State Secretariat about the proposed theme of Mwaungulu's dissertation; although it does not say who selected the theme, I would strongly suppose that it was also in Mwaungulu's own interest. More interesting is the HfÖ's answer to the State Secretariat's letter suggesting Mwaungulu as a PhD candidate, as the responsible person from the HfÖ considered Mwaungulu's academic performance at Leipzig, particularly in Political Economy and Planning of National Economy, to be too weak to qualify him for a doctoral program in Berlin. Instead, he recommended that the State Secretariat ask at the KMU. In spite of this serious objection from the HfÖ, however, Mwaungulu was finally accepted there—perhaps because Radio Berlin International had already confirmed its job offer to his wife, Gisela, as revealed by a request from the HfÖ to the housing unit of Berlin-Lichtenberg, asking for its help in finding a family apartment for them. This mention of Gisela is interesting in that, in all of the other documents I have referred to so far, Mwaungulu's German family has never been used as the most obvious argument for his return, which might point to the discomfort the GDR authorities felt about binational marriages, although binational is not the most accurate term here. In any case, Mwaungulu received his new scholarship, which consisted of a monthly stipend of 520 marks, was intended for a period of three years, and began in October 1967.¹⁷⁷ Once back in the GDR, his education continued, giving a new meaning to his exile.

rior Ministry to the State Secretariat for Higher Education and Universities of Applied Sciences, 22 May 1967. The only earlier documents in Mwaungulu's student files from the HfÖ, both from Tanzania and dated 20 October 1966, are a handwritten CV by Mwaungulu and a letter in which he informs about his Ghanaian Cambridge certificate which, as he argues in contradiction to an earlier report that he did not graduate from high school (see p. 104), was stolen by thieves when he lived in Ghana.

176 HTW ZA, Mwaungulu student files, letter from the State Secretariat for Higher Education and Universities of Applied Sciences to the HfÖ, 22 June 1967.

177 HTW ZA, Mwaungulu student files, letter from DAFriG to the State Secretariat for Higher Education and Universities of Applied Sciences, 19 June 1967; letter from the HfÖ to the State Secretariat for Higher Education and Universities of Applied Sciences, 29 June 1967.

2.11.2 Supervising Mwaungulu: Eva Altmann, the Founding Director of the University of Economics

It says something about the GDR's emancipatory ideals that the founding director of its largest economic teaching and research institution in 1950 was a woman, and that this woman was supervising Mwaungulu's academic work two decades later. Eva Altmann had studied economics and joined the Communist Party in the Weimar Republic. Several times incarcerated by the Nazi regime, her only child—a son whose Jewish father had abandoned her and emigrated with another woman to the Soviet Union in the early 1930s—committed suicide after the war. The East German journalist Hanna Maier empathically writes about her that, entrusted in 1950 with the task of building up a business school, Altmann dedicated herself entirely to science “and stood up for the many [people with] odd biographies that existed in post-war Germany” (2015, own translation).¹⁷⁸ Maier is probably not thinking of African exiles here, for only Wikipedia informs us that Altmann focused on tutoring and supervising foreign students after she handed over the HfÖ's directorate in 1956.¹⁷⁹ But her description nevertheless confirms the impression which Mwaungulu's student files gave me about Altmann's sense of commitment, just as Mwaungulu himself refers to Altmann in an entirely positive way, emphasizing to Trüper that “she liked me very much.” Altmann must have followed a strong socialist ethos of self-discipline and dedication while, at the same time, showing sincere empathy towards those with an “odd biography.” Unfortunately, in Mwaungulu's case this was not enough.

Mwaungulu was given four years to complete his doctorate, with the initial deadline being October 1971. Altmann's first report, written in summer 1968, spoke of a “generally good evaluation.”¹⁸⁰ The candidate could now begin with the study of the literature and had already accomplished two smaller works, a presentation titled *The European Economic Community as an example of international state-monopoly capitalism* and a brief thesis on Malawi's textile industry. The only comment that points to some problems was a remark saying that Mwaungulu suffers from occasional attacks of malaria. In February 1969, Altmann recommended for him to undergo a thorough medical examination because of his frequent illnesses and recurring fever attacks, and a letter from the HfÖ's directorate for international and cultural relations informed Mwaungulu about an appointment which

178 Maier, Hanna: “Die Staatsdienerin,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 29 May 2015, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/wirtschaft/serie-finanzfrauen-die-staatsdienerin-1.2499261> (accessed 2 October 2023). See also the biographical entry on Altmann in Müller-Enbergs 2010.

179 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eva_Altmann (accessed 2 October 2023).

180 HTW ZA, Mwaungulu student files, interim report from Eva Altmann, 6 August 1968.

had been made for him in a hospital, followed by the hospital's confirmation letter a month later that he actually was treated there.¹⁸¹ This documentation of Mwaungulu's physical condition gives the impression that the scholarship went hand in hand with a fairly patronizing agenda. Correspondingly, a report from Altmann and another faculty member from October 1969, though still optimistic about Mwaungulu's work, came to a more ambiguous assessment with regard to his procrastination, which was still explained by illness and family matters.¹⁸² An undated interim report, presumably from early 1970, indicated a considerable delay in fulfilling his working plan, explained by Altmann "with the difficulties Mr. Mwaungulu has with scientific work" but also with "additional time constraints due to his work as the chairman of the International Student Committee, a function he will now give up." Again, Mwaungulu had apparently been engaged in university politics.¹⁸³

The files mention several visa requests from Mwaungulu for trips to West Berlin to meet there with Malawian students in order to obtain research literature, implying a migrant network that reached over the Berlin Wall. On one occasion, however, Mwaungulu met with his brother in West Berlin, making the HfÖ's directorate wonder why the latter did not come to the GDR to visit. The reason was that Mwaungulu's brother was part of a government delegation from Malawi that was visiting the FRG officially.¹⁸⁴ This brother was Ngelesi Mwaungulu, who would later even work for a while at the Malawian embassy in the old FRG and—after the end of the Cold War, but at least during the first half of his term appointed by the Banda regime—represent Malawi to the United Nations. Joey Power mentions Ngelesi Mwaungulu several times and even conducted an interview with him for her study *Political Culture and Nationalism in Malawi*, which covers only Malawi's colonial and early postcolonial periods. She describes him as a former *Kwach* boy (a kind of youth fraction of the NAC) and an early founding member of the MCP after its forerunner's liquidation in 1959 (2010: 142, 259 & 270).¹⁸⁵ This would mean that Mwaungulu's brother not only made a political career during the Banda dictatorship—which Mwaungulu's German family confirmed to me—but that he must also

181 HTW ZA, Mwaungulu student files, file note from 26 February 1969; HfÖ directorate for international and cultural relations to Mwaungulu, 28 February 1969; medical confirmation from Friedrichshain hospital, 9 April 1969.

182 HTW ZA, Mwaungulu student files, writing from Altmann and Reichenberg, 16 October 1969.

183 HTW ZA, Mwaungulu student files, undated interim report from Altmann and Hochhaus (own translation).

184 HTW ZA, Mwaungulu student files, request from Mwaungulu to the HfÖ's directorate for international and cultural relations for a visa to travel several times to West Berlin, 3 September 1970.

185 It is probably because of Malawi's phonetic particularities that Power mentions this brother with different spellings, such as Ngelesi or Ngolesi Mwaunguru/Mwaungulu.

have been involved in the independence struggle, which Mwaungulu does not mention in his interviews. Be this as it may, the brothers' contrary political trajectories point towards the rifts that political polarization after independence created in not a few Malawian families. The two brothers bridged this rift at least to the point that a representative of the Banda regime was able to meet with his exiled dissident brother in divided Berlin to bring him some literature for his academic work on their common home country, and Mwaungulu's daughter even remembers Ngelesi Mwaungulu crossing the Berlin Wall several times to visit his brother in their apartment in Berlin-Lichtenberg.

As for Mwaungulu's PhD studies, the pattern described above continued. He was frequently ill; handled his doctor's notes for the university carelessly, which created trouble with the administration; and proceeded too slowly with the writing of his dissertation. Altmann tried to appease the directorate with some attempts at mediating before giving up to the pressure from above; her most interesting attempt in this regard is a report from May 1971, in which she informed the directorate not only about the coming arrival of Mwaungulu's third child and the difficult condition of his wife but also about the death of Mwaungulu's mother in Malawi. She wrote that Mwaungulu even applied at the Malawian embassy in Bonn for a passport to travel to Malawi but that it was rejected with the argument that he should apply for it in Malawi; meanwhile, however, the embassy would provide him with a certificate so that he could travel to Malawi and apply there for the passport.¹⁸⁶ This journey of course never materialized, for Mwaungulu knew what most likely happened to political opponents once the Banda regime had them under its control.

A year later, with the dissertation still unfinished, the university stopped his scholarship payments for a month after he had repeatedly ignored the university's requests for clarification about his many absences and delays; Gisela had to come to the university to inform the administration about his hospitalization in an institute for tropical medicine.¹⁸⁷ Subsequently, the scholarship was again resumed until Mwaungulu finally lost the race by not meeting the ultimate deadline of February 1973. Bureaucratic logic prevailed and the HfÖ informed the State Secretariat that the scholarship would be canceled and that it should clear this matter with DAfriG—which, as it seems, would have otherwise prolonged its financial support for Mwaungulu.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ HTW ZA, Mwaungulu student files, interim report from Altmann, 11 May 1971.

¹⁸⁷ HTW ZA, Mwaungulu student files, Directorate for International and Cultural Relations, file note, 10 February 1972.

¹⁸⁸ HTW ZA, Mwaungulu student files, Hochhaus to the State Secretariat for Higher Education and Universities of Applied Sciences, 7 March 1973.

Was it first and foremost this institution's incapacity to tolerate a PhD student who was frequently ill which drove the university to take this decision? An earlier statement from Altmann, in which she had complained a little theatrically about Mwaungulu's "violation of a doctoral candidate's most basic obligations," suggests otherwise and points more to a lack of discipline on the side of Mwaungulu. Whatever the exact reasons, the only option left to him was to continue his dissertation as a freelancer, to which both Mwaungulu and Altmann agreed.¹⁸⁹ In the following year, Mwaungulu nevertheless made a futile attempt to get the scholarship back—at least this is the best explanation I have for a letter which the class teacher of his twelve-year-old daughter wrote to the HfÖ in summer 1974. Therein, the teacher reported on the daughter's "excellent school performance, a clear opinion regarding [social] class, exemplary fulfillment of the duty of solidarity, and corresponding action in the collective." The teacher concludes that she "would be pleased if the HfÖ could acknowledge Mwaungulu's successful educational work." A reason for asking the teacher to write this letter might have been that Mwaungulu's new status as a freelance doctoral candidate not only deprived him of a fixed income, making him even more dependent on his wife, but also of any institutional affiliation. This change in status seems to have made him a dubious figure in the eyes of an authority on which he was even more dependent: the final document in his files is the HfÖ's answer to a request made about Mwaungulu's status in 1975 by the passport and registration office of the police, responsible for the yearly renewal of his residence permission.¹⁹⁰

2.11.3 The Vanishing Point of Exile: Reflections on Malawi's Economic Development

Interpreting Mwaungulu's time at the HfÖ solely through the university archive creates a picture of intellectual failure that easily overlooks a key achievement: the dissertation was almost completed when the university terminated his employment. Since the HfÖ did not archive any of his scientific writings, this can at best only be guessed from the files. In July 1972, Altmann mentioned 190 pages that Mwaungulu had already submitted; in November of the same year, Mwaungulu sent to her a revised version of the second part; on 1 March 1973—a day after the missed deadline—Altmann mentioned that only the final version of

¹⁸⁹ HTW ZA, Mwaungulu student files, Altmann to Hochhaus, 10 November 1972; proposal given to Mwaungulu, 12 April 1973.

¹⁹⁰ HTW ZA, Mwaungulu student files, Pieper to HfÖ, 5 July 1974; letter from the HfÖ to the police, passport and registration office, 25 February 1975.

chapter three, limited to 30 pages, was missing and that Mwaungulu would then only have to make some revisions, type up a clean copy of the whole work, and take his philosophy exam. In other words, if the HfÖ had given him three or four months more time, he most likely would have obtained his PhD in economics.¹⁹¹ Gisela Mwaungulu believes that the final part was already finished, as well, but she could not locate it anymore. However, the two preserved chapters, separately bound and carefully structured, consist of more than 250 typewritten pages in German, titled *Probleme und Perspektiven der industriellen Entwicklung Malawis* (Problems and Perspectives of Malawi's Industrial Development).¹⁹²

As a non-economist, I do not feel qualified to assess the strengths or weaknesses of such a work. Instead, I try here to provide a brief summary of its content while contextualizing the study and some of its arguments through situating them within the broader context of similar themes that I have found in other—older as well as more recent—scientific literature I am more familiar with as well as within the context of academic debate over the GDR. Given my simultaneous interest in the biographies of South African exiles, I look more closely at Mwaungulu's reflections on Malawi's cooperation with the apartheid regime and consider the role of his exile for writing such a study, rather than other possible aspects of the work.

Mwaungulu followed the development paradigm of modernization through industrialization, which was still dominant back then. Based on analysis of Malawi's economic policy and its outcomes, he argued that national independence was meaningless without socio-economic independence, which in turn could only be achieved through industrialization along socialist lines. He acknowledged that Malawi's capitalist-oriented economic policy had led to certain improvements but claimed that it made little difference to the general impoverishment or precarious living conditions of the majority of the Malawian people, for which he blamed British colonialism overall. Moreover, he argued that Malawi's development policy continually increased the country's national debt and perpetuated its dependence on foreign Western aid, of which he listed a considerable amount of West German *Deutschmark*.

Concerning an industrialized Malawi, Mwaungulu imagined that “the emergence of new cities and industrial centers with modern working and living condi-

¹⁹¹ HTW ZA, Mwaungulu student files, interim report Eva Altmann, 6 July 1972; letter from Mwaungulu to Altmann, 21 November 1972; letter from Altmann to Hochhaus, 1 March 1973.

¹⁹² Mwaungulu, Mahoma (1973): *Probleme und Perspektiven der industriellen Entwicklung Malawis*. PhD dissertation (uncompleted). Hochschule für Ökonomie “Bruno Leuschner,” Berlin (East). See the appendix on p. 267 for the table of contents that I have created out of the preserved chapters as well as for the nine long theses that Mwaungulu placed at the beginning of his main text.

tions such as social facilities, schools, universities, residential buildings, theatres, cinemas and so on will contribute towards gradually eliminating economic and socio-cultural backwardness and also consolidate Malawi's political independence" (1973: 56).¹⁹³ Reading this, I cannot help but think of Alex La Guma's hymn of praise of the Soviet Union's modernization of the formerly "backward" central Asian republics and Siberia (1978). But whereas La Guma, a South African exile, wrote *A Soviet Journey* in awareness of his home country's relatively high level of industrialization, Mwaungulu's vision of an industrialized Malawi appears to me rather utopian. As an anthropologist, however, it also makes me think of Arturo Escobar's argument that "the desires and hopes for development and modernity that many people worldwide have adopted as a result of their encounter with development and modernity [. . .] are real, even if banalized and rendered even more elusive by development projects" (Escobar 2012: xvii).¹⁹⁴

Mwaungulu was of course aware that Malawi could not build up a strong economy on its own and without foreign support. But, because of Malawi's one-sided Western orientation, he argued, agriculture as the country's most important economic sector continued to be labor-intensive, with a large part of the population carrying out subsistence or semi-natural agriculture by using traditional or "outdated" farming methods and tools. This kind of stagnation he saw as being accompanied by processes of pauperization and the continuance of labor migration, for Malawi's policy privileged foreign monopoly capital and an export-oriented agricultural sector largely based on monoculture. While the country's plantations and estates created enough surplus to theoretically enable the development and diversification of other economic sectors, profits remained largely in the hands of foreign enterprises and members of Malawi's small upper class. As a result of this misguided development—a logic in which Mwaungulu saw neocolonialism at work—Malawi's economy lacked internal incentives to transform its structures for the benefit of the majority of the people.

Mwaungulu's study includes numerous economic figures and tables, applying a specialized terminology I am unfamiliar with. Even though his uncritical faith in Marxism-Leninism seems to weaken his analysis, the study as a whole is of course much more complex than my brief summary here might suggest. What seems crucial to me is that the way in which Malawi continues to be discussed in the West up to this day confirms rather than disproves the main thrust of his ob-

¹⁹³ All translations into English are mine.

¹⁹⁴ Originally published in 1995, Escobar's *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* neglects the manifold entanglements between the Second and Third worlds, which his new preface for the 2012 edition also does not mention.

servations and analysis, making it impossible to dismiss his text as the mere product of ideological dogma.

Harri Englund's entry on poverty in Didier Fassin's *A Companion to Moral Anthropology* is a good case in point. Englund, while arguing a little antithetically that "no one country should be taken as the paradigm of African poverty," offers rich evidence that "Malawi tends to assume iconic qualities in Western concerns" and "may seem to offer a conveniently pure case of African poverty" (2012: 285). It is precisely against such a discursive background that Mwaungulu's study, larded with Marxist-Leninist vocabulary, eludes a purely anachronistic reading. At its core, it addresses a concern that, according to Englund, has lost none of its relevance even half a century later—the economic and social well-being of a particular African people. While Englund, a white Western anthropologist like myself, addresses this concern by using the highly abstract framework of moral anthropology, Mwaungulu, writing from a very different subject position and location in time and space, did so by using the much more practice-oriented framework of Marxism-Leninism. The use of Marxist approaches to understanding the African experience, however, was by no means limited to the Eastern bloc. Hence, instead of considering Mwaungulu's fragmentary work as just another redundant outcome of an outdated form of German socialist knowledge production, why not consider it as part of a broader Black radical discourse in the sense of Walter Rodney's *How Europe underdeveloped Africa* (1974)?¹⁹⁵

2.11.4 Understanding (Post)colonial Economies: Walter Rodney, Dependency Theory, and Development Theories in the GDR

Walter Rodney was a Marxist historian and pan-African activist who, at the age of 38, was assassinated in his home country of Guyana in 1980. His book *How Europe has underdeveloped Africa* was first published in 1972 while he was working at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, where he had already taught when Mwaungulu was exiled there. This is not to say that the two ever met, that Mwaungulu knew Rodney's work or that his study can be directly compared with it; nor is it to imply that *How Europe has underdeveloped Africa* has no shortcomings or would not today seem anachronistic at all. My point is that Rodney belongs to those slightly better-known Black radical intellectuals and activists from the Western shores of the African diaspora who clearly emphasized "political eco-

¹⁹⁵ For Rodney's thoughts on the Soviet Union, see his posthumously published series of lectures (Rodney 2018).

conomic critique in the theorizing of the global Black condition” (Burden-Stelly 2017: 216), as Charisse Burden-Stelly names it in her inspiring critique of the culturalist turn in African diaspora theory. Mwaungulu, an African exile in the GDR, shared with these more prominent figures a good part of the same radical agenda and discursive space. A brief comparison of Rodney’s introductory chapter “Some Questions on Development” with Mwaungulu’s study should suffice to demonstrate this.

Just as Mwaungulu, Rodney linked industrialization to development and blamed African elites for participating in neocolonial exploitation or compromising with the South African apartheid regime, the latter an aspect of which I will return to below. Even though Rodney did not exclude the feasibility of the developed socialist countries perhaps joining their capitalist counterparts one day in “the robbery of Africa,” at least “at this stage” he absolved the former from pursuing such ambitions (1974: 16, 23, 26–28).¹⁹⁶ Rodney’s definition of underdevelopment as “a product of capitalist, imperialist, and colonialist exploitation” (1974: 14) resonates pretty well with Mwaungulu’s ninth thesis about how British colonialism shaped Malawi’s economic structure, just like Rodney’s characterization of underdeveloped economies as having only “very few ties between one sector and another so that (say) agriculture and industry could react beneficially on each other” (1974: 18) corresponds with Mwaungulu’s third thesis about the deformation of Malawi’s economic structure or his section about the (dis)proportional development of the economic sectors in the Malawian economy.¹⁹⁷ And, whereas Rodney comments rather disparagingly on Ragnar Nurkse, a prominent development theoretician from the US (1974: 28), Mwaungulu likewise dismisses Nurkse’s balanced growth theory about the expansion of the internal market as being of no use in the Malawian case. Nurkse would forget that the development of the internal market cannot be resolved without taking into consideration a country’s socio-economic conditions, and Malawi’s ruling circles would neither take action to abolish the pre-capitalist relations of productions nor were they interested in radical agricultural reforms (Mwaungulu 1973: 133–135).¹⁹⁸ Ultimately, Mwaungulu’s argument about socio-economic independence sounds less sketchy or spectacular if Rodney’s definition of economic independence is taken into account:

196 Curiously, when Rodney writes that “socialist countries have never at any time owned any part of the African continent” (1974: 23), he does not mention that the GDR was a successor state of the German Empire, which, as a colonial power, had owned a part of the African continent.

197 See the appendix on p. 268 for the theses.

198 For a discussion of Ragnar Nurkse and his theories, see e.g. Kattel et al. (2011).

It is true that modern conditions force all countries to be mutually interdependent in order to satisfy the needs of their citizens; but that is not incompatible with economic independence because economic independence does not mean isolation. It does, however, require a capacity to exercise choice in external relations, and above all it requires that a nation's growth at some point must become self-reliant and self-sustaining. (Rodney 1974: 25)

As I have suggested by referring to the work of Burden-Stelly or, in two earlier sections, by emphasizing Mwaungulu's encounters with Padmore and Winston, I highlight these similarities to bring African exile in the GDR and the Cold War's East into the broader discussion on the marginalization of political-economic approaches in Western science. This marginalization is particularly striking in reunified Germany, where the use of Marxist approaches is met with far greater suspicion than in other Western countries (e.g. Wemheuer 2016; Pampuch 2018b: 238–241).¹⁹⁹ It is therefore no coincidence that, with Peter Jegzentis and Volker Wirth, it were two East German scholars who, in the early 1990s, pointed to similarities between the development theories in the GDR and those within western Marxist approaches, such as dependency theory (1991: 73), a theoretical framework which also resonates throughout Rodney's book. Aside from authors such as Marx, Engels and Nurkse, who also appear in Mwaungulu's bibliography, Rodney's brief reading guide prominently lists Andre Gunder Frank and Samir Amin, two key thinkers of different schools of thought within the dependency theory (1974: 29).²⁰⁰ As Rodney did in his introductory chapter, this branch of political-economic theory attributes a key role for underdevelopment to Western Europe's colonial expansion and the logics of global capitalism (e.g. Kvangraven et al. 2017).

Jegzentis and Wirth now see the similarities between this theoretical framework and development theories in the GDR—not so much in the research done at the IfÖE, where Mwaungulu wrote his thesis, but more at the KMU's African Studies department in Leipzig.²⁰¹ Although they focus on the late 1970s and 1980s and, thus, on the period after Mwaungulu's doctoral studies, I find several of their insights applicable to his work. For instance, they explain the use of terms such as “developing countries” or “underdevelopment” in the GDR, writing that the former term was accepted only hesitantly as a substitute for the term “young nation states”

199 For the problems West German historians had with the concept ‘capitalism’ itself, see Kocka (2016).

200 Note that Frank, himself a German-Jewish exile, as well as the Egyptian-French Amin have partially been inspired by the Marxist economist Paul A. Baran, like Frank a European Jew and forced into exile by the Nazi regime (Mausbach 2009: 124–125; Kvangraven 2017).

201 For a thorough account of African Studies in the GDR, with a focus on Southern Africa, see van der Heyden 1998.

and introduced into the GDR's academic debates in the early 1970s through the work of Parviz Khalatbari, an exiled Iranian economist and Communist Party member and—from 1961 to 1991—professor at (East) Berlin's Humboldt University.²⁰² However, they also highlight that the model of a “dependent multisectoral economy”—used at the KMU to “schematize the problem of the interaction between pre-capitalistic and capitalistic relations within developing countries” (Jegzentsis/Wirth 1991: 75, own translation) but also resonating throughout Mwaungulu's work—was still considered valid by the IfÖE for some countries in sub-saharan Africa (1991: 77). As the main difference between the IfÖE and KMU's African Studies perspectives they propose that the former “conceded that the overall capitalist system has an essential and dynamic capacity for change, especially with regard to socio-economic conditions in developing countries” (Jegzentsis/Wirth 1991: 76–77, own translation). Put differently, scholars at the IfÖE, at least beginning in the late 1970s, considered it possible that underdevelopment could be overcome with capitalist means, a form of development which they called “capitalist transformation” (Jegzentsis/Wirth 1991: 77).

Mwaungulu argued in this vein when he analyzed the modern cultivation methods and technology used on Malawian plantations and large estates, additionally acknowledging that these were owned not just by Europeans or Asians anymore but also by an increasing number of Malawians: “If applied purposefully in the Malawian economy, this sector and the surplus value it generates would arguably be able to drive Malawi's economy, albeit along capitalist lines” (1973: 190–191). That Mwaungulu saw progressive potential in various sectors of Malawi's economy despite its capitalistic outlook is striking. His point was that, due to the neglect of parallel developmental steps in other sectors such as education, the more developed sectors—he mentioned privately owned British textile and distillery companies, too—rather became an additional economic burden. Unable to find skilled labor among the Malawians, these companies instead recruited better-educated Europeans and did little or nothing to improve the situation of the many Malawians who had been torn out of traditional industries like agriculture (1973: 242–242).

²⁰² Concerning the Iranian exile, Leonard Michael from the University of St Andrews has been working on a PhD project on the exile of the Marxist-Leninist Tudeh Party of Iran in the GDR.

2.11.5 Biographical Self-reference: The Malawi Cabinet Crisis

Mwaungulu saw Malawi's working class—in its majority agricultural workers—characterized by traditional customs such as strong ties to the villages and a tendency for small ownership of land which, as he argued, hindered the development of political and ideological consciousness. The one to blame for this lack of political awareness was the Malawi Congress Party, of which he had been an active member for so many years. Correspondingly, he described the MCP as a reactionary and capitalist-oriented political party. This line of argument also served as a means for him to explain the Cabinet Crisis, the only section of his study in which he allowed himself a brief biographical note, though only in third person and in brackets:

In 1964, a small, anti-imperialist group of the national bourgeoisie stood up against the government's policy and its collaboration with and dependence on the foreign monopoly capitalists. When the group's demand for political and economic cooperation with other independent African and socialist countries was put down by the reactionary upper class of the ruling bourgeoisie, it resulted in the resignation of several ministers and a split within the state apparatus. The pro-imperialist dictatorial regime used its military and police forces to detain or kill these ministers and anyone who had supported them. As a consequence, thousands of Malawians who belonged to different classes of the population such as the bourgeoisie, the working class, the peasantry or the intelligentsia were forced to flee to neighboring countries like Tanzania and Zambia to seek asylum. Their aim was to return to their home country to free it from the clutches of this regime. (There are no statistics on the government crisis of 1964, but these events were witnessed by the author himself.) (1973: 142)

In an earlier section, conceding to his own as well as to his supervisor's ideological convictions, Mwaungulu inhibited an overly negative interpretation of being one of these exiles by formulating a teleological argument invoking Marx' revolutionary subject. Thus, it seems that when he was writing his study Mwaungulu still believed in a political change which would allow him to return:

In spite of all difficulties and weaknesses faced by the Malawian working class, the economic development carried forward by the foreign monopolies will accelerate both the growth of an industrial proletariat as well as the emergence of the working class as a political force; together with the exploited peasantry and other progressive forces, it will struggle against the internal and external reactionary forces. (1973: 120)

2.11.6 Malawi's Foreign Policy and Economic Ties to Apartheid South Africa

As I have already mentioned, Mwaungulu also expressed his thoughts about Malawi's cooperation with Portugal/Mozambique, Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa. For some writers, this is still a controversial topic. Mukuse Daniel Sagawa, who according to his own author information worked around 2011 in Malawi's Foreign Ministry, argues that past scholars have tried too hard to explain these policies predominantly with reference to Banda's personality while neglecting the external or international factors which influenced Malawi's foreign policy at the time. While remaining rather silent on the Banda regime's dictatorial character, Sagawa concludes that at least until 1975, when the independence of Mozambique changed the regional power structure, "systematic attempts were made to promote national security and development through economic and political relations with the white ruled states of Southern Africa" (2011: 153) and that "these factors were central to the consolidation of state power by the Banda government" (ibid.). Hence, Sagawa explains these foreign policies more as conforming to the unpleasant demands put upon the Malawian government by *realpolitik* but, at the same time, has to admit that the Banda regime consciously applied them to keep itself in power as well. Yet such an argument automatically leads to the awkward question of the Banda regime's legitimacy, a discussion which Sagawa avoids.

Mwaungulu similarly pointed to Malawi's difficult situation after independence but, unsurprisingly, came to a less ambiguous conclusion with regard to its foreign policy options. He listed three specific problems which Malawi faced after independence. First, the country's low level of economic development: "To put it bluntly, Malawi was a state that had no industry at all, and whose agriculture was backward and deformed. There were no compensating factors, such as well-developed connections to the world markets, with the exception of the railway line leading through Mozambique" (1973: 219). Second, he stressed Malawi's geopolitical position as a landlocked country which was almost completely surrounded by Mozambique: "Thus, from a geographical point of view, Malawi was already under the control of the Portuguese colonial rulers of the time, who were in close alliance with the white minority regimes in South Africa and Rhodesia" (ibid.). Ultimately, however, he problematized postcolonial Malawi's close relationship with Great Britain, which in his eyes kept Malawi "in an almost complete dependence on British aid to finance its national budget" (1973: 220) and made of Malawi "a particularly blatant example of the consequences of decades of British colonial rule" (ibid.). He then quoted from an infamous speech that Banda held in July 1964 at a summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Cairo; therein, Banda had declared that he shared the wish for Africa's full liberation

but also that not every country was capable of properly helping to realize it. Mwaungulu, in contrast, now argued as follows:

What could be expected, however, was the Malawian government making efforts to find alternatives that would eventually lead the country out of the economic and colonial grip and make it economically independent. What must be exposed, and what must be condemned, is the government's policy of constantly deepening and widening economic, political, and cultural ties with the South African Republic, Rhodesia, and the [. . .] fascist Caetano regime in Portugal. (Mwaungulu 1973: 221)

Another fellow exile who thought exactly like this was the already mentioned Henry Masauko Chipembere, the Minister of Education in Malawi's first cabinet who, in 1969, had definitely given up his Tanzanian exile for the United States, where he would eventually die in 1975. Referring to the same speech of Banda which Mwaungulu had quoted from, Chipembere wrote that

all the African sympathizers were unanimous on one point, namely that while Malawi could not afford to destroy her trade and other links with white-supremacist regimes in southern Africa she should take rapid steps to put herself in a position of less and less dependence on these regimes. [. . .] But with each passing day he [Banda] gave us cause for increasing dismay; far from gradually withdrawing from the south he took steps which could only get Malawi more and more committed to permanent collaboration with white racist minority regimes that were oppressing our own brothers in southern Africa. (2006: 316–317)²⁰³

Was this only the wishful thinking of two desperate exiles, out of touch with reality, as Sagawa's analysis implies? If so, the same counts for Carolyn McMaster (1974). Her voluminous study *Malawi: Foreign Policy and Development*, written at the London School of Economics during the same years when Mwaungulu was nervously trying to get his own thesis done, fully supported the exiles' views. McMaster, who eventually became the Planning Officer for Malawi at The Canadian International Development Agency, likewise expressed her understanding for the Banda regime's decision not to cut Malawi's economic links with the white-ruled South. However, through a comparison of Malawi's foreign policies with that of Zambia and Botswana, two other landlocked countries that had similar or even stronger ties with Rhodesia and South Africa, she succinctly concluded that "the links need not have been strengthened" (1974: 168). According to McMaster, a different foreign policy would have been possible, and even though the options were more limited at the economic level, there was much more room for maneuver at the diplomatic and declaratory level (1974: 167–168). Thus, it seems that Heiko Meinhardt was right in arguing that Malawi's foreign policy cooperation with the

²⁰³ First published in *Africa Today* (April 1971: 27–48); see also Baker (2001: 294–296).

financially strong West and the generous white regimes in Southern Africa secured Banda the resources that he so urgently needed to remain in power (1993: 59).

Another theme from Mwaungulu's study that connects to this and continues to attract scholarly interest is the role which Malawi played for South Africa's policy of "Africanising Apartheid," as Jamie Miller (2015) calls it. Whereas Miller points out that South Africa used its relations with Malawi, among other things, to portray its internal racial policies as a kind of legitimate Afrikaner nationalism, Mwaungulu proposed that the Malawian government helped to give birth to South Africa's expansionist or outward-looking policy strategy from 1968. In his opinion, Banda's regime prepared fertile ground for the acceptability of the South African and Rhodesian racial policies and let itself be used to weaken the Southern African liberation movements (1973: 233–236; see also McMaster 1974: 90–92). Economically, this close cooperation with the white ruled South had a paradoxical effect on Malawi's development, as he argued: "On the one hand, it is plundered and prevented from healthy economic development by the white-minority regimes [. . .]; on the other hand, these regimes are interested in using and strengthening Malawi as both a junior partner and bridgehead of the white bloc" (1973: 236).

A real thorn in Mwaungulu's side was the great number of labor migrants from Malawi and Southern Africa who continued to work in the South African mines. For him, this type of labor migration was a special case of imperialism, which would normally export capital to areas with cheap labor and raw materials but not the other way round (1973: 228). He thus wrote in a clearly Marxist academic prose that "labor force as a commodity continues to be Malawi's main export product" and that "more than a third of Malawi's adult and male population works as the cheapest work slaves on Rhodesian farms and in South African mines" (1973: 222). The South African exile Hugh Masekela (who never lived in the GDR or any other socialist country) memorialized these migrants in popular culture with his famous song *Stimela (Coal Train)*.²⁰⁴ In powerful jazz poetry, accompanied by a full band of musicians and spoken over the imitated sound of a moving train, he recited that

there is a train that comes from Namibia and Malawi
there is a train that comes from Zambia and Zimbabwe
there is a train that comes from Angola and Mozambique
from Lesotho, from Botswana, from Zwaziland
from all the hinterland of Southern and Central Africa

²⁰⁴ The song first appeared on Masekela's album from 1974, *I am not afraid*. In the same year, more than seventy returning Malawian labor migrants died in a plane crash in Botswana, resulting in a temporary ban of labor recruiting activities in Malawi (Wiseman 1996).

This train carries young and old African men
 who are conscripted to come and work on contract
 in the gold and mineral mines of Johannesburg
 and it's surrounding metropolis
 sixteen hours or more a day for almost no pay
 deep, deep, deep down in the belly of the earth
 when they are digging and drilling that shiny mighty evasive stone
 or when they dish that mish mesh mush food
 into their iron plates with the iron shank
 or when they sit in their stinking, funky, filthy
 flea-ridden barracks and hostels

(Hugh Masekela 1974)

Economic concerns can be addressed in very different ways—Mwaungulu and Masekela are basically making the same argument here about South Africa's racialized capitalism and how it drew countries like Malawi into its orbit. The only difference is that Mwaungulu articulated it within an East German study whose Marxist-Leninist jargon reads as being outdated today, whereas Masekela expressed himself in a more timeless lyricism.

Mwaungulu's bibliography included many names that were unknown to me, such as Surendra J. Patel. A blog entry on the website of the Indian book publisher *Permanent Black* introduces this economist in a way that has helped me to look differently at some of Mwaungulu's German writing. It stresses that editors of scholarly books have often studied literature and "tend therefore to [. . .] have their eyes constantly peeled for the literary element in what they're reading,"²⁰⁵ a description in which I easily recognized my own reading pattern; however, the blog entry's authors rightfully add that this kind of searching is often in vain when it comes to economics, where creative writing is not the most highly rewarded skill. To demonstrate to their readers an exception from this rule, they then quote from one of Patel's older essays, adding that "no one [. . .] shone a torch on Indian serfs in prose as nice as this" (*ibid.*). Perhaps "nice" is not the most accurate term here, but something similar struck my mind when I read the following description by Mwaungulu of the Malawian toilers. I suppose one has to be able to read it in the German original (see n. 206) to grasp what I mean, but I hope my English translation provides an adequate impression. Based on Lenin's assertion that the first productive force of all humanity is the worker, Mwaungulu wrote that

²⁰⁵ "There was once an economist called Surendra J. Patel," blog entry, 13 December 2012, <http://permanent-black.blogspot.com/2012/12/there-was-once-economist-called.html> (accessed 2 October 2023).

the productive forces, which are labor in the broadest sense of the word and appear as living and objectified labor, have been applied in the economic development of Malawi only to a very insignificant extent. In the first place, the majority of the toiling masses in Malawi, who, like everywhere, possess human consciousness and should use it in labor activity, and whose living labor, as the first element of the productive forces, should play an important role in the production process, have been denied by the colonial past and the present capitalist-oriented government of Malawi the opportunity to acquire experience in highly skilled activities and knowledge, which in fact have the meaning of objective truth embodied in the achievements of science and technology. (1973: 77)²⁰⁶

Leaving the question of written expression aside, there was only one country on the African continent that stuck out when it came to the question of where to find such embodiments of objective truth, in the sense meant by Mwaungulu. This country was, once again, South Africa. Mwaungulu comprehensibly explained its high level of industrialization with the emergence of an indigenous bourgeoisie of European origin that kept a part of the Euro-American monopoly capital in the country, rather than sending it to the colonial center, and used it for the development and industrialization of South Africa's economy. In arguments like this, one can literally grasp Mwaungulu's anger and frustration regarding the postcolonial development of the country he was banished from and the stunned disbelief which Malawi's increasing dependency on apartheid South Africa must have provoked in him. His conclusion regarding this cooperation sounds devastating:

In Malawi, a type of industrialization is being carried out that fundamentally differs from the industrialization carried out in countries with a non-capitalist orientation. The accumulation for Malawi's national economy is being financed exclusively with capital from imperialist states. Among the financiers of this development, the Republic of South Africa occupies a leading place. It is carried out at the expense of the oppressed classes, who are exploited by foreign monopoly capital as well as by the South African monopolies and their own ruling class. This ruling class is composed of the most reactionary forces of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, is pro-imperialist and anti-communist in orientation, and is more willing to enter into an alliance with the white supremacist regimes than to seek peaceful and mutually beneficial relations and cooperation with progressive African states. Thus, in Malawi,

206 "Die Produktivkräfte, die im weitesten Sinne des Wortes Arbeit sind und als lebendige und vergegenständlichte Arbeit erscheinen, haben in der ökonomischen Entwicklung Malawis nur in sehr unwesentlichem Maße Anwendung gefunden. In erster Linie wurde der Mehrheit der werktätigen Massen in Malawi, die wie überall menschliches Bewusstsein besitzt und es in der Arbeitstätigkeit einsetzen sollte und deren lebendige Arbeit als das erste Element der Produktivkräfte eine wichtige Rolle im Produktionsprozeß spielen sollte, durch die koloniale Vergangenheit und die gegenwärtige kapitalistisch-orientierte Regierung Malawis die Möglichkeit verwehrt, sich Erfahrungen in hochqualifizierten Tätigkeiten und Wissen anzueignen, die in der Tat die Bedeutung von in den Errungenschaften der Wissenschaft und Technik verkörperter objektiver Wahrheit haben" (Mwaungulu 1973: 77).

industrialization is entirely in the hands of private capital. The state sector is excluded from industrial development, and the reproduction process is not sufficiently accelerated in all sectors of the economy. In sum, such a form of industrialization enables the unimpeded influence of foreign monopoly capital and perpetuates Malawi's dependency in both economic and political-social terms. (1973: 236–237)

2.11.7 Unsettling Knowledge: Between Meticulous Analysis and Wishful Thinking

Mwaungulu must have been rather perplexed, in a way, over his own study. Having internalized the doctrine of socialist modernity, he was left with little more than the hope for a revolutionary Malawian subject yet to come. The crux was that although some African states such as Tanzania were experimenting with socialism—Mwaungulu even quoted from the *Arusha Declaration* and its critique of foreign aid²⁰⁷—this was completely unlikely to happen in Malawi, with the Western and South African supported Banda regime firmly in power. His study provided him with detailed knowledge about Malawi's economic situation, but once deprived of his scholarship and lacking an academic position, of what practical use was this knowledge for his life in the GDR? Instead of coming to terms with the day-to-day realities of living a life in East German exile, he had scrupulously analyzed the multiple internal as well as external factors which had influenced the (under)development of Malawi's national economy. His argument that an economic policy along socialist lines necessarily would have brought more positive results, or his firm belief that industrialization was the only way to overcome structural poverty, needs of course to be questioned. But, as I have shown with my reference to Harri Englund, the ways in which Malawi is discussed in the West until today confirm rather than contradict most of Mwaungulu's observations.

Yet, Mwaungulu's incomplete thesis was not a seminal work, and it is not my intention to elevate it as such. But reading it does help in understanding what made him a Marxist freedom fighter. Promising to overcome racialized capitalism

²⁰⁷ *The Arusha Declaration* was a political statement released by Tanzania's governing party in February 1967, when Mwaungulu was still in exile there, and is based on the idea of an African socialism. The English quote that Mwaungulu used is taken from the declaration's third part ("The Policy of Self-Reliance," subsection "Gifts and Loans will endanger our Independence," final paragraph). In the version that he used, it goes as follows: "We are mistaken when we imagine that we shall get money from foreign countries, firstly, because to say the truth we cannot get enough money for our development and, secondly, because even if we could get it such complete dependence on outside help would have endangered our independence and the other policies of our country" (Mwaungulu 1973: 39).

but vehemently rejected by the Banda regime, Marxism attracted a wide variety of Black radical intellectuals, of which Walter Rodney is only one prominent name. I have argued in the introductory chapter that African exile in the GDR—itsself part of the communist Eastern bloc—can best be understood as the most clear manifestation of a critique of capitalism by Africans living in the diaspora. The Marxist-Leninist doctrine as applied by the European socialist regimes, however imperfect in terms of the full understanding of racism, provided the tools for a “political economic critique in the theorizing of the global Black condition” (Burden-Stelly 2017: 216) *at the highest levels of the state*. In the case of Mwaungulu, who—at least at this stage of his life—could as well be described as an economist in exile,²⁰⁸ this only becomes more obvious through his learned profession and the concrete circumstances which, in 1964, turned him into an exile. But the same counts for most South African exiles, where the ANC’s alliance with the SACP constantly pointed towards the underlying economic structure of European (settler) colonialism and apartheid.

At the concrete level of the exiled individual, however, the fact that Mwaungulu, in contrast to how things looked during his first stay in the GDR and despite all his efforts, was unable to fulfill the task of taking the next step on the educational ladder might suggest that he was not really made for purely academic work. Or, perhaps, what he had gone through previously in Malawi and then in Tanzanian exile had left its mark—things were slowly falling apart, as it retrospectively appears. The only question was when and why exactly his alter ego from *Der Gast*—an African exile who was never meant to stay—intersected with reality and turned him into the *Knowledge Man*. To understand this, we need to examine more precisely how the unfolding of the Malawian exile community in Tanzania affected his exile in the GDR, which draws us deeper into the central and southeastern Africa of the 1970s and 1980s.

2.12 Radical Opposition from Exile: The Socialist League of Malawi (Lesoma)

The way in which Mwaungulu recalls his return to the GDR suggests that it was in good part the result of a discussion he had with the exile party which he had joined in Tanzania, the Malawi Revolutionary Movement. From such a perspec-

²⁰⁸ This observation reminds me of the exiled reformist (some considered Marxist) economists from the Weimar Republic, many of them Jews, who fled Nazi Germany to the United States where they started to work at the New School for Social Research (Krohn 1993: 52–58).

tive, his attempt at writing a thesis on Malawi's economic problems was his contribution to the broader struggle of the organized Malawian exile community against the Banda regime. How had this struggle developed since Mwaungulu left Tanzania, and what would his new contribution consist of?

The answer came via a letter that reached the GDR's International Relations Department of African Affairs in July 1975, just five months after the passport and registration office of the East German police had checked on Mwaungulu's new status at the HfÖ. Written in Tanzania by the secretary of a movement called The Socialist League of Malawi (Lesoma), its author Kapote Mwakasungura had "the great pleasure to present comrade Mwaungulu to the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany as a member of Lesoma's steering committee and the League's authorized representative in the GDR."²⁰⁹

In his interviews, Mwaungulu remains strikingly silent about this party, only mentioning its name to Trüper once. Tellingly, he does so in the context of his divorce in 1979, which paved the way for his expulsion from the GDR three years later; hence, Mwaungulu's political commitment to Lesoma seems to be connected on two different time scales with the inquiry that the East German police made about his status in 1975. The silence that Mwaungulu otherwise kept about Lesoma contrasts with a large number of party documents and letters from fellow party members that he carefully kept among his private things. Thus, Mwaungulu's personal legacy—that small and dusty box which Gisela Mwaungulu gave to me—became the starting point from which I reconstructed Lesoma's history and searched for more information about this party, mainly found in German and Russian archives, for the scholarly literature, with only a few exceptions, remains as silent about this movement as Mwaungulu is in his interviews.

Only in 2016 did a non-academic book appear whose original aim was to shed some light on Lesoma. Written and edited by the same Mwakasungura who in 1975 wrote the letter to the GDR and by Doug Miller, a Canadian emigrant and former Lesoma activist, it began as a project to write down the party's history but resulted in a book that, again, only briefly discusses Lesoma itself. Instead, it collects the voices of Malawians who—having been in exile and Lesoma members or not—in one way or another fell victim to the Banda regime and/or actively opposed it (Mwakasungura/Miller 2016).²¹⁰ The two authors see therein a necessary reaction to

²⁰⁹ SAPMO-BArch DZ 8/186, Beziehungen zur Malawi Liga 1975–1980, Letter from Mwakasungura to the Socialist Unity Party's Central Committee in Berlin, International Relations Department of African Affairs, Dar es Salaam, 12 July 1975.

²¹⁰ A Malawian journalist told me in 2018 that the book had only received little coverage in the Malawian media, mentioning as a feasible reason that a good part of the Malawian mass media

the ongoing glorification of the Banda regime in contemporary Malawi, a perspective shared by other Malawian intellectuals (Chirambo 2009; Chirwa 2007: 166–183, 194–197; Mapanje 2011).²¹¹ Furthermore, Mwakasungura and Miller’s initial idea of writing down Lesoma’s history resulted in several interviews conducted between Miller, Mwakasungura, and other former Lesoma members in Malawi. They generously gave me access to this rich and exclusive material so that I could use it for this study.

Aside from belonging to Mwaungulu’s own exile experience, Lesoma’s history inscribes a larger collective of Malawi’s then deterritorialized opposition into the broader field of African socialisms and national liberation movements in Southern Africa. Scholarship on the latter has convincingly questioned the concept of national liberation by stating that “the notion of a single one-way journey from tyranny to national liberation has arguably restricted the development of a more open-ended, fragmented and inclusive set of conflict histories in southern Africa” (White/Larmer 2014: 1271). This was followed by a call for more research on the transnational histories of national liberation movements, identifying as a key methodological problem that most of these movements “do not have easily accessible archives or any archives at all,” a situation which requires “creative solutions” (Alexander/McGregor/Tendi 2017: 3–4). The problem of sources from exile movements that operated on a transnational scale together with the notion of national liberation’s restrictiveness, with its underlying assumption of independent nation states as an end in itself, I would argue, may also have prevented earlier inclusion of Lesoma into such scholarship on African liberation movements as well as into scholarship on African socialisms (Pitcher/Askew 2006; Englund 2008: 41).

Another relevant factor here is that Lesoma’s history constantly reminds us of the Banda regime’s oppressiveness, broadening the picture of Malawi within the Southern African liberation struggles drawn by the Malawian historian Kings M. Phiri (2014). Relying on oral history accounts from Malawians and former Mozambican refugees who had fled their homeland’s wars to Malawi, Phiri gives considerable room to the memories of Malawians who worked in key sectors of the Banda regime, such as the ministry, the military and the police. In fact, two of his interviewees fell victim to Banda’s distrust at some point in their careers and spent years in Malawian prisons.²¹² His aim is to revisit “Malawi’s role during the

is still in the hands of people with personal or familial ties to the Banda regime. For two reviews by Western scholars, see Fisher (2017) & Meinhardt (2017).

²¹¹ The work of Paliani Chinguwo and the Lost History Foundation is particularly important in this context, see <https://historyofmalawi.com/> (accessed 2 October 2023).

²¹² These two individuals are the politician Aleke Banda, who played an important role in the independence struggle and remained loyal to Hastings K. Banda until he was jailed in 1980 for 12

liberation struggle in Mozambique and Zimbabwe, in the light of critical assessments made by earlier, expatriate scholars” such as David Hedges (1989) or the already mentioned Carolyn McMaster, “but especially in terms of how that role is being remembered, perceived, and interpreted in Malawi today” (Phiri 2014: 567). Thus, Phiri rightfully problematizes the dominance of non-Malawian perspectives that, as he argues, “have generally presented a negative picture of the Malawian contribution” (2014: 565) to these struggles, contrasting them with hitherto little known but important acts of Malawian solidarity at the official as well as the grassroots levels.

Although Phiri also has to admit that solidarity at the official level was rather limited, he emphasizes the solidarity shown by ordinary Malawians who lived in the border regions and hosted Mozambican refugees or Zimbabwean freedom fighters (2014: 583).²¹³ However, his understandable motivation to put Malawi into a more positive light—the study was done for the Southern African Development Communities’ (SADC) multivolume work *Southern African Liberation Struggles: Contemporaneous Documents, 1960–1994* and, thus, comes close to being a task of national importance²¹⁴—contrasts with the scant attention he pays to the Malawian exile community. In fact, Phiri does not even speak of exile as such, when he actually mentions it, and the only time an exilic condition is applied to a Malawian in the whole text is when one of Phiri’s interviewees refers to Hastings K. Banda’s early time abroad as living in exile (2014: 588).²¹⁵ Meanwhile, the politi-

years, and Focus Martin Gwede, who headed intelligence in the special branch section of the police until being jailed in 1976 for 17 years (Phiri 2014: 588 & 599).

213 For Malawi’s hosting of some of the Zimbabwe African National Union’s members, which in my opinion changes little in the general role of Malawi as a reactionary regime in the region, see also Mazarire (2017: 89–90) and Maluwa (1992: 348, 365–366); for another critical assessment of the role that Malawi played for Mozambique, written by a non-Malawian scholar, see Robinson 2006 (278–295).

214 See Temu, Arnold J./Tembe, Joel das Neves (ed.) (2014): *Southern African Liberation Struggles: Contemporaneous Documents, 1960–1994*. Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 9 volumes. With a research team consisting of members from the SADC’s mainland states, among them Malawi, this work is the result of the SADC’s aim to document regional as well as international contributions to Southern Africa’s liberation struggles.

215 In search of education, Hastings K. Banda (c. 1898–1997) left Nyasaland in 1915 for Southern Rhodesia and South Africa. In 1925, he migrated from South Africa to the US to study; in 1937, he migrated to Great Britain to complete his studies in medicine, where he remained until 1953, for he could not find an adequate job in Nyasaland. In 1953, he migrated to the Gold Coast, where he lived for five more years before finally returning to Nyasaland in 1958 and heading the liberation movement. While his extensive migrations must be seen in the context of racist experiences and discrimination in colonial Africa, it is problematic to refer to it as exile, as Phiri’s interview partner does, while at the same time neglecting the political exile provoked by Banda’s government.

cal exile provoked by the Banda regime is addressed in different terms and mentioned solely in the context of the secrecy which the Banda regime kept about its support for the Mozambican liberation movement Frelimo. One reason for this secrecy, Phiri argues, was that Frelimo used Tanzanian training camps “at a time when Banda and his government lived in fear of an imminent rebel attack from the same direction” (2014: 576). He then mentions the Cabinet Crisis as the precursor event, during which “six of Banda’s most able cabinet ministers rebelled against his autocratic style of leadership, were expelled from the government and the Malawi Congress Party, and thereafter fled the country along with many supporters to seek asylum in Zambia and Tanzania,” adding that “there were strong suspicions in Malawi that the rebels who had fled to Tanzania were then being militarily trained and equipped side by side with Frelimo cadres” (ibid.).

Obviously, these descriptions do not question Malawi’s national narrative the same way as recounting a period of organized political exile that lasted until the very end of the Banda regime does. Similarly problematic, I find Phiri’s implicit suggestion that the regime’s well-founded “fear of an imminent rebel attack” played a greater role in the limited support it gave to Frelimo than the regime’s anti-communist stance and geopolitical interests. Though this might not have been the author’s intention, in a rather paradoxical twist it invokes the existence of a political exile community not as the most pronounced *Malawian* opposition to a dictatorial regime and its highly ambiguous policies towards other liberation movements and the white-ruled South but more as another justification precisely for these policies. Still, Phiri’s neglect or reluctance to call the Malawian exile community by its name, together with his tendency to paint a more benevolent picture of the Banda regime, at least forces me to reflect on the discomfort I myself feel when the GDR—a country I have not even been a citizen of—is constantly reduced to its dictatorial aspects and on the question of whether I, who have never been to Malawi, am applying double standards here. So how does the picture of Mwaungulu’s home country change when Lesoma’s history—or what I as a German have created out of it—is taken into account?

2.12.1 Lesoma’s Foundation

Dunduzu Chisiza, like his brother Yatuta a key figure in Malawi’s independence movement, must have foreseen Lesoma’s emergence. In his influential book *Africa: What lies ahead?*, published in the year of his untimely death,²¹⁶ Chisiza

²¹⁶ Dunduzu Chisiza died in 1962 in a car crash; on rumors about his death, see Power (2010: 156–176).

wrote in a humourous tone that it is “almost an universal tendency in the less developed regions of the world that if the ruling party is pro-West, the opposition will be pro-East” (1962: 21). Regarding the latter, he added that “communism has a reputation for thriving on persecution” (ibid.), from which he concluded that “the policy of aligning with the West creates a burning issue for communists and so long as they have a legitimate issue to fight, ‘firmness,’ persecution, only add fuel to the flame. Paradoxical as it may sound, the safest way of aligning with the West is not to align with the West” (ibid.). Turning a deaf ear on this advice and forcing his opponents into exile, Banda provided every reason for the emergence of a radical opposition.

I have already mentioned the split that occurred in 1967 between some of the political leaders of the Malawian exile community in Tanzania: Henry Chipembere, Kanyama Chiume and Yatuta Chisiza. In one of their documents, Lesoma’s steering committee blames Chiume as the key person responsible for the split, claiming that he repeatedly questioned the political integrity of Chipembere, who was leading the Pan-African Democratic Party (PDP) before moving to the US.²¹⁷ The years that followed these events are described as a period of stagnation. Especially after the Central Committee of the PDP broke up, a political vacuum appeared. The remaining ex-ministers in Tanzania started to group loyal supporters around themselves, thus dissolving the former sense of unity while slowly establishing several opposition groups. Lesoma’s steering committee now argued that “what was born as Lesoma in 1975 was a resurrection of the unity of the opposition forces that had existed before the Chipembere/Chisiza split of 1967 and the PDP split of 1969/70.”²¹⁸ Somewhat contradictorily, it further states that it was the official founding of their party and its rapid success among the exiles that not only filled this political vacuum but also motivated more moderate ex-ministers, like Orton Chirwa, to establish their own parties, namely the Malawi Freedom Movement (Chirwa) and the Congress for the Second Republic (Chiume). So, who were the founders of Lesoma and why did their political views differ from those of renowned politicians like Chirwa? Mwakasungura and Miller situate answers to these questions within the broader changes that had taken place since the 1950s, influenced by the unique political environment of the Tanzanian host country as well as the Southern African liberation struggles. As a consequence, Lesoma “adopted a socialist programme which neither Kanyama Chiume nor

217 SAPMO-BArchiv (German Federal Archive) DY 24/14413, “Kontakte der FDJ mit der sozialistischen Liga Malawi (Lesoma),” 1978–1987, sheets 00088–00092: “Malawi: The present and the future: Our assessment,” by Lesoma steering committee, 3 March 1984, here sheet 00092. Chiume’s 1975 autobiography does not cover this period.

218 SAPMO-BArchiv DY 24/14413, sheet 00090.

Orton Chirwa could have accepted. Ideologically they were probably just as distrustful of socialism as Dr Banda was” (Mwakasungura/Miller 2016: 194).

Lesoma, the only political organization of Malawian exiles with a distinctly Marxist outlook, was the political outcome of a younger generation of Malawian exiles who were not only disappointed about the clashes of the former ministers but also inspired by the new socio-political climate they inhabited, including the Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere’s pan-Africanism and his experiments with socialism, the looming success of Frelimo’s liberation struggle in Mozambique, and the presence of representatives from all the other Southern African liberation movements on Tanzanian soil. Added to this was the influence of earlier experiences gained in countries like Algeria, China, Cuba, and the Soviet Union, where some exiles had received university degrees or, as already mentioned, political and military training. According to this logic, Lesoma adopted the language and attitude of national liberation movements and matched them to the specifics of its own situation. The party transformed its nationalist claim of opposing the Malawian government to the more universal claim of opposing a neocolonial puppet regime of the West. Such an accusation was of course nothing new; for instance, Havana’s *Tricontinental* had published in 1971 an article titled “Malawi: Neocolonial State.” Nevertheless, this development of Lesoma’s discursive strategy parallels to a certain degree the ANC’s strategy to transform the more nationalist claim of struggling against the South African apartheid regime to the more universalist claim of struggling against colonialism (Lee 2010).

In the organization’s writings and speeches, Lesoma insisted on the relevance of neocolonialism to counter the paradox of struggling against the independence leader of a Black African nation. This paradox had already haunted the older generation of political leaders like Yatuta Chisiza (Mackay 2008: 328–329). It also distinguished the exiled Malawian opposition from the similarly exiled Zimbabwean, Namibian, and South African liberation movements, for they were all fighting against white minority rule. To better illustrate Lesoma’s strategy for confronting this paradox, it is worth quoting at length from a 1977 volume of *Kuchanso*, the party’s political organ:

We must be aware that Banda alone, without the active and massive assistance which he receives from his masters in South Africa, Britain, the United States, and West Germany would not have kept our people in political bondage and social and economic misery for so long. This is why we must perceive and pursue our struggle within a broader political and ideological context engulfing the Southern Africa battlefield. The entrenchment of a neocolonial fascist state in Malawi poses a genuine threat to the consolidation of national independence and the peaceful, social, and economic progress along the socialist road of development which our neighbors in Mozambique, Zambia, and Tanzania have chosen. For

the same reason, the fascist Banda regime's open political, economic, and military collaboration with the racist and colonial regimes in Zimbabwe and South Africa creates immense obstacles to the liberation struggles of our brothers in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa. (4–5)²¹⁹

Lesoma's reference to neocolonialism corresponds with argumentative strategies from national liberation movements which have presented "the revolutionary nature of violence [. . .] as having potential for a total destruction of the [. . .] oppressive state system. The successor state would not be neo-colonial, like those African states that had ended colonial rule in the 1960s" (Kanduzi 2013: 147–148). These rhetorical similarities are outweighed, however, by the hard fact that the Organization of African Unity considered struggles for national liberation as worth supporting while rejecting interference into the domestic policies of member states such as Malawi.

Because of this ambiguous situation, Lesoma had to repeatedly justify its struggle and explain its causes. Of particular significance is its emphasis on being a national opposition movement—the legitimate representative of all Malawian people—and not primarily a movement of refugees that could hardly claim to represent the majority of the Malawian people, however harsh Banda's repression in the country actually was. To secure unity, a controversial ex-minister such as Chieme was excluded from membership whereas an ex-minister like Chirwa, who was still seen as a man of integrity, was asked without success to join Lesoma.²²⁰ Mwakasungura, who had fled Malawi in 1964 as a student activist, was one of the four founding members of Lesoma. A second founding member was known to be a former member of the PDP. Lesoma's then still-provisional steering committee included two survivors of Chisiza's guerilla campaign. In 1974, the committee wrote the party's manifesto.²²¹ Naturally, it called for the overthrow of Banda's dictatorship and the socialist restructuring of Malawi's national economy.²²² Concerning African unity and international cooperation, it claimed something that, retrospectively, sounds oddly nostalgic—Lesoma's ambitious objective was "to rehabilitate Malawi's dignity and rightful place at the Organization of African Union and the United Nations and particularly to play an active role towards promoting the African revolution and international solidarity."²²³

²¹⁹ This volume, together with several Lesoma membership cards, is archived in the GDR's document file SAPMO-BArch DZ 8/186, Beziehungen zur Malawi Liga 1975–1980.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, sheet 00092.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, sheet 00079.

²²² *Ibid.*, sheet 00080.

²²³ *Ibid.*, sheet 00082.

While scholars consider Lesoma the most important political outcome of the Malawian exile community (e.g. Meinhardt 1993: 61), the total number of its members can only be estimated. In an interview with *The Guardian* in 1979, Lesoma's first national chairman, to whom I return in more detail below, spoke of 15,000 active supporters inside the country and in exile.²²⁴ Heiko Meinhardt (1997: 98) estimated the number of Lesoma members at several thousand, while a France Presse article estimated the number in 1979 as between 1,000 or 2,000.²²⁵ Although predominantly composed of male members, the party also had female members, and Mwakasungura stresses that Lesoma was a serious socialist party with corresponding structures that included a Women's League.²²⁶ Among the letters from Mwaungulu's estate, I found evidence of one Malawian woman who became a Lesoma member in Europe and, subsequently, received a scholarship to study in a socialist country. As far as I can conclude from the correspondence, she ended up studying medicine in Bulgaria. Her case also suggests that increasing their chances for obtaining such a scholarship might have motivated young Malawians to join the party. In any case, a female member of Berlin's African community praised Mwaungulu precisely for having promoted women's education through intervening in Lesoma's practice of providing only male members with scholarships to study abroad.²²⁷

2.12.2 Lesoma's First Leadership

Although in its speeches and writings Lesoma rejected individualism and leadership culture, the tragic figure of Attati Mpakati, first national chairman of Lesoma, deserves our attention. As a person close to Chipembere, Mpakati had been a regional secretary in the Nyasaland African Congress and left Nyasaland in 1961 after detention (Mpakati 1973: 33; Uwechue 1996: 459). John McCracken briefly mentions him as Flax Musopole's "fellow left-winger" and writes that Musopole, in 1959 a leading figure in the anti-colonial uprisings in northern Malawi, started

²²⁴ SAPMO-BArch DZ 8/186, clipped newspaper article from *The Guardian*, 24 December 1979 (no title included).

²²⁵ GARF (State Archive of the Russian Federation), TASS (Soviet Union's news agency) dossier on general foreign policy information, 4459, file 3497, Malawi, 3 February 1983–28 December 1983, sheets 3–5: Situation in Malawi (France Press article translated into Russian), sheet 4.

²²⁶ Mwakasungura's responses to my questions, 14 March 2016.

²²⁷ Alofuokhai-Ghogomu, Stephania A.A.: Tribute to diplom economist Mahoma Mwakipunda Mwaungulu. Manuscript of a speech held at Mwaungulu's farewell party on 8 January 2008, Evangelische Zwölf Apostel Kirchengemeinde, Berlin.

a correspondence with Mpakati when the latter was studying in Leningrad (2002: 85; 2012: 436).²²⁸ Unlike Musopole, whose puzzling “transition from Marxist freedom fighter to MCP loyalist” McCracken sought to understand (2002: 85), Mpakati not only received an offer to study in the Soviet Union but also had the chance to realize it.

Mpakati studied economics in Leningrad in the early 1960s, thanks to the connections the Tanganyikan African National Union had with the Soviet Union. He even married a Russian and was father of two Soviet-born children. Afterwards, he continued his academic career in Sweden and earned a PhD from West Germany’s University of Bremen with the thesis *Problems and Prospects in Economic and Social Development of Tanzanian Society* (1977). Mpakati was appointed to the United Nation’s Institute for Namibia in Lusaka and also worked for the Reserve Bank of Mozambique in Maputo (Uwechue 1996: 459). When Mpakati contacted an East German diplomat in Dar es Salaam in 1975 to ask for assistance for his party, the diplomat later described him as a serious and reliable person fully aware of politics.²²⁹ In addition to his competence in economics and his international networks, another reason for Lesoma’s steering committee to make Mpakati the party’s first national chairman was his originating from the Mulanje district in the Malawian south, unlike the majority of the leading members who were from the north. Hence, the party’s decision to nominate Mpakati as its chairman reveals an early awareness of the danger of overrepresentation of northerners in leading positions. Beside Mpakati, Lesoma’s steering committee had thought about asking the exiled Malawian poet, academic and former diplomat David Rubadiri to become its first national chairman but then dropped this idea because of Rubadiri’s northern background.²³⁰ Convincing Mpakati of a position that would put him on top of the priority list of Banda’s security apparatus was not easy either; it took Mpakati almost three months to accept the offer.

From the 1970s until the early 1980s, some Lesoma briefings and articles authored by Mpakati and an interview with him were published in Western journals such as the *Review of African Political Economy* and *Race & Class*, but also in the *Tanzanian African Review*, and the relevant organ of international communism, the *World Marxist Review* (Malawi Socialist League 1975; Mpakati 1979; Mpakati 1980;

²²⁸ On political radicalism in northern Malawi, see also Owen Kalinga (2010).

²²⁹ SAPMO-BArch DZ 8/186, minutes of a meeting between Mpakati and Oelschlägel, GDR embassy Dar es Salaam, 23 September 1976.

²³⁰ See p. 131, n. 166. That most of Lesoma’s leading members were from the north, especially from the Karonga district, is noteworthy. One reason for the high number of northerners can be traced back to colonial times: the north was economically less developed but had more missionary schools and a greater number of well-educated Malawians compared to other regions.

Searle 1980; The Socialist League of Malawi 1981). Mpakati was an astute observer of the postcolonial condition who mingled theory with political practice. In search of an appropriate path for Africa's development, he was equally concerned with history and economics, moving between Africa, the Soviet Union as well as Northern and Western Europe. One of his earlier writings cites an illustrious mixture of thinkers like Karl Marx, Oskar Lange, Kwame Nkrumah, Marshall Sahlins, and Jean-Paul Sartre. He not only stressed that "Malawi has the right to obtain foreign aid from the socialist countries" (1973: 56) but even expressed some skepticism about the Soviet Union: "While it may be true that some other African states have suffered under Soviet aid motivated by Soviet imperialism, there is no reason why this should affect economic relationships with smaller countries of the socialist camp" (*ibid.*).

Considering Banda's obsession with eliminating him, Mpakati must have been the incarnation of all the evil that communism meant for the Malawian president. Around 1976, Mpakati had the invidious task of moving a part of Lesoma's headquarters from Tanzania to a much more politically insecure Mozambique. Tanzania tolerated Lesoma but prohibited the party from acting in public.²³¹ Whereas its office in Dar es Salaam was supposed to focus on Lesoma's international and Tanzanian relations, Mozambique was thought to become the clandestine base for making stronger connections with Lesoma's cells within Malawi. As a document from the GDR further explains, the party also tried to convince Frelimo to provide military training for its cadres, but Mozambique had little interest in straining its difficult relations with Malawi while a civil war was going on and is said to have kept a close eye on that base.²³²

It was in the Mozambican capital of Maputo where a letter bomb crippled both of Mpakati's hands in 1979. The rapprochement in 1980 between Malawi and Mozambique made the latter country an even more dangerous hiding place—Malawi is said to have offered Mozambique the extradition of several thousand Mozambican dissidents if Mpakati were to be handed over (Sagawa 2011: 146). In 1982, Banda put enough pressure on Zambia, where another Lesoma base existed and to which Mpakati had moved, to expel him; in 1983, the manhunt came to an end with the fatal shooting of Mpakati in Zimbabwe. His old comrade Mwakasungura reports that the Malawian branch of Mpakati's family is almost nonexistent and that his Russian family migrated to Sweden.²³³

²³¹ See p. 166, n. 229. This information from the files differs from that given to me by Mwakasungura, who holds that his party had its headquarters in Tanzania all the time and that Nyerere had no problems with Lesoma.

²³² SAPMO-BArch DZ 8/186, minutes of a meeting between Mpakati and Hollender, Maputo, 2 November 1978.

²³³ Telephone conversation between Mwakasungura and the author, 6 March 2016.

The assassination of its leader undoubtedly had an unsettling effect on Lesoma. Written in an emotional tone, the authors of a Lesoma paper from 1984 omit—or do not yet know—that Banda had also kidnapped other exiled opponents like Orton and Vera Chirwa and sentenced them both to death.²³⁴ The argument reveals symptoms of temporary exhaustion, if not despair. Rhetorically asking if Lesoma is just like the other Malawian opposition groups, it emphasizes that the Banda regime persecutes members of Lesoma with a particular relentlessness, claiming that “the government of Malawi has again dispatched to neighboring countries several specially trained murder squads in an attempt to assassinate the entire Lesoma leadership, either through letter bombs or by shooting as happened to our late leader.”²³⁵ Yet, an even more interesting statement seems to be part of a speech that representatives of Lesoma’s Youth Movement gave in the mid-1980s at a gathering of the Pan African Youth Movement (PYM), presumably in Libya.²³⁶ It not only criticizes the Frontline States²³⁷ but also switches Lesoma’s profile from being a national opposition movement to the perhaps more realistic notion of being a movement of exiles and refugees:

We should also address ourselves to the question of refugees in Africa. How can PYM help the [Organization of African Unity] in reducing the number of refugees from independent African countries, etc. Very unfortunately, the African press has also remained silent on the evils of neo-colonialism, hence dictators like Dr. Banda have managed to remain in power without their evils being exposed. Even the press of the Frontline States have decided to keep a low profile on the deteriorating political, social and economic situation in Malawi.²³⁸

234 Though the death sentences were later commuted, Orton Chirwa died in prison whereas his wife was jailed for 12 years.

235 SAPMO-BArchiv DY 24/14413, Malawi: The present and the future: Our assessment, paper by Lesoma’s steering committee, 3 March 1984, sheet 00092.

236 A letter from Lesoma to the Soviet Committee of Youth Organization mentions the participation of members of its Youth Movement at the PYM meeting in Libya in 1983. GARF, P-9540, file 530, Correspondences with the Organizations for the Solidarity with the Asian and African Countries and Private Persons in African Countries regarding Questions of Friendship and Cooperation, 1984, p. 22–23. As far as I can determine, Lesoma had a Youth Movement, a Student’s Movement, and a Women’s League; Meinhardt also mentions an armed wing called the “People’s Liberation Army” (1993: 62) but does not mention it again in a later study (1997: 79–80). Mwaka-sungura and Miller mention some Lesoma cadres who, following the model of the South African ANC, were sent abroad for military training (2015: 197).

237 This loosely allied group of states was formed to isolate apartheid South Africa on the continent. It existed from the 1960s to the 1990s and finally included Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

238 SAPMO-BArchiv DY 24/14413, paper by Lesoma Youth Movement, sheet 00106.

What Lesoma's Youth Movement is complaining about here reveals the ambiguous situation the party had to deal with. It was obvious to everyone that Banda's Malawi hindered the further decolonization of Southern Africa and the development of its newly independent states, while the political options available to countries like Tanzania or Zambia to counter Banda's politics were rather limited. And Lesoma members were extremely dependent on the good will of the countries which hosted them. If Lesoma's Youth Movement was disappointed by the hesitant and ambivalent way the Frontline States dealt with Malawi, what were Lesoma's relations with the socialist world in the North like, and what was Mwaungulu's role in these relations?

2.12.3 Lesoma's International Relations: An Explanation for Mwaungulu's Expulsion from the GDR?

Banda's first attempt to eliminate Lesoma's national chairman is a good starting point to look more closely at the relations between Lesoma and the GDR and to bring Mwaungulu back into the story. In February 1980, two closely related events took place in East Berlin. One occurred in the office of the GDR's Solidarity Committee, where a conversation between the Committee's proxy secretary-general and Mwaungulu, explicitly addressed here as the representative of Lesoma, was summarized as follows:

The Solidarity Committee will not engage in any activities to support Mr. Mwaungulu's search for a job. It was further communicated to him that, as of 31 December 1980, the Solidarity Committee will not support his claim for renewal of his residence permit and would appreciate his departure to an African country of his choice instead.²³⁹

The same day when Mwaungulu was kindly asked to leave the GDR, the diplomatic channels between East Berlin and the GDR embassy in London ran hot. Obviously, the objective was to impede Mpakati's entry to East Germany. After having been wounded by Banda's letter bomb in Maputo, Mpakati was flown to London for medical treatment. From there, he planned to fly to East Berlin, where Mwaungulu had tried to organize further medical treatment of his chairman. However, as documents from the GDR indicate, this time Mpakati, who had already visited the GDR on other occasions, faced problems reaching East Germany. A fax from the GDR's Solidarity Committee to the GDR embassy in London stated that medical treatment for Mpakati had been prepared for November 1979, but Mpakati did not arrive; by 1980, however, the Committee saw no possibility

²³⁹ SAPMO-BArch DZ 8/186, minutes of a talk between Wolfgang Krause and Mwaungulu, Berlin, 6 February 1980, own translation.

for treatment.²⁴⁰ Hence, the fax indicates that, although there had initially been official interest in aiding Mpakati, only a few months later he was to be kept away. Meanwhile, the simultaneous attempt to get rid of Mwaungulu indicates that the GDR considered any further relations with Lesoma to no longer be expedient. But what had their relations been like up to this point?

Mwakasungura describes the material assistance provided to Lesoma by the socialist German state as relatively small in comparison with the assistance provided by countries like Tanzania, the Soviet Union, Zambia, and Cuba.²⁴¹ From 1975 to 1980, the GDR had trained two Lesoma members in professions such as mechanical engineering and education and printed several official party documents, including Lesoma's provisional constitution, the party's manifesto and membership cards.²⁴² Despite its notorious paper shortage, the GDR had printed at least three volumes of Lesoma's organ *Kuchanso*—not unlike the much better known *Sechaba* from the ANC and *Namibia Today* from the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO)—with runs of 500 copies of each volume (fig. 10). That this support meant something for Lesoma becomes evident in the fact that, until the mid 1980s, its Youth Movement tried in vain to convince the GDR to revive it.²⁴³ Likewise, Lesoma's national treasurer, Mundu Mwambetania, spoke in 1983 of the rather unfortunate situation “that because of very big logistical constraints stemming mainly from acute financial problems, we are unable to produce requisite propaganda materials for distribution.”²⁴⁴

Willi Sommerfeld, a former member of the GDR's Solidarity Committee, remembers the printing of these Lesoma documents. Since there existed no diplomatic relations between the GDR and Malawi, it was unproblematic and did not demand higher authorization from the GDR's Central Committee for International Affairs.²⁴⁵ All it needed was a Lesoma member on-site who was capable of convincing others of the sincerity and purpose of the party's struggle—exactly the kind of person that Mwaungulu was.

240 Fax from the Solidarity Committee to comrade Kern in the GDR's embassy in London, 6 February 1980. Gisela Mwaungulu assured me that Mpakati visited the GDR and her family in East Berlin several times.

241 The assistance Cuba provided Lesoma needs further investigation. In 1978, the *New African* wrote about Cuban training for Lesoma members, who were flown from Mozambique to Havana (Cuban Training for Malawian Exiles 1978: 12).

242 SAPMO-BArch DZ 8/186, letter from Mwakasungura to the GDR's Solidarity Committee, Dar es Salaam, 27 December 1977. Documents in the same file indicate that the GDR had earlier accepted one Malawian trainee sent by Henry M. Chipembere in 1969.

243 SAPMO-BArchiv DY 24/14413, sheet 00037, letter Marama to Ziegler, 15 January 1986.

244 Letter from Mwambetania in Dar es Salaam to Mwaungulu in West Berlin, 31 October 1983.

245 Interview between Willi Sommerfeld and the author on 11 November 2010.



Fig. 10: Cover of Lesoma's organ *Kuchanso*, printed in the GDR. *Kuchanso* means "New Dawn" and *Mpumbulu* means "Revolution" (Mwaungulu private estate).

The important role that Mwaungulu played for Lesoma and the latter played for him becomes obvious in another letter written by Mwakasungura at the end of 1977, on the occasion of his comrade's yearly procedure to get his residence permit renewed:

It was agreed that the Socialist Unity Party and the Government of the GDR be informed of the fact that comrade Mahoma is, thus far, the only member of Lesoma and the only Malawian in the whole of the socialist countries there and that, until such time that Lesoma will be in a position to post someone else, his representational services in the GDR and the other socialist countries are extremely necessary.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁶ SAPMO-BArch DZ 8/186, Letter from Mwakasungura to the Socialist Unity Party's Central Committee in Berlin, International Relations Department of African Affairs, Dar es Salaam, 17 July 1977.

Given the tenuous relations depicted above, it can hardly be a coincidence that Mwaungulu's eventual expulsion to West Berlin in 1982 marked the end of any closer relations between Lesoma and the GDR. What is meaningful here about his expulsion within Germany, from East to West, and the effort it took him to secure his status in the FRG, is the way the matter was treated in the conversations Mwaungulu had with other Lesoma members abroad, who helped him to get a document from Tanzania that he urgently needed for identification (see p. 127, Fig. 8). For example, in January 1983, only two months before their national chairman Mpakati was fatally shot in Zimbabwe, one of Lesoma's students at Moscow's Lumumba University wrote to Mwaungulu: "We want to assure you that we shall follow your example. From you we have learnt that the only way to live is to understand our positions as refugees. Your life here has taught us that persevere [*sic*] problems is the best way to strengthen relations with all those who understand our cause."²⁴⁷ Hence, Mwaungulu's expulsion led younger Lesoma members to reflect upon the underlying political causes for their own fragile status. In a similar vein, Mwambetania empathically wrote from Dar es Salaam that "we were all very happy to learn that at last you have been accorded refugee status. No doubt this will enable you, one way or the other, to have some relative peace of mind."²⁴⁸

I think that at least two factors in the early 1980s influenced the GDR's decision to cut all ties with Lesoma and expell Mwaungulu. First, the GDR was economically involved along the Mozambican border with Malawi, where the East German state participated in a coal mining project that, if it had been successful, could have served as an important source of foreign currency for the GDR's declining national economy just at a time when railway damage caused by the Mozambican civil war seemed to have made Malawi a feasible transit country for transportation (Künanz 1993: 182).²⁴⁹ Second, this was the time when Malawi became a member of the Southern African Development Coordinating Conference (a forerunner of the SADC) and changed its foreign policy into one of rapprochement with its neighboring countries. In 1981, Mozambique became the first socialist country which established diplomatic relations with Malawi. Joaquim Chissano, then Mozambique's foreign minister, suggested to the GDR to do the same.²⁵⁰ Mwaungulu's own expla-

247 Letter from Moscow to Mwaungulu, 30 January 1983 (Mwaungulu private estate).

248 Letter from Dar es Salaam to Mwaungulu, 31 October 1983.

249 For a detailed account on the GDR's economic involvement in Mozambique, see Döring (1999).

250 PA AA, MfAA, M 31, ZR 2378/89, bilateral relations between the GDR and Malawi. Considering this period, Meinhardt writes about a power struggle within Lesoma that in 1981 resulted in the formation of a splinter group called the Malawi Democratic Union (1997: 80).

nation connects with this line of argument: To Trüper, he argued that Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 might well have raised hopes in the GDR that diplomatic relations with Malawi would follow. Consulting its Soviet ally on this matter, however, the East Germans considered it a useless step as long as Banda remained in power.

Andre Gunder Frank (1977) polemically called it a “transideological enterprise” when Second World countries attempted to make up for their growing trade deficit with the First World by trying to extract more economic benefit from their trade with Third World countries. A brief discussion paper from the GDR's Foreign Office, written in 1981, reveals some of this spirit through mentioning that “the GDR has always sent congratulations [to Malawi] on the occasion of its National Day, for which it [had generally] been thanked,” further noting that “Malawi, in spite of belonging to the world's poorest countries [. . .], is characterized by a healthy economic development, enjoys a high credit rating and allows profitable business [ventures].”²⁵¹ So what was the Soviet stance toward Lesoma?

While Mwakasungura emphasizes the Soviet Union's solidarity with Lesoma, Vladimir Shubin, who worked for the Soviet Union's Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, draws a more pragmatic picture of the relationship. Shubin remembers Mpakati and that some contact with Lesoma was maintained, mostly by the Solidarity Committee, but that no serious assistance was provided except scholarships.²⁵² That these scholarships were of great significance for Lesoma becomes obvious not only through the personal letters from Lesoma's Soviet graduates in Mwaungulu's estate but also through Mwakasungura's estimation that at least thirty Lesoma members must have studied in the Soviet Union. Scattered documents from the Soviet Union's Solidarity Committee give more detailed insight into the magnitude of Soviet solidarity with Lesoma.²⁵³ Compared to the East Ger-

²⁵¹ PA AA, MfAA, M 31, ZR 2378/89, bilateral relations between the GDR and Malawi, file notice about the relations with Malawi, Berlin, 18 August 1981 & handwritten discussion paper on Malawi (own translation). For the GDR's congratulation telegrams to Malawi covering the period from 1977 to 1985, see SAPMO-BArchiv, DA/5 12846, sheet 203, “Republik Malawi.” The East Germans also consulted the Soviet Union's Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee in the context of Mpakati's plan to enter the GDR in 1980, as a handwritten note on the following document indicates: SAPMO-BArch DZ 8/186, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, letter from the GDR's embassy in London to the GDR's Solidarity Committee, 8 January 1980.

²⁵² Email from Vladimir Shubin to the author, 6 December 2015. A Russian author took Lesoma as an example of a revolutionary-democratic party which struggles against its country's capitalist path of development, comparing Lesoma with the Kenya People's Union (Chirkin 1985: 180).

²⁵³ Several of these documents contain handwritten notes by Soviet officials indicating that there must have been a dossier on Lesoma. Unfortunately, neither I nor the subject specialist at the GARF were able to locate this dossier. I thank Maria Medvedeva for her translation work.

man support, Soviet support was greater and continued over a longer period; but, just like their East German allies, the Soviets had little or no faith at all in the possibility of a change of government in Malawi in the short term.²⁵⁴

In 1976, Lesoma handed over two volumes of *Kuchanso* to the Soviet embassy in Tanzania, from which they were sent to the Soviet Union's Solidarity Committee,²⁵⁵ revealing again the importance which the GDR's printing of propaganda material had for Lesoma. Requests for university places in the Soviet Union are first mentioned in a letter from Mpakati from June 1979.²⁵⁶ Only one month later, Lesoma asked for more professional training facilities for its members and whether a convalescence stay in the Soviet Union could be organized for the injured Mpakati together with his Russian wife.²⁵⁷ Although J. Jukalow, who worked in the Soviet embassy in Tanzania, argued in 1980 that the large number of stipends given to Lesoma members was disproportionate to Lesoma's activity, a document from 1982 indicates that, since 1976, more than fifty Lesoma members had received a stipend to study in the Soviet Union, a number that even tops Mwakasungura's estimation.²⁵⁸ Worth noting here is that Lesoma did not tolerate misconduct by its members abroad and, in 1982, Mwakasungura asked the Soviets to send two of Lesoma's students back to Tanzania: one because of thievery, the other one because of unauthorized visits to the embassies of Ghana, Nigeria and other African countries in the Soviet Union.²⁵⁹

254 Doubts about Lesoma's chances of generating a change of government in Malawi are expressed with detailed information on Malawi in a letter which W. Solodownikow, from the Soviet embassy in Zambia, wrote to A.S. Dzasochow, dated 18 May 1981. GARF, P-9540, file 481, Memos from Talks, Information and Letters from the Soviet Embassies in Africa, 27 December 1980–22 November 1981, sheets 146–157.

255 GARF, P-9540, file 405 B, Memos and Information from the Soviet Embassies in Africa, 17 January to 1 December 1976, sheet 250: Letter from J. Naumow, consultant of the Soviet embassy in Tanzania, to the ASSK, 27 September 1976.

256 GARF, P-9540, file 447, Memos and Information from the Soviet Embassies in Africa, 29 December 1978–21 December 1979, sheet 163: Letter from P. Jevsukow, Soviet embassy in Mozambique, 12 June 1979.

257 GARF, P-9540, file 447, Memo of a talk between Nkvasi, Lesoma's secretary for diplomatic contacts, and W. Mamonjko, third secretary of the Soviet embassy in Tanzania, 9 August 1979, sheets 214–215.

258 GARF, P-9540, file 481, Letter from J. Jukalow to A.S. Dzasochow, 27 December 1980, p. 1; file 499, Memos from Talks, Information and Letters from the Soviet Embassies in Africa, 28 January 1981 to 24 December 1982, sheet 17: Letter from J. Jukalow to A.S. Dzasochow, 30 January 1982.

259 GARF, P-9540, file 499, Memos from Talks, Information and Letters from the Soviet Embassies in Africa, 28 January 1981 to 24 December 1982, sheets 192–193: Letters from J. Jukalow to A.S. Dzasochow, 9 September 1982, and from Mwakasungura to the ASSK, 8 August 1982. One of the students studied at Patrice Lumumba University, the other one in Moldova. The last traces of

Meanwhile, the party succeeded in participating in a remarkable number of international conferences within the socialist and non-aligned blocs. Its breakthrough in the international arena came with the participation of Mwakasungura and Mwaungulu in the World Peace Council's 1977 Conference Against Apartheid, Racism and Colonialism in Southern Africa, held in Lisbon, where the two exiles, together with another Lesoma member, were proudly listed as representatives of Malawi (Portuguese National Committee 1977: 170).²⁶⁰ On this occasion, Mwakasungura became aware of the highly cosmopolitan nature of his comrade's exile in the East German capital, later remembering Mwaungulu as "an immense internationalist figure" who was familiar with many leaders of groups like the ANC, the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA), and the South-West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), whereas Mwakasungura had only met these people for the first time at the conference.²⁶¹ Requests to the Soviet Union for financial support to cover travel costs further suggest Lesoma's participations at the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization's conference in Aden 1981 and the International Conference in Solidarity with the Frontline States and Lesotho in Lisbon 1983.²⁶² Considering Lesoma's official outposts in Western Europe after Mwaungulu's expulsion from the GDR, the party could still count on three representatives, respectively located in England, Finland, and West Germany, however limited their individual agencies might have been.

Lesoma that I was able to find at the GARF is a folder from 1984 containing three documents. One expresses the party's condolence about the death of Yuri Andropov, the fourth general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party; the second expresses the party's gratitude to the Soviets for having facilitated two Lesoma cadres to attend a five-month political orientation course at Moscow's Comsol Institute, followed by a request for ten more such places for a whole year. The third document by Grey Kamuyambeni, who followed Mpakati as Lesoma's national chairman, reports more generally about Lesoma's continuing struggle against the Banda regime. GARF, P-9540, file 530, 1984, sheets 21, 22–23 & 24–26.

260 Doug Miller also attended the conference, but as a representative of the Canadian University Service Overseas.

261 Kapote Mwakasungura's answers to my questions, 14 March 2016.

262 GARF, P-9540, file 481, sheets 24–25: Letter from Mwakasungura to A.S. Dzasochow, translated into Russian and remitted from J. Jukalow to A.S. Dzasochow on 31 January 1981; file 499, sheet 213: Letter from J. Jukalow to A.S. Dzasochow, 5 October 1982.

2.12.4 Lesoma and the End of the Banda Regime

Similar to what Gerald Chikozho Mazarire (2017: 103–104) wrote about the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), Lesoma can best be understood as an ‘international animal’, an offspring of exile that survived for almost three decades, thanks to the support of the African states neighboring Malawi as well as from the wider world.²⁶³ Lesoma existed until 1991, when the party, together with two other exiled opposition movements, merged into the United Front for Multiparty Democracy (UFMD), but it was not until 1993 that the Banda regime succumbed to the international pressure and declared a general amnesty for exiles.²⁶⁴ In 1994, when the first democratic elections in Malawi were held, the UFMD virtually disappeared from the election results.

However, during the process of the country’s transformation, Mwakasungura, Lesoma’s long-standing secretary-general, is said to have become “a key player as a member of the Transitional National Consultative Council [. . .] and helped to draw up the New Malawi Constitution”; later he served as High Commissioner to Zimbabwe. Unsurprisingly, Mwakasungura and Miller mention anti-communism as one of the many problematic legacies of the Banda era that made the life of returning exiles difficult (2016: 208). The profile of the Malawi cabinet and members of parliament from 1996 seems to confirm this observation, as it lists only one politician who was once affiliated with Lesoma, an affiliation that only lasted from 1975 to 1981 (Kaunjika 1996).²⁶⁵ Contrary to the aggressive rhetoric directed against the Banda regime and Western imperialism in general, or expressions of sympathy for Yatuta Chisiza’s failed guerrilla campaign and an interest in military training, I could not find any evidence of violent actions led by Lesoma or within the party. It would, therefore, be misleading to conceptualize Lesoma only as a socialist move-

²⁶³ Considering Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle, Mwakasungura emphasizes the role of Lesoma members as mediators between the Tanzanian government and the Zimbabwean liberation movements ZANU and ZAPU.

²⁶⁴ Against the background of the Soviet Union’s demise, and the corresponding lack of radical socialist claims in the UFMD’s program, Heiko Meinhardt described with astonishment the founding of a small splinter party called the Malawi Socialist Labor Party in Dar es Salaam in 1990, led by former Lesoma member Stanford Sambanemanja (Meinhardt 1993: 62–63). For more information on the UFMD, see also Meinhardt 1997: 98–102.

²⁶⁵ Besides Frank Mkandawire, the book lists two more exiles, but neither had any former affiliation with Lesoma. Considering returned exiles, it is striking how uncritically legal consultants from a Malawian NGO, founded by at least one former Lesoma member, adopted the Western discourse on Human Rights, which ignores the structural side of socioeconomic inequalities (Englund 2006: 123–169); for a brief interview with this founder, see Mwakasungura and Miller (2016: 212–213).

ment that worked seriously toward an overthrow of the Banda regime. The party's insistence on the damage neocolonialism brought to the African cause, and the role corrupted elites played in it, not only recalls Nkrumah's book about the last stage of imperialism (1965). It also anticipates what Thandika Mkandawire, himself a Malawian exile who is said to have been a close friend of Mpakati,²⁶⁶ concluded as a distinguished Nyerere Lecturer in 2013, while reflecting on fifty years of African independence:

In terms of reflection and research, we ought to revisit some of the earlier concerns in Africa over inequality and neo-colonialism. The irony is that, today when the features of both structural dependence and class differentiation are most pronounced in our societies, much less attention is being paid to these issues in scholarly work. (2013: 62)

Lesoma's discourse was an internationalist vanguard discourse, applied by the party to justify its struggles as well as to understand the internal and external factors that allowed the nationalism of the Banda regime to convert the warm heart of Africa, as Malawi is popularly known, into a bulwark of Western interests. Lesoma made classical concepts of national liberation look anachronistic long before the liberation of all African countries and the end of apartheid was secured.

To really understand Lesoma, we need to keep in mind the significance that the unfulfilled dream of a People's Republic of Malawi is one issue, whereas the steady organization of a considerable number of exiles and refugees—and the task of improving their daily lives—is another matter. For instance, in the same letter in which Lesoma's national treasurer complained about a lack of propaganda materials, he asked Mwaungulu to organize support from Christian and humanitarian groups, for the party needed more than anything else to "assist those who are fleeing the country because of their involvement in Lesoma activities."²⁶⁷ Inevitably, the party's clandestine work within Malawi was answered by Banda's security apparatus with more repression, thereby producing new refugees. Accordingly, several documents in Mwaungulu's private estate show that Lesoma was also concerned with more pragmatic and less prestigious projects such as The Malawi Refugee Concrete Block (accommodation facility for refugees) or international campaigns to collect second-hand clothes for newly arriving refugees. Considering just the students who were sent abroad thanks to scholarships from the Soviet Union or other friendly states, Lesoma was a quite effective organization in a very positive sense, arranging higher education for a remarkable number of young Malawians while only a single university existed in their homeland. But Lesoma's intentions and *modus operandi* are much better summarized

²⁶⁶ Information given by Mwakasungura.

²⁶⁷ Letter from Dar es Salaam to Mwaungulu, 31 October 1983.

in a letter Mwakasungura wrote to Mwaungulu in West Berlin. Armed with nothing more than another university scholarship, in 1983 Mwakasungura traveled to a research institute in Norway to work on a critical analysis of the rural economy of Malawi (1986). From Norway, he wrote the following:

Dear Mahoma,

[. . .] Back home the situation is still extremely volatile and anything can happen. In spite of the extremely complex situation in which we have to operate, there is something to comfort us in that the Party now does have roots inside, and in a way functioning and drawing more and more people into the fold. The Govt is perhaps spending half its energy having to cope with the infectious spread effect of Lesoma and that is no small achievement for a party without a bank account or a single full-time cadre. The neighbors, too, while recognising our growing influence and the inevitability for forming the next government in Malawi, are as jittery about our independence of mind and singleness of purpose as Banda is afraid of our power over the people. Historians will have trouble writing the history of Malawi and the part Lesoma played over this period.²⁶⁸

As for the part which Lesoma played in Mwaungulu's daily life in the GDR during the second half of the 1970s, it should be clear that his function as Lesoma's representative was neither a particularly time-consuming task nor did it bring him a regular income—rather, it seems to have been linked to his later expulsion. While he succeeded in raising some support, such as getting Lesoma's propaganda material printed, it was an ultimately futile attempt to put Lesoma's struggle against the Banda regime on the agenda of the GDR's solidarity efforts. In the meantime, his daily life in East German exile continued.

2.13 Life in East German Exile 1973–1979

2.13.1 Working in the Film Industry and at the College of Solidarity, Alcoholism, Divorce, and the High Psychological Costs of Exile

It was presumably in 1974 that Mwaungulu appeared on East German television screens for the first time. In *Die Mission* (The Mission), a TV adaptation of Lorraine Hansberry's *Les Blancs*,²⁶⁹ he played the main actor—an African who had lived in Europe for several years before returning to his homeland where, after a

²⁶⁸ Letter from Mwakasungura to Mwaungulu, Norway, 23 October 1983 (Mwaungulu private estate).

²⁶⁹ *Die Mission*, GDR 1973, dir. by Kurth Veth. Lorraine Hansberry (1930–1965) was an African-American author and playwright. *Les Blancs* is her only play that takes place in Africa and was posthumously published in 1972.

process of self-development and in conflict with a white, female journalist from the US, he finally joins the anticolonial struggle of his people. The film's main setting is a Christian mission. A review in the East German newspaper *Neue Zeit* not only presented Mwaungulu erroneously as a doctor of economics but also as a South African, as if his national belonging was just too complicated a matter to be communicated correctly.²⁷⁰ Several more movies followed over the course of the decade (figs. 11–17).²⁷¹ Though most of them had political themes, Mwaungulu's occasional work in the socialist show business stands in striking contrast with his learned profession as an economist and his engagement for Lesoma. One interviewee told me that, beside the money Mwaungulu earned for acting, he must have enjoyed the attention which he received within the GDR's acting and art scene, particularly through his supporting role in the successful children's film *Ein Schneemann für Afrika* (A Snowman for Africa).²⁷² Perhaps it was some kind of compensation for the lack of attention which Lesoma's struggle received in the political arena.



Fig. 11: Mwaungulu (r.) together with Albert Ndindah and child actor Hadiatou Barry, who was born in the GDR in 1966 as the daughter of an East German mother and a Guinean father. Ndinda, Barry and Mwaungulu played together in the popular DEFA movie *Ein Schneemann für Afrika* (permission granted from Gisela Mwaungulu).

²⁷⁰ Künzel, Mimosa: Gegen Diskriminierung und Ausbeutung. *Neue Zeit*, 30 March 1974 (page number unknown).

²⁷¹ E.g. *Visa für Ocantros*, DEFA, GDR 1974, dir. by Kurt Jung-Alsen.

²⁷² *Ein Schneemann für Afrika*, DEFA, GDR 1977, dir. by Rolf Losansky.



Figs. 12–14: Mwaungulu during the filming of *Die Mission* together with the actresses Lotte Loebinger and Inge Keller (permission granted from Lusako Karonga).



Figs. 15 and 16: Mwaungulu during the filming of *Die Mission* together with the actress Inge Keller and the movie's director Kurt Veth, who later became the president of the *Hochschule für Schauspielkunst Ernst Busch* (Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts) (permission granted from Lusako Karonga and Gisela Mwaungulu).



Fig. 17: Mwaungulu in *Tod am Mississippi* (Death at the Mississippi, TV-movie, GDR 1973/74, dir. by Ralph J. Boettner) (permission granted from Gisela Mwaungulu).

Other jobs Mwaungulu found during this period were translating booklets for the *Ernst Thälmann* state combine for heavy engineering from German into English and vice versa, as he told Trüper, or occasional employment at the *Schule für*

Solidarität (College of Solidarity) in Berlin, as he emphasized with Theuerkauf (fig. 18).²⁷³ Founded in 1963 by the GDR's journalist association, the College of Solidarity soon became a renowned training facility for journalists through offering fully paid vocational training for students from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. While the greatest number of students came from Africa, a small group of Greeks, opponents of their country's Western-supported military dictatorship, were the only Europeans who attended it (Castillon 2010: 47). Mwaungulu claims that his job there was to teach Economics of the Developing Countries and Philosophy: "But this was real propaganda work, philosophy also meant there Marxism-Leninism. I had to orient the people toward Marxism-Leninism so that they would fight against capitalism. This was my job. Because I was and I am a Marxist-Leninist!" (Theuerkauf 2000: 19). That he stresses so much the propagandistic aspect of his teaching job—which as a Marxist-Leninist he actually approved of—seems at odds with Adina Hammoud's appraisal of allegations of ideological indoctrination raised against the College of Solidarity after reunification, criticism which she saw as coming from a relatively simplistic perspective (1993: 241). Mwaungulu, adhering to Marxism-Leninism until the very end of his life, would probably have had only a knowing smile for such accusations. As he further explained, it was at this educational institution where he began to teach German and Swahili, as well, which he remembers as having been a good experience, for he would again do this kind of work later in the old and new FRG. One job for which the acting director of the College of Solidarity's successor institution found some evidence was Mwaungulu's mentoring of two Indian students for two or three weeks during their traineeship in 1978 at a daily newspaper from Dresden, a job that he did as an independent contractor.²⁷⁴ The College of Solidarity, however, was not his last workplace in the socialist German state; rather, Mwaungulu's last resort in the GDR was a missionary church, which I discuss below.

That Mwaungulu worked in so many different fields after the HfÖ ended his scholarship indicates that, throughout the 1970s, he had problems finding the right place for himself in East German society, not to speak of a regular income. This wearying situation went hand in hand with increasing alcohol consumption, physical abuse of his wife, and consequently the further disintegration of his marriage, to which his residence status was linked. In 1979, Gisela could not stand it anymore

273 The College of Solidarity was situated in Berlin-Friedrichshagen and changed its name to Internationales Institut für Journalistik Berlin Brandenburg e.V. after reunification; I cannot say if it still exists. The state combine for heavy engineering (*Schwermaschinenbau-Kombinat Ernst Thälmann*, also known as SKET) was situated in Magdeburg.

274 Email of 25 May 2016 from Rüdiger Claus, who only joined the College of Solidarity's teaching staff in the 1980s.



Fig. 18: Mwaungulu together with two foreign students and an East German adviser at the College of Solidarity, June 1977 (permission granted from Rüdiger Claus).

and divorced him. She explains Mwaungulu's worsening drinking problem as stemming from the frustration that increasing economic dependence on her must have caused in him, which sounds like a reasonable assumption. Sonja Steffek argues similarly in her study on romantic relationships between Black African men and white European women in Austria when she writes that certain concepts of masculinity can keep men in a dominant position toward women, even if the former are racially discriminated against; this can collide with the lower social and economic status that African men often face in European societies and become particularly difficult when a residence permit depends on marriage to the women, a situation which could result in aggressive behavior (2000: 110–111 & 129–130). It seems to describe pretty well what happened between Mwaungulu and his wife, only that Mwaungulu was not subjected to the same degree of racism as Blacks in capitalist Western societies tended to face. Still, Mwakasungura, unaware of Mwaungulu's family problems when he met with him in 1977 at the World Peace Council's conference in Lisbon, comments on his comrade's drinking habits in a different way: "It didn't strike me as being too excessive because I was equally in alcohol. For people in exile way away from home, alcoholism tends to come to one naturally, only the

degree differs.”²⁷⁵ Hence, exile should be considered as an additional factor which further stimulated Mwaungulu’s alcohol consumption, even more though if the “alcohol-centered” character of his host society is taken into account: from the 1970s onwards, the consumption of hard liquor increased dramatically, making the GDR in 1987 the country with the highest consumption rate of hard liquor in the world (Kochan 2011: 85). Given that alcoholism is a mental issue, Sebastian Koch’s study on Chilean exiles in the GDR is instructive here.

Koch mentions an alarmingly high number of psychological problems among the Chilean exiles, and files from the GDR repeatedly speak of *Emigrantenpsychose* (emigrant psychosis), *Emigrantenkoller* (emigrant fever) or *Emigrantenkrankheit* (emigrant disease), coupling political exile to an increased likelihood of mental illnesses such as depression (Koch 2016: 273–275). Koch prefaces these findings by saying that, “it was only after the great wave of refugees from Latin America in the 1970s that a broader awareness of the psychological consequences of torture and flight developed across Europe and that neither the GDR nor the other host countries were usually prepared for such problems” (2016: 273, own translation). While it must come as something of a surprise that a state whose founders were in good part returnees from the Soviet Union was overwhelmed by the task of responding adequately to the psychological problems of political emigrants, Koch sees one of the reasons for this in the GDR’s prohibition of classical psychoanalysis, forbidden “because it would necessarily result in social criticism and provide the patient with potentially subversive skills” (2016: 278, own translation). Instead, an East German functionary emphasized mastering the German language, which he saw as “a key to overcoming the so-called emigrant disease, for it widens the number of people one meets,” while another record stressed that “emigrant fever should be confronted with the inclusion of all into specific tasks, a constant awareness of the political, economic and ideological situation of international life and the international class struggle, and active inclusion into the life of the GDR” (2016: 274, own translation).

The discrepancy between some of these suggestions and Mwaungulu’s situation after 1973 is astonishing. Mwaungulu spoke fluent German and even had a German family, and it would have been equally ridiculous to assume that he lacked political awareness about international issues. But what kind of role was he suited for if the GDR considered the struggle of this Malawian exile not only a hopeless undertaking but, more and more, an obstacle to its own political and economic interests?

275 Kapote Mwakasungura’s answers to my questions, 14 March 2016.

2.14 The End of Solidarity: Work in Christian Organizations and Expulsion to West Berlin

In 1982 I was kicked out of the GDR because, as an economist, I saw many things. I knew even then that Honecker's government couldn't make it. They made so many mistakes in managing economic planning and all sorts of things. [. . .] Then I took part in a big conference in Potsdam in 1980. It was, so to speak, a world conference, with economists from all over the world. [. . .] This solidarity school sent me. They said: 'We don't have time. You are an economist, and you have to represent us there'. I prepared everything in English. I showed them all the mistakes of the GDR. (Theuerkauf 2000: 20)

This is how Mwaungulu explained his expulsion to West Berlin in his interview with Theuerkauf, adding that he not only saw these "mistakes" but that he checked up on them, too:

Sometimes on the weekends, I would just borrow a pass from a student, go to a factory to work and see how things were done. That was in the big state combines. [. . .] I found out that the workers didn't get their bonuses. Instead, it was the plant manager, the technical manager, the economic manager and the party secretary who took the bonuses. And the workers never saw the money. That's why I knew: No, it doesn't work like that. (ibid.)

Mwaungulu embellished his damning criticism of the GDR's socialist economy with a long list of countries where all the economists who attended the conference came from, as well as with the names of prominent East German colleagues such as Helmut Faulwetter, who worked at the IfÖE. To Trüper, Mwaungulu basically repeated the same story but additionally listed the famous Argentinian economist Raúl Prebisch, whose work inspired dependency theory, among the participants before correcting himself by saying that Prebisch ultimately could not attend.²⁷⁶ This variant already hints at the likely fictional nature of his story. Although I could not find any evidence that this conference ever took place and, in the event that it actually did, would consider Mwaungulu's participation as a speaker to be highly unlikely due to his failed career at the HfÖ, his story nevertheless contains a deeper truth by placing economics at the heart of his expulsion, as I have suggested with the GDR's foreign policy considerations towards Malawi. That doubts regarding Mwaungulu's loyalty to the socialist state were hardly the reason for his expulsion becomes further evident through files from the GDR's se-

²⁷⁶ On Prebisch's role in the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and his early call for a New International Economic Order, see Bockmann 2015.

cret police: in 1987, the *Stasi* seriously considered recruiting Mwaungulu in West Berlin as an informant about the city's African community.²⁷⁷

When I told Bernd Krause of Mwaungulu's conference story, he frankly disregarded it as a "heroic tale." Krause is a founding member of *Solidaritätsdienst international e.V.*—the NGO-like successor institution of the GDR's Solidarity Committee—and the former director of the *Gossner Mission*, where Mwaungulu was working during his last years in the GDR. For centuries, Western colonialism had been justified via Christian proselytization. It is thus not without a certain irony that Mwaungulu, a Marxist freedom fighter from Africa and nonbeliever, found his last resort in the GDR in a Protestant missionary church. Following a tip from Gisela Mwaungulu, I met with Bernd Krause in Berlin-Friedrichshain to talk with him about her ex-husband.²⁷⁸

We had our conversation in Krause's office in the mission building, a small, narrow room with two windows, each tapered into a circular apex; to my perception, it was the only element which revealed the Christian character of the building. While I was listening to Krause, I tried to reconcile my image of Mwaungulu with the fact that Krause, who I assumed must be a deeply religious person, remembered Mwaungulu at the beginning of our conversation particularly as someone who enjoyed the sexual interest he aroused in East German women. Pointing to a potential function as foreign exchange earners as well as to the impact of revolutionary romanticism and sexual desires, Krause stressed the attraction of exotic figures like Mwaungulu within the more isolated East German society.²⁷⁹ He softened his argument when we came to Mwaungulu's divorce, which had "broken his back a bit," as he put it. Then he began telling me his version of the expulsion.

Krause believed that he first met Mwaungulu through the mediation of Alfred Babing²⁸⁰ on the occasion of one of the ANC's annual receptions in its residency in Berlin-Pankow, emphasizing that Mwaungulu was still invited to such gatherings at the time. According to Krause, up to then the Solidarity Committee had

277 BStU (Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik), MfS-HA II Nr. 30696, sheet 000034.

278 Interview with Bernd Krause, Berlin 28 February 2008.

279 Depending on their status and countries of origin, many Africans could easily travel from East to West Berlin and back, thereby obtaining Western consumer goods and (convertible) foreign currency. The latter was necessary for buying items in the GDR's government-owned Intershops, which sold high-quality goods generally unavailable to most East Germans. For a South African writer's claim that an East German woman offered him sex so that he would help her to leave the GDR, see Modisane 2015: 119.

280 Alfred Babing worked at the GDR's Institute for International Politics and Economics.

acted as a kind of employer for Mwaungulu, providing him with different jobs. Mwaungulu told Krause about his problems with the East German authorities, who were only willing to extend his residence permit if he had a job, a precondition which in turn required a valid residence permit. Krause, whose narrative exhibits some inconsistencies in the chronological order of things, tried to break this vicious circle through providing Mwaungulu at first with a low-paid job as an interpreter for visits of African guests. Again, Mwaungulu's exile becomes closely entangled with that of South Africans through Krause's statement that it was during a visit of exiled ANC cadres that he first worked in this function. Krause used this opportunity to talk beforehand with an ANC representative about Mwaungulu's problems, but the representative assured him that Mwaungulu was backing the South African struggle 100% and, thus, had the ANC's fullest confidence. This conversation earned Krause a warning from the *Stasi*, for he had dared to enter a foreign embassy and make conspiratorial arrangements. Though I could not find any evidence of this in the *Stasi* files on the *Gossner Mission*, Krause further claims that he subsequently had to inform the Solidarity Committee about his future plans with Mwaungulu, but the Committee assured him that Mwaungulu was a reliable cadre who had done an excellent job so far at the College of Solidarity. This intervention even secured Mwaungulu another job provided by the Committee.

Krause vividly remembered the many times when Mwaungulu accompanied him as an interpreter during such visits of African guests: "He was fantastic, because he was not only an interpreter for the language but also for the cause; he was committed to this liberation struggle, had a good sense of humor, and everybody liked him!" He described Mwaungulu as a very humble person, a feature which he frequently observed among some African men who were kind of natural leaders but listened carefully and empathically to others without showing any dominating behavior. For one last time, this job gained Mwaungulu a certain acceptance among the East German authorities, and Krause could no longer say when all this suddenly changed and Mwaungulu, out of the blue, was ordered to the registration office. At this point, Krause seemed to repeat or vary his earlier argument about the conditions which the authorities put on Mwaungulu's residence permit; their new argument now was that he would have to provide proof of a more permanent kind of employment: "Otherwise, he would be . . . practically an anti-social element, that's how it was called in the East, meaning that—as a foreigner—he could easily be expelled."

Though Krause tried to intervene again, this time he did so only half-heartedly, as he confessed, fearing to risk the small space of freedom and dialogue which the SED regime granted to his institution. Instead of employing Mwaungulu perma-

nently, he asked the larger, neighboring *Ökumenisch-Missionarisches Zentrum* (Ecumenical Missionary Center, ÖMZ) to do so, with the *Gossner Mission* covering only a part of the expenses in the initial phase.²⁸¹ Mwaungulu henceforth worked in advanced training courses for catechists and educators or gave speeches in different congregations outside Berlin in the context of the World Council of Churches' program to combat racism until, on the 3rd of August 1982, he was ordered by the police to leave the GDR within a week. Stretching this deadline up to the very last day, on the 10th of August he stuffed his most important things into a suitcase and crossed Checkpoint Charlie to West Berlin. Among the last friends in the GDR he is said to have visited in the night before leaving were Arnold and Jeannette Selby—two fellow exiles from South Africa.²⁸²

2.15 Epilogue

In 1983, Mwaungulu became the first recognized asylum seeker from Malawi in the FRG. Forcing the FRG juridically to admit the Banda regime's dictatorial character, his case became a precedent and paved the way for others to follow. A member of Amnesty International's group in Pinneberg, near Hamburg, founded in 1972 to focus exclusively on the Banda regime's human rights violations, stressed the corresponding significance of Mwaungulu's successful claim.²⁸³ The official document which granted Mwaungulu asylum stated that "in case of an eventual return to his homeland the claimant is likely to be subjected to severe persecution because of the current political situation in Malawi, especially considering the Malawian authorities' uncompromising treatment of opposition members."²⁸⁴

Mwaungulu continued with his political work for Lesoma while Amnesty International, or petitions directed to the FRG's foreign ministry, replaced the GDR's Solidarity Committee. But he had to spend more and more of his energy to manage his new life as an African refugee in a Western capitalist society. Later, in the

²⁸¹ For files from the ÖMZ that list Mwaungulu as a staff member during this period, see Evangelisches Landeskirchliches Archiv in Berlin, BMW 7/270 Arbeitskreise u.a., 10 September 1979–22 September 1987. I thank Dr Klaus Roeber, a former senior staff member of the ÖMZ, for sharing his memories of Mwaungulu with me.

²⁸² Interview with Jeannette Selby, Berlin, 23 August 2016.

²⁸³ Interview with J.O., Hamburg, 28 July 2016.

²⁸⁴ Bundesamt für die Anerkennung ausländischer Flüchtlinge (Federal Office for the Recognition of Foreign Refugees), Zirndorf, Gesch.-Z. 256/00001/82, 15 July 1983, 3 (Mwaungulu private estate, my translation).

period following German reunification, Mwaungulu not only saw his East German family on a more regular basis but also fell victim to two more racist assaults, one of which left him—a man in his fifties—badly injured and almost without teeth. Just a few hundred meters away from Mwaungulu’s apartment, on the eastern side of the former frontier between East and West Berlin, was in the early 1990s a meeting spot for right-wing skinheads (Kayaci 2009).

Mwaungulu participated in anti-racist campaigns and began to teach African history, in the beginning as a paid job for educational institutions but later for free, and then he even taught German to African migrants or helped them with other integration issues at self-organized community places like the *Bildungs- und Aktionszentrum Dritte Welt* (Third World Centre for Education and Activism) in Kreuzberg, which was also the place where Theuerkauf conducted her interview. In 1994, Mwaungulu, accompanied by his two sons, visited Malawi and opted for Malawian instead of German citizenship, even though he would return to Germany and stay there for the rest of his life. After his death in 2004, Berlin’s African Community organized a fundraising campaign that eventually enabled the family to transfer his cremated remains to Malawi (figs. 19–22).



Fig. 19: Mahoma Mwaungulu in the foyer of Humboldt-University Berlin, next to a writing on the wall showing Karl Marx’s 11th thesis on Feuerbach (“Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it”) (picture: Ekko von Schwichow 2000).

6. Juli 1964
Nyasaland wird unabhängig und in Republik Malawi umbenannt.

Aug. 1964
Auf Verlangen von Präsident Kamuzu Hastings Banda kehrt Mahoma in sein Heimatland zurück.

Aug. - Okt. 1964
Mahoma arbeitet im ökonomischen Planungskomitee des Landes. Im Oktober wird er unter Hausarrest gestellt. Seine Ermordung ist geplant. Mit Hilfe von Freunden gelingt ihm die Flucht über Sambia nach Tansania.

1964 - 1967
Während dieser Zeit lebt Mahoma als Flüchtling in Tansania und nimmt am Befreiungskampf gegen das diktatorische Banda-Regime teil.

1968 - 1973
Mit einem DDR-Schiff flieht Mahoma von Tansania aus nach Rostock.

Es folgt die Promotion an der Hochschule für Ökonomie in Berlin-Karlshorst. Er kann seine Doktorarbeit nicht abschließen, weil er die DDR verlassen und nach Hause zurückkehren muss.

1973 - 1981
Mahoma arbeitet als Freelancer, als Dolmetscher sowie als Darsteller bei der DEFA.

10. Aug. 1982
Ausweisung aus der DDR nach West-Berlin. Hier stellt Mahoma einen Asylantrag. Nach einem Jahr wird er als Flüchtling anerkannt.

In dieser Zeit unterrichtet er junge Asylbewerber und -bewerberinnen in Deutsch und hilft ihnen bei Übersetzungen.

1983 - 1989
Mahoma teilt sehr aktiv in der afrikanischen Community. Er engagiert sich bei der Aufklärungsarbeit über die Geschichte Afrikas, unterrichtet Deutsch und Kiwahili und gründet den Verein Umoja-Center. Als Afrika-Kenner bekommt er Aufträge vorzutragen, wovon er leben kann.

1989
Als die Berliner Mauer fällt, stellt Mahoma seine Familie wieder. Seine Tochter Nachona hatte bereits 1988 seine Entlassung zur Welt gebracht.

1990 - 1999
Mahoma arbeitet als Angestellter für das Rathaus.

1997 - 2004
1997 gründet Mahoma mit Gleichgesinnten das Pan-Afrikanische Forum e.V., wo er sich bis zu seinem Tod engagiert.

Er fungiert als Vorsitzender des Vereins und unterrichtet weiterhin Deutsch und Kiwahili. Des Weiteren engagiert er sich im Alphabetisierungsbereich.

28. Nov. 2004
Mahoma stirbt im Urban-Krankenhaus (Berlin-Kreuzberg) an den Folgen eines Schlaganfalls.

Während seiner 40 Jahre in Deutschland (1960 - 2004, unterbrochen von 1964 - 1968 in Afrika) galt Mahoma mehr als eine öffentliche und weniger als eine Privatperson.

Schon in der Zeit als er an der Uni in Leipzig war, war er der Generalsekretär der Afrikanischen Studenten Union. Bei seiner Rückkehr in die DDR war Mahoma der Vertreter der Socialist League of Malawi (LESOMA) in den Osteuropäischen Ländern. Das Ziel von LESOMA war die Bekämpfung des Banda-Regimes.


Kurz nach seiner Anerkennung als politischer Flüchtling in West-Berlin gründete Mahoma das Umoja Center und 1997 folgt die Gründung von PAF. Während seiner Zeit in Deutschland wurde er wiederholt Opfer rassistischer Attacken. Er wurde dreimal von Rassisten brutal zusammengeschlagen.

Das erste Mal war 1984 in Leipzig, wo er von seinen damaligen Kollegen angegriffen wurde. Die beiden anderen Übergriffe ereigneten sich nach der Mauerfall hier in Berlin-Kreuzberg.

Bei diesen Angriffen verlor er fast alle Zähne. Trotzdem hat Mahoma nie Hass gezeigt. Zudem hat er seit langer Zeit ein Bluthochdruck gelitten und später kam Prostata-Krebs hinzu.

Am 26. November verlässt Mahoma an den Folgen eines Schlaganfalls.

Nach einem arbeitsreichen Leben verstarb schnell und unerwartet unser Freund, Wegbereiter, Vordenker und Vater



Mahoma Mwaungulu

★ 3. Januar 1932
♣ 26. November 2004

Wir trauern um ihn und gedenken seiner in tiefer Hochachtung und Verehrung.

Mahoma Lebenslauf in Kürze

| | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Jahres, Lebensdaten | Knollys Mwanungu Ricky Reiser |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|

(a)

Nachruf

WIR TRAUERN UM MAHOMA MWAUNGULU

Die Schwarze Community in Berlin trauert um Mahoma Mwaungulu.

Wir Menschen afrikanischer Herkunft in Berlin haben eine große Persönlichkeit verloren.

Mahoma hat sich sein Leben lang für das Zusammenwirken aller afrikanischen Nationen eingesetzt.

Mahoma Mwaungulu hat sich sehr stark für die Belange der afrikanischen Immigranten in Berlin eingesetzt und für die afrikanische Community viel geleistet. Wir werden ihn für immer vermissen.

Schon seit seiner Jugend gehörte er der Pan-Afrikanischen Bewegung an. Seit 1997 war er der Präsident des Pan Afrikanischen Forums, e.V., Berlin.

Mahoma wünschte sich in Malawi beerdigt zu werden.

Um seinen letzten Wunsch zu erfüllen, bitten wir all seine Freunde und Bekannten um finanzielle Unterstützung, damit wir ihn in sein Heimatland zurückbringen können.

Wer war Mahoma Mwaungulu?

03.01.1932
Geburt von Mahoma in Kiwé, Tanganyika (heute Tansania)

Sein Vater arbeitet zuerst als Krankenpfleger und dann als medizinischer Assistent in Tanganyika. Die Eltern kommen aus Nyasaland (heute Malawi).

1939
wird sein Vater in die Armee (Kings African Rifle) eingezogen und muss in 2. Weltkrieg an die Seite von Großbritannien in Somalia, Äthiopien, Ägypten, Palästina, Italien, Frankreich und dann in Madagaskar kämpfen.

1946
kehrt der Vater zurück. Rückkehr nach Nyasaland

1949
seine hochschwängere Mutter, Mahoma und zwei Brüder kehren nach Karonga, Malawi zurück.

1949 - 1947
Grundschule in Karonga (evangelische Schule)

1947 - 1949
Absolvierung der 5. und 6. Klasse im Internat (evangelisch) in Livingstonia (ca. 100 km von Karonga entfernt)

Dort wird Mahoma politisiert. Er schafft die Schule, aber auf Grund seiner politischen Einstellung wird er nicht an die Oberschule übernommen. Zu dieser Zeit gibt es nur zwei Oberschulen im ganzen Land - eine katholische und eine evangelische. Ihm wurde ein Platz an einer Theologie-Schule angeboten. Er soll Dorschullehrer werden. Dies lehnt er ab, weil er das Abitur machen will. 1949 beginnt er dennoch das Theologie-Studium, kurz danach bricht er es ab. Sein Ziel bleibt der Besuch der Oberschule.

1950 - 1952
Besuch einer privaten Mittelschule in Kampala/Uganda. Dort trifft Mahoma Mitschüler aus Malawi, die später eine große politische Rolle in Malawi spielen sollten.

1953 - 1954
Mahoma arbeitet als Angestellter in Tanganyika. Zwischendurch lebt er in Malawi.

Politisch ist er sehr aktiv. Bei den Aufständen gegen den Zwangszwangsanschluss von Nord- und Südrhodesien sowie Nyasaland engagiert sich

Mahoma und landet deswegen sogar im Gefängnis. Der Widerstand der Menschen in Nyasaland gründet sich auf die Befürchtung, es werde ein Apartheid-Regime wie in Südafrika entstehen.

Als Mitglied der Vereinigung von Nyasaland African Congress bekommt Mahoma eine Empfehlung der Partei nach Ghana zu gehen. Der Vater ist strikt dagegen, weil er erwartet, dass Mahoma heiratet, um den wachsenden Familienverband zu unterstützen. Mahoma setzt sich gegen den Vater, durch. Die Reise nach Ghana dauert acht Monate und geht quer über den ganzen Kontinent. Sie führt von Nyasaland und Tanganyika über den Tanganikasee über die beiden Kongo Republiken, Gabun, Kamerun, Nigeria, Benin und Togo nach Ghana.

1955 - 1958
Besuch der Oberschule in Accra, Ghana. Nebenbei belegt Mahoma Seminare für politische Bildung, die von Kwame Nkrumah persönlich durchgeführt werden.

1958
ereignet sich ein Aufstand in Malawi, bei dem viele Menschen getötet werden

Osteuropäische Länder beschließen, Stipendien an malawische Studenten zu vergeben. Die Hilfe läuft über das Büro für Afropolitische Angelegenheiten in Accra, Ghana. Mahoma bekommt ein Stipendium in der DDR.

1958 - 1959
Mahoma besucht Hochschulkurse an der Universität in Accra. Zusätzlich arbeitet er als politischer Mitarbeiter am Bureau for African Affairs in Accra

1960 - 1964
Studium der Fachrichtung Volkswirtschaft an der Karl-Marx-Universität in Leipzig

Privat

1961 Eheschließung mit Gisela Edlich
1979 Scheidung von Ehefrau Gisela, die mittlerweile drei Kindern das Leben geschenkt hat.

Nachona (1967)
Lusako (1968)
Litumyo (1971)

(b)

Fig. 20: The 2004 pamphlet printed by members of Berlin's African community, listing key dates in Mwaungulu's life and including a eulogy in which the authors praise Mwaungulu's commitment to the community (permission granted from Knollys Mwanungo).



Fig. 21: Mahoma Mwaungulu (I.) together with his East German family, Berlin 2002 (permission granted from all family members).



Fig. 22: Portrait of Mahoma Mwaungulu in Berlin (picture: Ekko von Schwichow 2000).

2.16 Conclusion

Mwaungulu's path into East German exile runs through central sites and key moments of African decolonization. Nyasaland's struggle against the Central African Federation and independent Ghana as a promoter of pan-Africanism and hub to the socialist world, Malawi's postcolonial transformation into an anti-communist dictatorship and pillar of Western interests; Tanzania as a promoter of Southern Africa's liberation and Cuba's commitment to Africa—it all becomes intertwined through his life story, leading into exile in the GDR. Notably, Mwaungulu emerged as a political actor in all these settings, albeit with varying degrees of agency. Thus, his life story entangles crucial aspects of Africa's decolonization with the GDR's solidarity- and Africa policies. That his exile eventually continues in West Berlin as a refugee claimant and migrant activist at a time when the Second World still existed but tried to halt its economic decline anticipates the latter's demise as a counterforce to Western hegemony.

Mwaungulu's exile experiences in the GDR also point to a paradoxical effect which his host country's solid support for the anti-apartheid struggle could have for freedom fighters from other African countries. Apparently, the predominance of the anti-apartheid struggle in East German culture and politics up from the mid 1970s, which included Namibia's struggle for independence against the South African occupier, left little room for minor struggles such as Lesoma's. By becoming the representative of this Malawian exile movement, Mwaungulu became expendable, however loyal and occasionally useful he was for the GDR to act as a South African on TV, work as a mentor or teacher at the College of Solidarity, or lend East German churches an authentic face in their implementation of the World Council of Churches' program to combat racism.

At the beginning, I juxtaposed *Knowledge Man*, a documentary about Mwaungulu from West Berlin's migrant subculture of the 1980s, with *Der Gast*, a TV movie with Mwaungulu from the GDR of the 1970s, telling the story of an unhappy affair between an East German woman and a South African communist. These two movies, I argued, already contain the basic information about Mwaungulu's exile. First, the precarious social and economic conditions he was facing in his later life after his expulsion to the FRG, eased through the high esteem and empowerment he enjoyed as a political thinker and activist in West Berlin's African Community; second, his failed marriage to an East German, whose divorce preceded his expulsion, and the increasing subordination of his political struggle against the Malawian Banda regime to the logics of the GDR's solidarity policies. For understandable reasons, the GDR prioritized the struggle against the South African apartheid regime while considering the Malawian exile community's struggle as a hopeless undertaking. Another linkage which already becomes visi-

ble here is that between the German and Jewish exile during the Nazi period and the African exile represented by freedom fighters like Mwaungulu: *Der Gast* based on a short story written by the Jewish communist Hedda Zinner, who had survived the Nazi regime in Soviet exile.

Whereas Mwaungulu's childhood years in Tanganyika and Nyasaland are already marked by his parents' migrations, his teenage years and life as a young adult in colonial Africa reveal a pronounced will to climb the educational ladder. Correspondingly, his membership and further politicization in the Nyasaland Student's Association in Uganda demonstrates the outstanding mobility necessary to achieve this goal as well as the British colonizer's attempts to control and channel these aspirations according to their political interests. It is also during his student years in Uganda that Mwaungulu's fateful affiliation with the future Malawian opposition becomes visible for the first time. Back then, however, Malawi's independence movement was still united in the struggle against the Central African Federation, which had been established in the interest of the European settlers to secure white minority rule in a time of increasing African nationalism. Mwaungulu's life story reminds us here that the Federation's break up in 1963 was a key moment of decolonization in which future Malawi played a pivotal role.

Mwaungulu's journey across the continent to Ghana as a representative of the Malawian independence movement, in turn, draws us into the turbulent days of Ghana's independence and the heyday of pan-Africanism. From a German perspective, an intriguing aspect of this biographical stage is the historical link that Mwaungulu's life story creates between George Padmore's work for the Comintern in the Weimar Republic and Mwaungulu's next destination, the GDR, as a successor state. Padmore's break with the Comintern in the 1930s and criticism of the Soviet Union has often been taken as an evidence that the Soviet Union's anticolonialism never was what it pretended to be. Nevertheless, Mwaungulu migrated to the GDR thanks to an East German scholarship provided to him at his working place in Padmore's Bureau of African Affairs in Ghana. It shows that, after the end of Stalinism and despite his former criticism, Padmore again played a role in deepening the relations between decolonizing Africa and international communism. Meanwhile, Padmore's earlier break with the Comintern and Mwaungulu's later expulsion from the GDR point to continuities in the tensions between certain Black revolutionaries and European communism or state socialism.

The GDR's scrupulous documentation practice, together with the great variety of biographical sources I additionally collected, allow a rare in-depth look into the life of a highly politicized, self-conscious African student of Political Economy and his interaction with the socialist German state in Leipzig during the first half of the 1960s. The GDR appears here as a decolonial space of possibility whose educational system welcomed Africans with more than symbolic gestures. Through

intensive language courses and—if necessary—additional preparatory courses, the GDR enabled Africans, who otherwise would have lacked the requirements, to be admitted to an university. At this stage, Mwaungulu, using his contacts to a befriended East German functionary he already knew from Ghana, reveals a strong agency to counter the temporary reduction of his stipend. His is also an early example of how an African could enter into a serious relationship with an East German, with all the implications such heterosexual relationships necessarily implied for the GDR's more isolated society—here, it resulted in three African-German children, two of which were still born during his student years in Leipzig. Moreover, Mwaungulu's marriage in 1961, possible through an affidavit that a trade union leader from Nyasaland personally brought to him, discloses contacts between an African country's trade unions and a socialist German state that have so far received no scholarly attention at all.

On the other hand, that Mwaungulu became the victim of a racist attack at the last possible moment of his first stay in the GDR—the night before his planned departure to Malawi—reveals the fragile societal base on which the country's relationship with decolonizing Africa was built, confirming older scholarly accounts which emphasize early expressions of anti-Black racism. Whereas solidarity at the institutional level was real and everyday encounters between Africans and East Germans were of course possible, the socialist state could not completely protect its 'foreign guests' from the violent hostility of some of its citizens. Mwaungulu's engagement for the Union of African Students and Workers in the GDR, brought up in two of his life story interviews in the context of racism, allows for an insider view in this autonomous African organization. It supports the observation made by other scholars whereby UASA, among other things, was concerned with educating East Germans about racist behaviour in everyday life.

Learning about Mwaungulu, however, means learning about the personal background of UASA's secretary for African affairs. It suggests that among UASA's leading figures were not only pan-Africanists who, with the occasional support of communist African-American visitors to the GDR, raised the East Germans' awareness of racism in their society but shared the radical Marxist-Leninist convictions of their host country's ruling elite, resulting in a strong loyalty to the GDR. This makes Mwaungulu's critical reflections on racism even more valuable, for he looked back on the GDR of the 1960s and 1970s against the backdrop of his later life in the FRG of the 1980s *and* the post-reunification racism of the early 1990s, when he felt victim to racist attacks for two more times. He identifies different conjunctures of racism in the GDR, with his main argument being that the socialist government tried to protect Africans and other foreigners very much, including the severe punishment of racist aggressors with long prison sentences, but that it ultimately failed to educate its population in this regard. According to

Mwaungulu, it was left to the Africans to raise the East German authorities' awareness that racism in the wider population was still a problem. Though acknowledging that it became a little better in the 1970s, he argues that it remained an unsolved problem which, after the fall of the communist regime, culminated in the violent eruptions of post-reunification racism. Mwaungulu thus invalidates two arguments: First, that there existed an *institutionalized* racism in the GDR, an accusatory allegation sometimes made to delegitimize the GDR's anti-fascist and anti-colonial stance as mere rhetoric; second, that the East German manifestation of post-reunification racism were primarily the result of the hardships (white) easterners faced during the transformation process, a defensive posture sometimes taken to protect the GDR against corresponding criticism. Mwaungulu's life story corrects or relativizes both of these assumptions.

His return to Malawi in 1964 in the midst of the Malawi Cabinet Crisis, which turned his home country into a Western-backed dictatorship that eventually forced him into exile, reminds us of the negative impact which Malawi's authoritarian turn had for Southern Africa's further decolonization. Accordingly, Mwaungulu's exile begins with introducing the refugee figure, offering insights into a Tanzanian refugee camp where Mwaungulu lived for several years. Again, his life story reveals here insights into a group of African refugees that has largely been ignored by anthropology or historical science. Tellingly, even his memories of this refugee camp link the GDR in a positive way to Africa, for he remembers how an East German scientist solved the camp's water problem. Another theme Mwaungulu comes up with at this biographical stage is the Cuban commitment to Africa. First, he does so through mentioning his six months long training course as a political commissar on the Caribbean island; second, and more importantly on the narrative level of his life story interviews, he parallels Guevara's failed guerilla campaign in the Congo and eventual death in Bolivia with a failed guerilla incursion in Malawi, undertaken by members of a Malawian exile movement of which Mwaungulu had become a member. Thus, the figure of the refugee merges into that of the exile through Mwaungulu informing us about the organized political exile in Tanzania in the aftermath of the Malawi Cabinet Crisis.

The way how Mwaungulu remembers his return to the GDR in 1967—the result of an argument he had with his party about the planned guerilla incursion, which he rejected—reveals the ambiguous situation he faced as a political exile in Tanzania while at the same time being a family father in the GDR. Given that Cairo airport was still damaged from the Israeli airstrikes during the Six Day War, his journey back from Dar es Salaam to the GDR via the sea route points to the temporary closure of one of the main hubs of decolonization and thus to the shift in the African perception of Israel. Mwaungulu's reunion with his East German family in 1967, marking the beginning of his exile in the GDR, is characterized by a mutual

feeling of estrangement caused by Mwaungulu's previous exile years in Tanzania. Here, I presented some reflections of Mwaungulu's family members, such as his wife's memories of their move from Leipzig to East Berlin or the children's early memories of their father, among them prominently Mwaungulu's desire to (re)migrate together to Africa as soon as possible.

Mwaungulu's exile in the GDR went hand in hand with a scholarship to write a doctoral thesis about the problems and prospects of Malawi's industrial development at the *Hochschule für Ökonomie* in Berlin, the GDR's most important higher learning facility for economic science. While the scholarship provided him with a generous income and studying this topic was his contribution to the Malawian exile's struggle and thus in accordance with his party, linking immigration to specific projects, occupations or institutional affiliations also points to a problematic tendency in the GDR's immigration policies. Were not Mwaungulu's marriage to an East German and fatherhood of two East German children sufficient grounds to allow him to return? Anyway, given the linkages between his return to the GDR as a stateless exile and a scholarship to write a doctoral thesis, I first evaluated his student files from the HfÖ to better understand the institutional logics which, after a prolongation of almost two years, led to the cancelling of his scholarship in 1973. A noteworthy aspect here is that Mwaungulu's supervisor, the HfÖ's founding director Eva Altmann, who had survived the Nazi regime in Germany as a Communist Party member, appears to have been well disposed to her African doctoral candidate but ultimately had to give in to the institutional pressure to sanction Mwaungulu's lack of academic discipline and failure to keep up with the time schedule. The picture of Mwaungulu which emerges out of these files is that of an exile who, as a consequence of the tribulations he had gone through in Malawi and Tanzania and a tropical disease he suffered, appears to have lost his inner balance, unable to reconcile his new condition with the institutional requirements. Nevertheless, he almost completed his dissertation, and in recognition of both the significance which Western colonialism played for the development of capitalism and the fundamental threat which Marxism posed to Western hegemony precisely for criticizing this political-economic system, I dedicated a longer subchapter to his fragmentary thesis, outlining several aspects which seem relevant to me.

First, I placed Mwaungulu's work into an ongoing Western discourse on '(under)development', 'backwardness' and 'extreme poverty', in which certain stereotypes and fears are projected upon countries such as Malawi. Second, I used Walter Rodney's classic *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*, together with a survey of the GDR's development theories, to show certain parallels between Rodney and Mwaungulu's way of arguing as well as between the GDR's development theories and Western Marxist approaches such as dependency theory. In doing

so, I tried to connect Mwaungulu's work to a broader Black radical discourse, which continues to emphasize the role of capitalist economics for global inequality and racial exclusion but is marginalized within African diaspora theory and Western science, particularly in reunified Germany. Third, I discussed Mwaungulu's critique of Malawi's relations with apartheid South Africa, a topic that still attracts scholarly interest, before finally reflecting on the ambiguous effect which studying Malawi's economic development might have had on Mwaungulu's personal task to coming to terms with a life in East German exile.

The history of The Socialist League of Malawi (Lesoma), which I began reconstructing thanks to documents from Mwaungulu's estate, made clear that his function as Lesoma's representative did not provide him with any serious institutional backing on the side of the GDR. Given its characteristic as a national opposition movement and *not* a national liberation movement, Lesoma, which emerged out of the Malawian exile community in Tanzania, never came close to the kind of political acceptance which other African exile movements such as the ANC or SWAPO enjoyed in the Cold War's East. Much in contrary, both the GDR and the Soviet Union considered Lesoma a movement that pursued a noble cause but ultimately led a hopeless struggle. Hence, it appears that Mwaungulu's membership in Lesoma brought him into conflict with his host country's foreign policy shift and the changes that took place in Southern Africa during the early 1980s. This would at least allow for a rational explanation for his expulsion to West Berlin, which otherwise remains a conundrum or act of bureaucratic arbitrariness, meanwhile, Lesoma's exile network helped him getting through this difficult period. That Lesoma nonetheless had received some support from these countries can be explained, on the one hand, with Mwaungulu's tenacity as the party's representative in the GDR and some East German functionaries' openness to his cause, and the Soviet Union's generosity toward leftist African demands, on the other. In any case, Lesoma's history offers rare insights into the political exile provoked by the Banda dictatorship, complementing more recent attempts in historiography to contextualize Malawi anew within the struggles for Southern African liberation.

Beside his transnational engagement for Lesoma, Mwaungulu's life in the GDR of the 1970s is characterized by increasing marriage problems, culminating in 1979 in the divorce which, affecting his residence status, paved the way for his later expulsion. Or, by only occasional employments in such different fields as movie actor, translator, or teacher at the College of Solidarity, and, last but not least, by alcoholism. This latter aspect made me question how the health system of the GDR, a state founded by communist remigrants who knew about the hardships of exile from first-hand experience, dealt with psychological problems of political emigrants. The example of the Chilean exiles indicates that Mwaungulu could not expect too much support in this regard, meaning that he must have

been more or less on his own to solve this problem. That Protestant churches, charitable by definition, were the last East German organizations to offer him institutional backing fits this pattern. Whereas in his memories the Scottish missionary schools in Nyasaland appeared as obstacles to full political emancipation, his work for churches in the GDR as an African Marxist-Leninist and declared nonbeliever can not only be interpreted as evidence of the open-mindedness of these East German churches but also seen as an ironic endpoint for the political expression of one African exile whose original struggle lacked the official blessing of his socialist host country. This becomes even more obvious if we compare Mwaungulu's exile experience with that of my second case study, a South African who entered the GDR two years after the former had been expelled from its territory.

3 Asaph Makote Mohlala: “I had to Fight my Way Back”

Asaph Makote Mohlala and I first met personally in 2014 at the inaugurational meeting of *Mayibuye Südafrika Community e.V.*, an association of South Africans living in Berlin, to which Thabo Thindi had invited me.²⁸⁵ Among its members are several former exiles who lived in the GDR and participated in Thindi’s interview series *Exile Faces*. Hence, before meeting Mohlala there in person, I had watched his documentary interview, conducted at the HKW. Mohlala had impressed me because of the haunting way in which he had recounted his life story—he obviously had something to tell. Together with his physical appearance, I got the impression of him being a sensitive person who must have gone through some difficult times. Imagining him in any affirmative way being part of today’s East Germany—a space also known as the ‘brown East’ due to right-wing extremist trends there (Heft 2018)—seemed hardly possible.

I conducted two interviews with him, first in October 2015 and then in February 2016, both in his apartment in Berlin-Weißensee, a district in the city’s former Eastern part (fig. 23). The second interview became necessary because, even though the first one was more than six hours long, Mohlala only spoke very little about his life in the GDR and the later reunified Germany. Instead, he always returned to his life in Africa, insisting on a full account of everything that seemed important to him, with time considerations not allowing him to go deeper into that later period of his life. After our long talk on the first day we both felt exhausted, and his appearance and some of his behaviour during our long conversation had given me the impression that he was, in general, not doing too well physically.

Neglecting the later period of his life suggests that, for Mohlala, coming to the GDR in 1984 was the climax of his life—an abrupt change that gave his exile a peaceful place where he could settle down and start a family, even though as we will see it would take another effort to return and make a permanent home out of it. What he experienced in East Germany was clearly no match, to his mind, for what he had experienced before in Southern Africa. Indeed, his life offers intriguing insights into what it could mean to be an exiled “Soweto kid”—one of those young South Africans who left the country in 1976 in the aftermath of the Soweto uprising—and Mohlala was of course aware of this distinctive feature of his life. At the end of our first interview—he rightly called it a “mixed masala,” like an Indian spice mix—he picked up some papers from a chair, having put them there

285 <https://www.mayibuye.de/> (accessed 2 October 2023).

specially for our meeting but now seeming a little insecure about showing them to me or not. He finally chose not to do so. It was the unfinished manuscript of his autobiography, as he eventually told me. He also said that writing was very difficult for him, and he did not know if it was good enough to be read or even if he would ever complete it. So the below account is what I have created out of the “mixed masala” of our two interviews. In chronological order, I begin with what Mohlala told me about his life in South Africa. From there, I follow the different stages of his exile in Tanzania, the Soviet Union, and Angola, before coming to his exile in the GDR. To give the reader a fuller taste of this slice of history, I have added some new ingredients to the mix, such as interview snippets from other South African exiles as well as background information on relevant events and institutions.



Fig. 23: Asaph Makote Mohlala, Berlin-Weißensee, February 2016 (permission granted from A. Mohlala).

3.1 A Fatherless Child: From Alexandra Township to a Safe House in Dar es Salaam

In 1976, the year of the Soweto uprising, the 21-year-old Mohlala was attending a boarding school in the South African countryside. The school was almost 500 kilometers away from Johannesburg’s Alexandra Township, an urban area inhabited

almost exclusively by Blacks, where he had been born in 1954. It was only during his summer vacation that he was able to witness the material damage caused by the uprising, including the burned-out shops and remnants of tires which had been set on fire in the streets. Before this event, his life story points towards a different, more intimate struggle—that of a child given away by his young, overburdened and single mother, who would never reveal to her child the father’s name. Instead, Mohlala was adopted into the family of his grandfather, who was originally from the Mpumalanga province in the Northeastern part of South Africa where they speak Northern Sotho; incidentally, two other African languages Mohlala grew up with were Southern Sotho and Zulu. To the detriment of his school performance, he soon had to assist his stepmother in the household work—“a boy who had to do the girl’s work at home,” as he put it, thereby illuminating some of the gender structures back then as well as a certain kind of ‘feminization’ he underwent as an adopted son. While care work would earn him a living in later life, it seems that he saw only the negative in this kind of socialization when it comes to his childhood and teenage years.

From early on, Mohlala internalized that it might be better not to attract too much attention to himself. Contrary to his older half-brother,²⁸⁶ who had already been sentenced to a term of suspension because of his political activities, Mohlala stayed away from politics until the brother eventually introduced him to a political circle and his escape was organized, presumably by the ANC. The German-Jewish author Georges-Arthur Goldschmidt writes that “exile also consists of some very brief, impalpable, ordinary moments. One closes a door or jumps into a car, for example. Seen from the outside, it is an inconspicuous, minuscule occurrence, after which everything is irretrievably over” (2020: 5, own translation). In Mohlala’s narrative, this specific moment almost fades to negligibility as well, although it contained the prospect of something new that could make life better than before. In spite of a warning that a police raid on the political circle Mohlala had entered was only a question of time, his going into exile reads more like another step on the way to personal emancipation: first, his grandfather sending him to the boarding school as a way to free him from the grip of his stepmother and, second, his rather casual decision to participate in an organized escape from South Africa to get rid of apartheid:

At that time, someone advised the group of which my brother was a member: ‘You guys are sitting on a hot seat, it’s better for you all to scam.’ How can we do that? ‘Okay, I’ll organize

²⁸⁶ Mohlala spoke explicitly of his “half-brother” only at the beginning of our interview, whereas for most of the rest of it he simply referred to him as his “brother.” I follow this logic too.

it. When we meet, this is the number of persons who are leaving, not more.’ I say: I’ll come with you, but next week I have to go back to boarding school. But then I took my clothes, suitcase, not much, a few things for the few weeks when I had been at home. Okay, I must go back, but I go to this meeting and listen first. There were two small minibuses from VW, and we were all taken—all except one or two because there was no more space.²⁸⁷

Mohlala and his brother were taken abroad at the same time, which had raised a discussion beforehand because, for reasons of social responsibility, the ones who organized the flight had at first rejected taking the two oldest sons of a family away. These doubts notwithstanding, Mohlala followed his brother and crossed the border to Swaziland, where his group stayed for several weeks. The trip continued to Mozambique and, from there, with the help of Frelimo and Mohlala for the first time ever traveling by plane, to Tanzania.

According to the instructors’ names that Mohlala remembers, he must have spent his time there in Mkhumbane, a safe house of the ANC in Dar es Salaam (Houston 2013: 62).²⁸⁸ The newcomers had to decide whether they wanted to continue school or join *uMkhonto we Sizwe* (Spear of the Nation, abbreviated MK), the ANC’s armed wing.²⁸⁹ Mohlala, who had already repeated two years at South African schools, opted for the military. Part of the daily program included much political education, tactical training and sports; as he remembers: “We really enjoyed it. It was nice!” When one of their instructors told them about how members of the ANC were committing acts of sabotage against South Africa’s infrastructure, such as damaging power poles, they immediately wanted to put their training into practice. The instructor tried to slow down their cockiness by teaching them, instead, about their own historical background. Mohlala’s account still reveals some of the impatience he and his cohorts felt: “‘Comrades, you must take time’. Okay, alright, we’ll take our time. It’s fine, no problem. Well, then we were taught about the history of the African National Congress, its membership of the 1950s, 1960s. Now we were in the 1970s, products of Soweto, the Soweto uprising.” Visits to the Soviet Union and the GDR’s embassies in Tanzania soon followed, watching documentaries about the Great Patriotic War on the one hand and the GDR’s achievements on the other. Yet, what Mohlala remembers best is the finger food that was served to the young cadres on both occasions. After having spent roughly four months in Swaziland, Mozambique and Tanzania—accompanied by his brother—Mohlala would celebrate his 22nd birthday in the Soviet Union.

²⁸⁷ Mohlala and I spoke a mixture of German and English; I have translated the German parts I am quoting from into English.

²⁸⁸ Mohlala mentions Marc Shope and Elias Mahlase, aka ‘Banda’ (see Houston 2013: 62).

²⁸⁹ The MK was formed in 1961, when the ANC and the SACP were banned by the South African government and had to work underground.

3.2 Military Training in the Soviet Union

Our flight was nice and good. And you know, in the plane, it was nice. And these nice ladies who were serving us . . . this was a thing that one would have never expected to experience to be served by a white lady with a smile. It was an afternoon plane, but we arrived the next morning in Moscow. In Moscow, we were taken to an apartment with a bus driven by a soldier. Stop over in Moscow was a short one; then we got a connecting flight to Simferopol. Ja, this was good. But we were medically checked again and put into quarantine for one week.

Mohlala's remembrance of his first stay in the Soviet Union, between 1976 and 1977, starts with this gendered perception of a young, Black South African male. Having grown up under apartheid, it was hard for him to believe that white women—here, the female stewardesses in a Soviet aircraft on way to Moscow—could be friendly and caring towards him. The camp where Mohlala would be trained for six months, however, was not on the Soviet mainland but on the Crimean Peninsula, in Perevalnoye. Mohlala referred to the camp only as 'Simferopol', the next large city near the airport, so I use this denomination, too. According to Vladimir Shubin, this camp had been created particularly for the training of liberation movements, and "good use was made of the Second World War experience of the Crimean guerrillas, who had operated in mountains, forest and bush—in other words, in terrain not very different from Southern Africa" (Shubin 2009: 157). Helder Fonseca, who dedicates several pages of his study *The Military Training of Angolan Guerrillas in Socialist Countries* to the experiences of Africans who were trained in Simferopol before Mohlala arrived there, adds that the camp was constructed in the mid-1960s at the beginning of the Brezhnev era (Fonseca 2019: 116–122, here 117). Compared to similar training facilities in Odessa and Moscow, as Fonseca writes, one particularity of the Simferopol camp was that the trainees there were more isolated from the general population. They stayed inside the camp for the whole week, were escorted when they left it on weekends, and alcohol was generally prohibited. Fonseca further claims that, contrary to the racism African civilians at times experienced in the Soviet Union, "in the testimonies of military trainees there are no visible tensions relating to 'skin colour' in interactions both with the military and civil Soviet societies" (Fonseca 2019: 120–121).²⁹⁰

Mohlala's oral testimony confirms Fonseca's analysis and adds to the predominantly positive picture painted by Africans who had been trained there be-

²⁹⁰ Fonseca relied on written sources, such as interrogation reports of captured guerrillas from the Portuguese, Rhodesian and South African security forces as well as captured memos or published personal narratives.

fore. He participated in a six-month course in artillery during which he learned military tactics and how to handle a rocket launcher. The brother, together with his girlfriend, had been sent to the same camp a little later with another group. While the brother’s girlfriend was taught in communication, the brother was trained as an engineer and learned how to detect and deactivate landmines or body traps. Additionally, all of them attended Russian language courses. What slightly contradicts Shubin’s remarks quoted above is that the military training took place during winter. Consequently, dressed in thick clothes, under climatic conditions rather unlikely for Southern Africa, they practiced walking up- and downhill in fields full of snow. Another ironic moment Mohlala recalled is how they watched on TV the match Soviet Union vs. Canada of the 1977 Ice Hockey World Championships together with some of the Soviet officials. He and the other South Africans were backing the Canadians—“so we sat quiet” while their favorite team got a caning by the team of their Soviet hosts. Such differences notwithstanding, Mohlala’s narrative leaves no doubt that, for him, the military training course in the Crimea was an exciting experience.

3.3 From the Crimea to Angolan Camp Life: Civil War and South African Aggression, becoming a Paramedic, and the Limits of Scandinavian Support

Up to this point, and despite all of its serious and dramatic aspects, Mohlala’s narrative sounded relatively harmless to me, fostered by his physical appearance as a small, sensitive-looking family man in his 60s who had been wearing glasses since his time at the boarding school and was now sitting in front of me in his living room in Weißensee. Although he had brought up the Soweto uprising and his participation in military training, experiences of racist oppression and real danger did not appear to me to be the guiding principles of his life story so far. Rather, they seemed to me more implicit elements, placed in the shadows by his earliest memories of being an unwanted and adopted child. What he told me next would change this impression.

According to Mohlala, when the six-month course in the Soviet Union was coming to an end, Tanzania did not want to take back military-trained members of the ANC anymore; his party was surprised by this and in search of a new host country for them. Though I have not been able to find any verification that Tanzania took such a decision in 1976–77—the country did so, however, in 1969 (Shubin 2008: 78; Burton 2019: 52)—the relationship between Tanzania and the ANC had been strained, and Mohlala’s stay in the Crimea coincided with the ANC’s resolu-

tion to redeploy the MK to a more welcoming country.²⁹¹ The crucial point is that it would bring Mohlala and his comrades into the midst of a war-torn region. As he recalled, “we were offered a place to stay in Angola. But Agostinho Neto said, ‘People, you can come, but you will have to defend yourself. Because we are in war.’”²⁹² Indeed, though Angola was the country from which “more cadres were infiltrated back into South Africa than ever before,” as Maren Saeboe writes, “most trained combatants would fight in Angola rather than in their homeland” (2002: 192).

This new change of location in Mohlala’s life is revealing insofar as German research on Africans in the GDR, when referring to migrants’ countries of origin, often uncritically adopts terminology from GDR sources and writes in a rather euphemistic or reductionist way of ‘the young nation states’, as if all African countries were already independent when the GDR started its involvement there, and without really taking into account what happened in those countries that actually were so. The history of Angola (but also of Mozambique), one of the countries from which labor migrants, students and exiles departed to the GDR, is particularly striking here. Angola’s independence from Portugal in 1975, already the result of an armed struggle, led to a decades-long civil war that was crucially intensified through South Africa’s attempts to prevent the consolidation of African socialist regimes in the region as well as to put down the independence struggle of Namibia, bordering Angola in the South and occupied by South Africa since the defeat of the Germans at the end of World War I. Thus, the country Mohlala would be brought to from the Crimea was an international conflict zone where, at its height, thousands of Cuban soldiers fought together with the ruling MPLA to push back the South African army as well as the MPLA’s Angolan opponents, with atrocities committed on all sides, including the MPLA, and the two superpowers as well as China being directly or indirectly involved.²⁹³

²⁹¹ Maren Saeboe and Vladimir Shubin argue that the move to Angola corresponded with the ANC’s good relations with the MPLA and its search for a more reliable host country and training ground for the MK while Angola, contrary to Mozambique, had more to win than to lose by hosting the MK, because it had already been attacked by South Africa (Saeboe 2002: 49–55; Shubin 2008: 115–123). For the ANC’s strained relations with Tanzania, see also Ellis/Sechaba 1992: 53–54.

²⁹² Agostinho Neto was the first president of Angola and leader of the MPLA. The two competing Angolan parties opposing the MPLA were the UNITA (*União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola*), headed by Jonas Savimbi and later supported by South Africa, and the FNLA (*Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola*), headed by Holden Roberto and supported by the USA and Zaire, among others. UNITA was the main movement the MK came into combat with (Saeboe 2002: 192).

²⁹³ I am thinking here especially of the MPLA’s politically motivated purges of 1977, with the number of victims estimated at between 30,000 and 80,000 deaths, according to Peter Meyns

Understandably, Mohlala’s perspective on this conflict leaves no room for ambiguities. Angola’s governing party, confronting the same enemy as the ANC, offered him and his comrades in exile a place to stay. He thus seems to have misunderstood my question regarding whether it was not in the interest of Neto that, with the MK’s involvement, there would be another armed movement on the ground capable of defending itself against the MPLA’s enemies; instead, he emphasized that “it was not in our interest, the ANC and its military wing.”²⁹⁴ His narrative continued with the ANC’s challenge to make Angola the main base for the MK, his return to the Soviet Union in 1979 for another six-month course to become a paramedic, and the general support given to the MK by the socialist countries. The exile army that takes shape in Mohlala’s account depended not only on its Angolan host but also on the support provided by countries such as the Soviet Union, the GDR, Czechoslovakia or Cuba. For instance, he mentioned a plane from the GDR being sent to Luanda every week, providing them with dried soup and tracksuits, and that the MK had to build up its own medical care system. Meanwhile, Hungary or Yugoslavia had offered to fly some of the more serious cases out to their own countries, examining them beforehand through their embassy personnel in Angola. All this required an infrastructure in exile, and Mohlala, now a paramedic, was a part of it in one of the MK’s northern camps. He also recounted that the MK was under attack several times, with the convoys carrying supplies from Luanda to the camps being at particularly high risk. Moreover, his narrative included a vivid description of how the South African air force attacked camp Nova Katengue in 1979 (Saeboe 2002: 81–83). When he told me how they treated the casualties from these attacks, he surprised me with his local knowledge of the GDR:

They had to take the injured to the military hospital in Luanda. And then some were seen by the doctors there, but one had to be taken here to the GDR, to be treated here. In Luanda, there was no . . . okay, they have operated and done their best, but the treatment was not really adequate. So, one of the injured had to come here. And then, after being treated, the GDR also gave him scholarships to go to school here. So, after he was okay, he went to school. He was treated in the GDR in a place called Bad Berka. Before he went to Bad Berka, he was in the *Kreiskrankenhaus* [district hospital] in Quedlinburg, where they tried to fix this and that and then, the day after, was sent to recuperate at Bad Berka. Then he got a scholarship and studied medicine. Now, he is a general in the national army of South Africa.

(2017), who further argues that the MPLA could only consolidate its power and become Angola’s ruling party through the military support of Cuba. However, Meyns also acknowledges the outstanding complexity of Angola’s political situation at the advent of independence.

²⁹⁴ Saeboe as well as Shubin suggest that, even though the MK was too small to be of real military help for Angola, there were nevertheless considerations similar to the question I raised with Mohlala.

The geographical leaps within such an extract become more meaningful if we consider the interview's content, as I have summarized it so far, as a whole. Beginning in Alexandra, one of South Africa's notorious townships, it led us to Dar es Salaam—in the mid-1970s still an important hub for the ANC—and then to the Crimea—a region not many European contemporaries would have linked in a positive way to anticolonial struggles of the South. Returning to the African continent, it delved into the Angolan war zone and the MK camps, sustained by an international solidarity network, so that we could then follow his injured comrade from Luanda to East German towns so small and provincial that even most Germans would have problems finding them on a map. Within Mohlala's narrative, these sites are all interconnected through South Africa's struggle for liberation. Only later, when he told me that in 1982 he was sent for a three-month course in primary health care in Denmark at the invitation of the Norwegian and Danish Red Cross, did his narrative briefly move beyond this Southern Africa–Eastern bloc scheme to include a Western country. But, even then, he would point to the particularities of support from the Scandinavian countries, such as the condition that their material assistance should never be used for military purposes. The courses the Scandinavians offered had to be strictly civilian in character, and Mohlala added that the Scandinavians were good at monitoring the uses their material assistance was put to.

Imagining that the relatively peaceful and sated way of life Mohlala saw in Denmark must have contrasted sharply with his life in Angola, I asked him if he had not thought about a way to stay in Scandinavia, which he clearly denied. His explanation of why he attended the Scandinavian course followed the strict logic of military orders and discipline while, moreover, illuminating the difficult conditions in the MK camp he was working in. For instance, he told me how his medical superior, who had to leave the camp for a while, handed a fragmentary notebook over to him, leaving Mohlala with the task of educating himself before going to Denmark:

'Bango, let me show you my book here of all what I have written, what I have noted and so on.' So I was given a certain learning by doing [task]. But health is sensitive. So, learning by doing? No. He said, 'Bango, I also had it that way, learning by doing. So, if you can't recall what I have presented to you with the staff, then here is this book. When you have time, just go through how I treated malaria [. . .].' I said okay, I'll see. And the chapter I needed to tell me [what to do] tomorrow in the morning, when he will not be there? He will be gone. Tomorrow morning? What? The chapter was not there.

The shortage of qualified personnel and improvised structure of the camp's health sector forced Mohlala to steadily improve his medical skills, and the brief course in Denmark was only of minor significance compared to what would be awaiting him in the GDR, as we will see. He gave me several examples of the med-

ical work he was doing in the camp. Malaria was the most common disease, but he also assisted in obstetrics. Once he helped an Angolan delivering her baby—they also treated civilians asking for help—and the mother was so happy that she named her newborn child similarly to the pseudonym he used as an MK operative. In a tragic case, a baby sick with malaria died in his hands while he tried in vain to find a functioning vein. It is in the context of this scene that, retrospectively, he justified his first move to the GDR in 1984 with the need to gain more professional knowledge. But, while he was telling me this, he also seemed to be aware that his permanent stay in Germany, enabled by marrying an East German, complicates this justification:

So I could not even put in a drip, an infusion, because all the veins were collapsed. Tried on the head, tried somewhere on the leg . . . no, doesn't work. So, I said let me just—and now the course in the GDR was also to pick me up, because . . . I hadn't [originally] wanted that. But you know, somehow, somewhere one meets somebody. I said, if this one could be my partner, that would be good.

3.4 Medical Training in the GDR: The Dorothea Erxleben School in Quedlinburg

3.4.1 The School's Training Program for Foreigners and its Discussion in Science

Today, there are only two countries left south of the Sahara that are still served by a German airline, Namibia and South Africa. This decline of connectivity is part of what Ali Mazrui once mourned as Africa's “dis-globalizing experience” after the end of the Cold War (1999: 7). Back in 1984, Mohlala, together with several other exiled comrades who had been allocated a stipend from the GDR, were able to board an East German Interflug plane and fly nonstop from Luanda to East Berlin, where two East Germans and one South African welcomed them at Schönefeld airport. Their fellow exile, who also served as a translator, then accompanied them to Quedlinburg—a small, rural town with less than 30,000 inhabitants, around 200 km away from Berlin and located north of the Harz mountains, a low range in what was re-established as the federal state of Saxony-Anhalt after reunification. A newspaper article from the GDR, published in 1987, spotlighted the Dorothea Erxleben School, where Mohlala did his training, explaining how the school had been exclusively training foreign cadres for 25 years by then—in total, 1,650 women and men from 60 African, Asian, and Latin American countries had successfully completed vocational training of three years there—gaining knowledge in twenty-eight subjects, such as nursing, anatomy, physiology,

nutrition science, infection theory, and pathology.²⁹⁵ In 1987, 18 members of SWAPO and the ANC were attending the school, as the article further notes, and Mohlala—as the article does not say—was one of them. While the school's main focus was nurse training, medical-assistant training had been re-established in 1985, after a longer break. Its aim was to prepare healthcare professionals to give medical care in remote areas of the Global South, ready to work autonomously under conditions that would strongly differ from those in Europe.

The East German writer Stefan Wolter authored a monograph covering the twentieth century history of the hospital of which the Dorothea Erxleben School was a part (2007). Though containing only a few pages on the training of foreigners, his book offers a rare post-reunification view from Germany on the subject (2007: 265–268). According to Wolter, the first students came from Mali and arrived at the school—a newly established subunit of a longer-existing nursing school—in September 1961, followed the next year by a group of ten more foreign students whose origin he does not further specify. For 1964–65, he writes of 35 women from Nigeria, Guinea, Cuba, Tanzania and Zanzibar who were all trained as nurses. The curricula for the German and foreign students was basically the same, only that the latter were additionally taught in tropical medicine and attended a one-year course in German language beforehand. In 1966, the school gained a nationwide reputation as the GDR's central institution for teaching German for medical professions. From this time on, a large proportion of those who came to the GDR to do medical training or study medicine but lacked the necessary language skills learned German in Quedlinburg. In the mid-1970s, the level of medical training was increased through extension of the program from 2.5 to 3 years (plus one-year language preparation, if needed) as well as offering more highly qualified teachers. Wolter further mentions two important changes within the medical school's directorate: its first director, Margarete Haberdank, was replaced in 1962 by Hans Kranold, followed in 1971 by Friedrich Kolbe, who had worked abroad before and was thus experienced in working with foreigners.

Wolter illustrates this section of his book with two pictures, the first showing a Black female student in the hospital's children's ward, dressed as a nurse and smiling at three white children who are playing at a table; the second showing five Black students, one of them male, sitting at a table with learning materials in a classroom situation. Two of the female students, very young and with headscarves, look a little stressed, while the faces of the other three express careful

295 "In der DDR zur medizinischen Fachausbildung. Aus 60 Entwicklungsländern studierten Kader in Quedlinburg." *Neues Deutschland*, 12 August 1987, vol. 42, issue 188, p. 2. The school was named after the first female medical doctor from Germany: Dorothea Erxleben (1715–1762).

attention. Wolter writes empathically about the topic, acknowledging that “the hospital provided valuable medical aid to poorer countries” and that “in some places in the world, there will be people who fondly remember their training in Quedlinburg” (2007: 267, own translation). Considering only the information about the training of foreign students which his book provides, I see no reason for Wolter to draw any negative conclusions from this period except that real integration into the existing society was hardly possible (2007: 267–268). Nevertheless, he dismisses an official statement as mere political propaganda only because it claimed in 1981 that,

as a result of the growing trust which the young nation states have in our worker’s solidarity, many governments from Asia, Africa and Latin America are asking our state to train urgently needed medical cadres. [. . .] To this day, the school and the hospital have fulfilled a deeply humanitarian and politically valuable task in the spirit of proletarian internationalism. (2007: 267, own translation)

Moreover, relying solely on oral sources from the German side, he adds that at least one case of suicide occurred and criticizes that the school also trained “officially prohibited feldshers for conflict areas” (ibid., own translation).²⁹⁶

Wolter looks at the hospital in Quedlinburg through the prism of its twentieth-century history, thereby adopting a decidedly local and institutional perspective in which the training of foreigners seems only a marginal issue. Before I turn this perspective upside down and look at the same subject through the prism of Mohlala’s exile narrative, I want to discuss how Young-sun Hong, a historian who works in the US but grew up under South Korea’s West-aligned military dictatorship, looks at the subject through a decidedly transnational perspective: the prism of “the humanitarian, development, and medical aid programs of the two German states for the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa” (Hong 2015).²⁹⁷

²⁹⁶ The International Labour Organization lists a feldsher (*Feldscher*) among the paramedical practitioners (see ILO, International Standard Classification of Occupations 2008 (ISCO-08): Structure, group definitions and correspondence tables, Geneva 2012, p. 131 https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/ilo-bookstore/order-online/books/WCMS_172572/lang-en/index.htm (accessed 2 October 2023)). I cannot say whether an internationally binding agreement existed concerning the prohibition of feldshers training which the GDR had signed (or not).

²⁹⁷ In a chapter about the GDR’s engagement in Zanzibar’s medical sector, Hong mentions the gynecologist Ruth Radvanyi as one of the East Germans who were temporarily working in Zanzibar, adding that she is the daughter of novelist Anna Seghers and economist Johann Lorenz Schmidt (2015: 308). What Hong does not mention, however, is that the whole family was Jewish and exiled in France and Mexico during the 1930s and 1940s; I come back to an analogy between one of Seghers’ exile novels and Mohlala’s narrative later.

Like Wolter, Hong could not locate the Dorothea Erxleben School's archives and did not conduct any interviews with former students (Wolter 2007: 268; Hong 2015: 378). Instead, she relies exclusively on files from the 1960s and 1970s about the medical training of foreign students in the GDR which she found in the German Federal Archive and the Political Archive of the Foreign Ministry, arguing that "the voluminous correspondence, complaints, and petitions [. . .] provide an opportunity to study how East German officials and citizens interacted with these foreigners" (Hong 2015: 201). Hence, the students' own voices are dominated by the more numerous writings from East German officials about them and appear only through scattered documents. Though the small number of examples she relies on do not qualify as a representative study, they suggest that the changes in the medical school's directorate and the upgrading of the level of medical training given in the mid-1970s as well as the re-establishment of medical-assistant training in the mid-1980s had their reasons. Hong's study does not, however, mention any of these changes.

While acknowledging that the hospital's history as a nursing school anticipated the GDR's training of foreigners there, Hong speculates about Quedlinburg's "relative isolation" (*ibid.*) as the main reason for the GDR to make it a training center for foreign students, suggesting that the city's small size and remote location facilitated "the virtual ghettoization of non-European students" (*ibid.*). Hong's assumption, however biased, is not completely unfounded: in 1966, the director of a medical school in Potsdam asked the GDR's Health Ministry to transfer four male Zanzibari graduates from Potsdam to Quedlinburg before their return to Zanzibar so that they "would have fewer opportunities to socialize with German women" (Hong 2015: 207). Nonetheless, this does not say anything about whether similar considerations had influenced the GDR's original decision to make Quedlinburg a center for the training of foreign students; moreover, as Hong quotes from earlier correspondence between East German officials, the training of the first group of foreign students in Quedlinburg was already said to have resulted in romantic relationships between Malinese men and German women, including pregnancies (*ibid.*).

Hong writes of about 450 students from "the nonaligned countries of the Third World"²⁹⁸ who completed training in the GDR's medical sector between 1961 and 1973, most of them studying in Quedlinburg (2015: 201). What she discovered about

²⁹⁸ Similarly with the previously quoted "newly independent countries of Asia and Africa," I quote this phrasing from Hong to highlight its generalizing tone, as gathering all of the students' sending countries under this umbrella term neglects Southern Africa's late decolonization and, therefore, obscures the fact that students such as Mohlala were sent by exiled liberation movements.

the activities of the first group of arrivals sounds disappointing. Though the Malinese students had had work experience from French colonial hospitals, in Quedlinburg they “were required to clean rooms and make beds for several months as an ostensible part of their basic training” (2015: 204). Unfortunately, Hong does not mention whether German nursing students were also assigned with such tasks or not. Another problem at this early stage of the program’s establishment was that the East Germans had no expertise in tropical medicine. A letter from an East German official from 1962 reveals an awareness of these problems (*ibid.*), yet assigning rather unqualified work to foreign students instead of instructing them in more demanding tasks right from the start was repeated during the first half of the 1960s with students from Niger and Cuba (Hong 2015: 205–206).

Hong concludes from these examples that “the absence of a clear program for meeting their needs, together with the housekeeping tasks and basic patient care into which they were shunted, quickly alienated these visitors” (2015: 206) and that racial prejudice “most often manifested itself in the conviction that Africans had to be taught the basic virtues of work, discipline, and order before they could hope to acquire skills or technical knowledge of any kind” (2015: 206–207). In spite of these critical conclusions, there are some cases in which Hong thematizes the training in Quedlinburg in a more neutral or positive way as well. For instance, in 1960 a sixteen-year-old Malinese woman came to the GDR. At first, she had to perform unskilled labor as a nurse’s aide in a Berlin hospital, but after some East German officials found out about this unsatisfactory situation, she was sent to Quedlinburg and successfully completed her basic training there. Nonetheless, problems on her career path did recur after she began to study midwifery in Leipzig—this time through a head teacher who wrote a very negative evaluation in an exceedingly disrespectful tone (2015: 208).

A similar case of particular interest here is that of a seventeen-year-old South African named Cora. Hong does not give any information about how and from where exactly she came to the GDR; all that she writes in this regard is that the teenager arrived in 1969, already pregnant, to study nursing. Against the GDR authorities’ advice, she initially wanted to abort but ultimately gave birth to a daughter, and the government provided her with all available welfare benefits. In 1970, she “resumed her training in a German-only class in Quedlinburg and two-and-a-half years later she received her state nursing certificate” (2015: 212), after which she wanted to become a nursing instructor. As in the case of the young Malinese woman, Quedlinburg appears here as a successfully completed stage on an adolescent’s career path. In line with this logic, and despite the fact that the authorities considered her social behavior to be inappropriate and doubted her suitability for teaching, the young woman was finally allowed to study in Potsdam. It was only after her South African mentor decided that she

should abandon her studies and, together with her little daughter, leave the GDR for Zambia because of a politically unreliable African boyfriend that the SED's ZK ordered her to leave the country in 1977. This points towards the ambiguous role which political organizations from their sending country could play in a foreign student's life. Moreover, that the two were sent to Zambia because of a South African mentor's decision suggests that she was an exiled ANC member, like Mohlala, as Zambia was one of the ANC's main host countries. The close relationship between the GDR and the ANC would also explain why the East German authorities showed so much paternalism with regard to her pregnancy and patience with her recalcitrant behavior or—in Hong's words—why the ZK “sought to make Cora into an example of the power of the socialist state to remold the character of this obstinate young woman and bring her around to a proper understanding of her social obligations” (ibid.). Hong contextualizes the case by employing Konrad Jarusch's argument about the GDR as a welfare dictatorship of care and coercion (2015: 210); yet the reasons why the seventeen-year-old Cora could not accomplish her wish to abort remain as unclear as the circumstances which had brought her to the GDR.²⁹⁹

From my perspective, the broader picture which Hong creates of Quedlinburg and the training of Third World students in the GDR's medical sector is generally rather depressing. Although she quotes some East German officials who seemed seriously concerned about the medical students' well-being and education, Hong's account leaves no room for the possibility of improvements being brought about by the training programs, let alone the possibility that the GDR could be seen as an emancipatory space for Africans. Quite to the contrary, her section's final remarks about the beginning of labor migration from Algeria and the GDR's economic problems evoke an even more dystopian picture of the late 1970s and the 1980s, when “young people from the Third World [. . .] were increasingly seen as a source of cheap labor, rather than as comrades in arms” (2015: 214). Further, her tendency to deny the GDR's solidarity policies any emancipatory effects culminates in her study's epilogue, where she warns “against romanticizing East German rhetoric of anti-imperialist solidarity” (2015: 320).³⁰⁰

²⁹⁹ The GDR's abortion law was liberalized in 1972, only a few years after Cora's arrival.

³⁰⁰ Hong sees such a trend in the popular-science writing of Hans-Georg Schleicher (2019). Schleicher was the GDR's ambassador to Zimbabwe in the 1980s and, thus, in close contact with Southern African freedom fighters and politicians; it is mainly Schleicher and his wife's publications that have enabled post-1990 German knowledge production regarding the GDR's support for African liberation movements. Together with Ulf Engel, a West German professor for African studies, Schleicher also co-authored a highly nuanced analysis of the two Germany's Africa poli-

Hong’s concluding arguments and overall approach to the GDR remind me of a problem which Marcia Schenck (2018) has addressed regarding post-unification literature on labor migration to the GDR. As a result of research methods which draw primarily on archival sources, non-German actors often appear in the literature “merely as silhouettes” (2018: 4), as “victims of state exploitation” (ibid.) whose experiences are filtered through the interests of the GDR institutions which originally generated and collected the archived documents. Schenck, to my mind rightfully, proposes oral history interviews to counterbalance this tendency. Consequently, we can now ask the following: How did Mohlala, who came from a conflict area to the GDR seven years after Cora and her daughter’s departure, look back on his medical training in Quedlinburg—not speaking from some distant part of the world, as both Wolter and Hong’s accounts suggest, but while living in Weißensee, right in the German capital?

3.4.2 How Mohlala Remembers his Stay at Quedlinburg

Two things Mohlala immediately recalled were the luxury of the residential house and the school’s internationalism. The relative luxury of their accommodations—two persons shared each apartment, with a living room, a sleeping room and a kitchen, although toilets and showers were shared by each floor—has even been acknowledged by South Africans who were studying in other parts of the GDR and visited the Quedlinburg trainees from time to time. Concerning the school’s internationalism, Mohlala remembered Namibians, Palestinians, Afghans and Nicaraguans who lived and studied with them in Quedlinburg. He spoke with pride about the high level of teaching offered and how he, one of the best students in the language course, successfully mastered it all. He recalled the friendly competition between those South Africans who learned German in Quedlinburg and those who learned it at the better known Herder-Institut in Leipzig—not a serious competition but motivating enough so that each group would try to trump the other with their newly achieved language skills.³⁰¹

In an interview that Ilona Schleicher conducted in 2011 with two other ANC exiles who had lived in the GDR—Bert Seraje and Bartolomew La Guma—Seraje, who came to the GDR via Zambia as late as September 1988, made a critical statement

cies (1998). Hong neither problematizes the anti-communist and Eurocentric bias in Germany’s post-reunification discourse – against which Schleicher’s text must be read – nor does she pay sufficient attention to the particularities of Southern African decolonization and the role which the GDR’s support for liberation movements played therein.

301 On the Herder-Institut, see Gramkow 2010.

about a former teacher at the Herder-Institut in 1988. According to Seraje, he had to tell this teacher that she should stop treating them as if they were ignorant, underaged children who only need to be taught something, an attitude which reminded him of how they were treated by the apartheid regime (Schleicher 2012: 103). Significantly, Seraje had already talked about this incident twenty years before in another interview, conducted by Hilda Bernstein during a period when the violent racism which accompanied the GDR's dissolution was particularly strong and put Seraje under daily threat of physical assault. Against this backdrop, Seraje's earlier account not only reads even more intensely but also reveals the teacher's initial reaction:

The teachers will think that we don't know a thing, ja. We just came to be fed with information but from outside, we can't give them anything that they can learn from, na? And that also put me into clashing with my teachers. And at one stage, I told one of my teachers, you behave just like the whites in South Africa [. . .]. She cried and I said, no . . . in any case, that is what I got from you, man [meaning the female teacher]. Any case, after that the whole situation was nice [. . .] but that was also the climax for me here, because I couldn't stand it any more. I could have slapped her or so, but I thought no, any case that is the best I could do. To tell her, no you behave just like these people. (Bernstein/Seraje: 93)³⁰²

In the more recent interview by Schleicher, however, Seraje further said that the Herder-Institut subsequently wrote a complaint to the ANC's representative office in East Berlin so that he first thought he must leave the country, but nothing happened. Notwithstanding, he repeated that with the exception of this one teacher everything else in Leipzig had been all right.

With this in my mind, I asked Mohlala about his teachers in Quedlinburg. He responded that, in general, they had been friendly but were very strict about homework. He then recalled a little quarrel which his language class—South Africans from the ANC and Namibians from SWAPO, men and women—had with one of their teachers. The latter, a young woman, once called it a *Schweinererei* (rascality, literally 'swinishness') when several of the students came to class without having done their homework. The students argued with the teacher that it was inappropriate for her to use such a word because she was younger than all of them—perhaps surprisingly signaling that they were offended by her lack of respect for reasons of age rather than ethnicity—and they continued to discuss the topic when the class was over. Thus, infantilizing students does not necessarily point towards an assumption of rac-

302 Bert Seraje Interview, conducted between 1989 and 1991 by Hilda Bernstein in Berlin. MCA 7-1683, Hilda Bernstein Collection, The Mayibuye Center, University of the Western Cape, South Africa. Bert Seraje and Sacks Stuurman, who was also interviewed by Thabo Thindi for *Exile Faces* (see p. 72, n. 76), are the same person. Bert Seraje was the code name given to Stuurman as a member of MK.

ism on the teacher’s part. In this respect, what Seraje recalled about his teacher in Leipzig seems to me of another, more negative, quality than what Mohlala recalled about his teacher in Quedlinburg. Furthermore, Seraje mentioned another relevant aspect: South African exiles came to the GDR as seasoned activists. They had not only taken up the struggle against the apartheid regime but also undergone political education in Africa that was critical by nature right from the start (Schleicher 2012: 107). Once in the GDR, I would add, they could then be confronted with young, white teachers who had never left their small country and had done little in the way of engaging critically with their racist stereotypes. Hence, the only thing which Mohlala remembered as a problem, particularly during his first year in Quedlinburg, was that he and his comrades spoke only German in class whereas, in their spare time, they kept speaking English and other South African languages, as there were no Germans residing with them at the boarding school. In the end, this made learning German a more difficult task.

Mohlala’s South African group consisted of seven men and three women. The canteen did not offer food in the evenings or Sundays, meaning that those who shared a flat had to cook for themselves if they did not want to go to a restaurant. Here again, the benefits of his upbringing become evident as, contrary to his roommate, Mohlala knew how to prepare a tasty meal. When the roommate—the two had already met in the Angolan camps but knew each other only superficially—turned out to have “no courage when it came to cooking,” Mohlala stopped sharing his meals with him.

But the roommate then started dating one of the South African women so that she would cook for him. For a while, the couple shared a room together, even though this was officially prohibited. It was only later that a stricter control system was established, consisting of three East German women and two men, who, as the students found out after a while, were all part of Quedlingburg’s local police force, with one of them sleeping at the residential home. Contrary to the residential home’s usual staff, this new control team was very strict. It kept an eye on (heterosexual) couples and made sure that rooms were only shared by persons of the same sex. The establishment of a new control team suggests that, by then, the residential home’s staff had tolerated the students’ subversion of the rules to some extent but that, eventually, the authorities responded to enforce the GDR’s general rules.

3.4.2.1 Self-determined Trips: Interactions between South African and Namibian Exiles

Mohlala mentioned that he and the other South African apprentices in Quedlinburg received a monthly stipend of 600 East German marks. If his memory served him right here, this would mean an unusually high sum for a monthly stipend; for instance, C.B., another ANC exile who studied at the same time at Potsdam University, recalled only receiving some pocket money of at most 250 marks per

month.³⁰³ In any case, a more interesting thing Mohlala spoke about was a document which allowed them to travel independently by train, though only twice a month. The trick the ANC exiles used to travel more often than that illuminates not only the mechanisms applied by the GDR to monitor their mobility—though the police escort described below could as well have been a measure to protect the exiles from racist encounters with GDR citizens or even have been requested by the ANC itself³⁰⁴—but also some of the differences between liberation movements in exile or, hierarchies of the displaced:

When we traveled, we had a document that was stamped when we bought a ticket. And when we traveled by train there was also the *Volkspolizei* accompanying us. Most of the time they were also carrying out controls. ‘Ah, there are our friends again’, that’s how they called us.

But they were friendly?

They also were friendly, yes. ‘Yes, friend, where are you going? Ah, to Berlin. Do you have a ticket? Does he have this document from school? Yes. Show it. This is good, have a nice trip’. But when the document was stamped two times, our options to take the train were gone. Then we tried something else.

What?

From SWAPO. We had our student cards.

The SWAPO members always stayed in the residential home on the weekends, and you took their student cards to travel to Berlin?

Yes, with these documents.

Didn’t the SWAPO members also like going to Berlin?

No, let’s put it like this: they were really restrained. And not only that; they really saved their money in order to buy things before returning to Africa.

And your people didn’t think like that?

There were no limitations with regard to their luggage. And their representative office supported them; if they had extra luggage, they could bring it to the office where it would be registered under their name and sent to Africa.

³⁰³ Interview between the author and C.B., Berlin, 4 June 2016.

³⁰⁴ Another reason for the police presence on the train could simply have been Quedlinburg’s proximity to the West German border.

It means that they could really buy a lot of things.

Yes, they could . . . [but] for us it was 20 kg and that’s it.

Ah, more strict.

Bringing extra luggage to the office so that it would be sent abroad . . . no, that wasn’t possible. Then we said okay, they don’t take the train, maybe one visited another in a month, but most of the time they stayed in the boarding school. And there were no names on the documents.

In another interview which I had conducted previously with Bartolomew La Guma—a civilian member of the ANC—La Guma had already mentioned to me that SWAPO members were more like soldiers, that their movement was more strict and militarily disciplined than the ANC, which was more liberal, as he called it. Because of Namibia’s harsher sociopolitical and economic realities compared to South Africa, SWAPO could thus be understood as the more subaltern group, even in exile in the GDR, where these different backgrounds translated into the more frugal lifestyle of its members. Instead of traveling around more than necessary, its members rather prepared for life in a liberated but still relatively poor Namibia. Meanwhile, ANC members—even those from its military wing, such as Mohlala—exhibited a more easygoing lifestyle and habitus in the GDR. Moreover, that SWAPO facilitated members buying East German consumer goods points to Jonathan Zatin’s older argument about economic scarcity and distributional conflicts as an additional source of xenophobia and racism in the GDR (2007).

Mohlala’s account of the ANC exiles’ interaction with members of SWAPO raised my interest in possible contact he and his comrades in Quedlinburg might have had with other groups of Africans who lived in the GDR. For instance, the *Schule der Freundschaft* (School of Friendship), a boarding school for young Mozambicans, was situated in Staßfurt, only 45 kilometres away from Quedlinburg (e.g. Schuch 2013; Müller 2014).³⁰⁵ But Mohlala spoke only of contact with the Namibians from his school. In this context, he started to reflect upon the lives of Namibians who came to the GDR at a young age and had to leave the country because of German reunification (Kenna 1999; Engombe 2004), or the Black East German Lahya Aukongo, whose Namibian mother had been injured during a South African attack on a refugee camp in Angola and flown to the GDR, where

³⁰⁵ For an account of a former student who later returned to the GDR as a labor migrant, see Miguel 2020. The rigid measures applied by the East German and Mozambican authorities to restrict student movement made it hardly likely that the Mozambicans in Staßfurt and the South Africans in Quedlinburg could have met each other by chance.

she gave birth to her daughter (Aukongo 2009). This demonstrates his concern for the fate of other Africans and Black Germans whose biographies are connected to the GDR. The lives of these Namibians, he said, must have been very hard because of what happened to them back in Namibia or—in the case of Aukongo—in Berlin after reunification, with the resurgent racism that it unleashed.

He then recalled that some of his Namibian schoolmates in Quedlinburg traveled to a hotel in Oberhof, visiting two female SWAPO members who were training as cooks there. A small town in the Thuringian Forest, Oberhof was one of the most prominent locations for winter sports in the GDR. Many middle-aged white East Germans I know still refer to skiing in Oberhof as a typical way in which they spent their Winter vacations when they were young—or even continue to spend their vacations there. Just like the Baltic Sea, Oberhof could rightfully be listed among the GDR's popular *lieux de mémoire*, as conceptualized and compiled by Martin Sabrow (2009). However, similarly to the way that Sabrow's otherwise inspiring volume lacks any serious consideration of the GDR's internationalism, I cannot imagine any of these East Germans associating their former holiday resort with having been a training post for Africans, let alone connecting it with the liberation struggle of a country that had once been a German colony. It is only Mohlala's marginalized knowledge which enables me to do so here.³⁰⁶

3.4.2.2 Romantic Relationships: Encounters between the ANC and the Free German Youth

In January 1988, the beginning of his last year of medical training, Mohlala met his future wife. It happened during an ANC meeting in Potsdam. Each January, June, and August, the party organized large, official meetings in the GDR; to finance them, the students had to pay a small fee every month as well as to cover their individual costs for food and accommodation.³⁰⁷ “The program started on

³⁰⁶ There are of course a few studies pointing to Oberhof as a training ground for Namibians. For instance, Zatlin included in his study on xenophobia in the GDR a photograph from 1981 depicting a Namibian couple's wedding in Oberhof, with its original caption mentioning Oberhof as the place where they were temporarily living and studying (2007: 713). However, Zatlin mistakenly considered Namibians in the GDR only as labor migrants and ignored the country's liberation struggle.

³⁰⁷ It is unclear to me if there really were three meetings every year, as other ANC exiles speak of only one annual meeting (e.g. Schleicher 2012: 106). Nonetheless, according to Mohlala, the meetings were organized every January 8, the ANC's founding day in 1912, celebrated in Potsdam; on June 16, the day the Soweto uprising erupted in 1976, celebrated in Magdeburg; and on August 9, National Women's Day, celebrated in Berlin. National Women's Day honors the so-called Women's March in South Africa in 1956, during which more than 20,000 women protested against the Urban Areas Act (or Pass Laws), introduced by the apartheid regime to facilitate racial segregation.

the evening with a lot of speeches, about three hours, then the disco started with eating and drinking until 10 pm,” Mohlala summarized such a meeting rather pragmatically. Far from being isolated events, these gatherings were often attended by members of the FDJ—and just as the South African hosts were of mixed gender, so were their East German guests. The young East German woman he fell in love with was born in Weißensee, studied polygraphy—a profession based in the fields of graphics and printing, comparable to media designer—in Leipzig, and had her own apartment in Berlin.

From that point on, Mohlala took the train to Berlin every weekend to visit his girlfriend. At his residential home in Quedlinburg, people of different sexes were not allowed to stay in the same room overnight. Visitors had to sign a document and show their passport to a gatekeeper, meaning that his girlfriend would have had to sleep in a separate guest room. These regulations notwithstanding, Mohlala told me of more encounters between the students in Quedlinburg and East Germans, also between the sexes. Ballenstedt, a nearby town about half the size of Quedlinburg, had an engineering school for forestry. As a West German, I automatically associated forestry with being a male profession; hence my surprise that Mohlala spoke only of the young women who attended that school. Thanks to its more progressive gender policies, the GDR had a higher percentage of female foresters than the FRG.³⁰⁸ These encounters began with weekly or monthly visits of students from both schools, again organized by the FDJ. Out of these official meetings, individual visits emerged. The Germans traveled back to their family homes at most every second weekend, leaving plenty of time for visiting each other in the residential dorms, although the control teams took care that visitors left by 7 pm.

3.4.2.3 Disunity in Exile: Classism and Intellectual Snobbery among ANC Members

Mohlala took the above-mentioned ANC gatherings as his point of departure to reflect a little more upon how the ANC members interacted with each other in East German exile. In his eyes, there was no real unity. Instead, small groups formed according to the places where they lived in the GDR or the professions in which they were trained, and there were also tensions between civilian and military ANC members. The staff from the ANC’s office in East Berlin would sit together with the stipendiaries from the University of Economics (HfÖ): on one side the ones from Potsdam and Magdeburg, and on the other side the ones from

³⁰⁸ See e.g. Hummel, Andreas: “Geschlechter: Försterinnen setzen Marke.” *Nordwest Zeitung*, 7 February 2017, https://www.nwzonline.de/wirtschaft/foersterinnen-setzen-marke_a_31,2,1431803268.html (accessed 2 October 2023).

Quedlinburg. Mohlala particularly disliked comments such as ‘You are soldiers [and only apprentices], we are students’; ‘we are better off’ or, ‘can you imagine that, after our return to South Africa, we will work somewhere in an office and you won’t?’ He and his comrades from MK countered such provocations by responding that they did not care, that they were disciplined army members:

‘It’s okay, why not? We are in the army doing our duty, and politically as well as mentally we are better than you. You just *look* like better people.’ [. . .] Yes, this was really . . . well, bad that some were saying, ‘Ah, those . . .’ And then, when the members of the board were elected, this was also one of those things . . . but some comrades commented on it, because after the meetings there was criticism and self-criticism . . . Yeah, and then unity was conjured up: ‘Comrades, we are one. We are ANC members. Okay, there are those who are in the army, but we are all comrades, okay?’ Yeah, okay. We are all comrades, fine, no problem. But then, the board members—students and no apprentices. ‘We are not apprentices, we are students!’ Then it became a little better. I was elected as a secretary among the principals, but there were some who didn’t think I could manage to do this among these students who were elected onto the board. But I did it, it was alright, no problem. That’s how it used to be back then.

That Mohlala recalled such intellectual snobbery and classism among ANC exiles in the GDR sounds ironic at first glance, given the host country’s self-image as a workers’ and peasants’ state as well as the ANC’s ideological proximity to socialist ideals, not to speak of its close alliance with the SACP. Mohlala’s specific socialization most likely played an additional role here—growing up as an adopted child made him sensitive to social hierarchies beyond the color line. If it was true, however, another question is whether this classism shown by his comrades was more a result of the GDR’s migration policies, which entailed a logical differentiation between students or trainees in civic or military professions or, rather, of their earlier socialization in apartheid South Africa. Access to university was restricted in the GDR and, thus, considered a privilege even for East Germans, but the financial attraction of academic jobs was rather limited, compared to skilled work in industrial production, as there was no huge wage gap between academic and non-academic professions, as tends to exist in capitalist countries (e.g. Hockerts 1994: 530). Moreover, considering the ANC exiles among my sample who had attended university during their stay in the GDR, the main difference between their lives as students and Mohlala’s life as an apprentice seems to be that his school was exclusively for foreigners, meaning that the former had more regular contact with East Germans. Mohlala nevertheless dated an East German and traveled independently to visit her in Berlin, suggesting that, in his particular case, this difference was not of much importance. Hence, it appears that it was not so much the exiles’ actual living conditions in the GDR that were the key determinant here but, rather, their former experiences with South Africa’s racial capitalism and

their expectations of what would await them in a liberated post-apartheid state. The university students might have expected more comfortable jobs with higher income because, unlike Mohlala, they would likely take over jobs normally done by racially privileged, better-off whites.

Mohlala’s own explanation similarly points back to South Africa but sounds a little different: “We [South Africans] are sick. To really trust someone . . . well, who is this? In the families it’s like this as well.” In his opinion, growing up Black under apartheid often meant living in large families marked by internal migration, with children from different parents speaking different languages, as in his own case. Such conditions made it difficult to build up real trust among each other, and this mistrust and envy accompanied them into exile. This resonates with Mphahlele’s remark about those internal South African migrants—“exiles,” in Mphahlele’s words—of the generation of Mohlala’s grandfather, who were urban dwellers forced “to establish a kind of permanence in areas where they were denied a sense of place” (Mphahlele 1982: 41).³⁰⁹ This denial, in turn, not only continued in the kind of exile Africans like Mohlala later experienced but even intensified there because, “to avoid being in permanent exile,” as Tague argues with regard to Mozambicans, “one had to have a purpose (and to be serving the liberation movement through that purpose)” (Tague 2018: 142), keeping alive the idea of returning to their country of origin.³¹⁰ Tague rightfully claims that this sense of purpose was often linked to pursuing educational achievements. How, then, to avoid stagnation—or avoid a relapse into the previous stage of exile, with its ominous reverberations of permanence—when an apprenticeship abroad was coming to an end?

3.4.2.4 Farewell to the GDR: Starting a Family while Being Prevented from Settling Down

Obtaining a new scholarship and proceeding with one’s education was one way for an exile to remain longer in the GDR, if only for a given time, while marrying an East German was another. In Mohlala’s account of how he had to leave the GDR in 1988, these two options overlapped but ultimately ended with the impossibility of achieving either one of them. Interestingly, Mohlala considered as the main obstacle to his remaining in the GDR not the country’s migration policies but the lack of engagement of his own political organization, the ANC:

³⁰⁹ See p. 37 for full quote.

³¹⁰ See p. 20 for full quote.

I had problems, already at the end of '87, because my girlfriend was pregnant and it was a bad time—my last year of apprenticeship, and I had to go. Okay, so I'm going to the chief representative in the office and trying to talk to him. He says: 'Comrade . . . is it your future wife?' I say: Yes, I want to marry. 'But you're in the army. You were ordered by the ANC to study and to return, and to execute the ANC's assignment.' I say: Yes, but this kind of opportunity exists in the ANC. There are comrades here who got married and stayed. Why doesn't it work for me? 'Comrade, those in the headquarters in Lusaka don't allow the apprentices here to marry. But we will solve your problem. I'll write a letter to the headquarters.'

The letter, as Mohlala continued, was never written, and his problem remained unsolved. Hence, it suggests that some of the superiors raised false hopes among their subordinates, be it because of their own limited agency in exile or because they did not really want to help. Mohlala said that the ANC's chief commander visited them in Quedlinburg at the end of their apprenticeship, telling them that they had attained a sufficient amount of basic knowledge so that there might be a chance for them to study medicine at an East German university. Since many of them had attended school in South Africa only briefly, he encouraged them to seize this opportunity. According to Mohlala's account, however, the ANC actually was not in a position to raise such hopes among its cadre who had just graduated as medical assistants from the Dorothea Erxleben School. Quite to the contrary, the prospect for new scholarships must have been rather small, given that Mohlala spoke of only one member of his group who was finally allowed to stay in the GDR to study. Again, however, his narrative becomes a bit confusing here. The majority of his group, he said, was allowed to participate in extra training for about three months before leaving the GDR, whereas he was among those who were not even considered candidates for this brief extra training, the exact nature of which he did not mention. Instead, he was told that his medical services were urgently needed in Angola because of UNITA's ongoing attacks. Yet, this alleged urgency was contradicted by the planned date of his return flight, which would only have taken place after his comrades' additional training had ended. A comrade who would leave the country on the same plane as Mohlala informed him about the exact day of their departure. Despite the bureaucratic inconsistency, this did leave him with three months of spare time, a period that he spent together with his girlfriend and their newborn child in Berlin.

Beside his own difficulties in starting a family and settling down, Mohlala spoke about two cases of pregnancies among ANC members. One was the girlfriend of his roommate in Quedlinburg, who gave birth to a child in the GDR, suggesting that the ANC (and the GDR) tolerated pregnancies of ANC members if they occurred during their training in Germany. Mohlala did not say whether it was possible for the young mother to complete her apprenticeship, but at least she was allowed to continue her temporary stay. The second instance was a comrade who, as in the

case of Cora in Hong’s example, was already pregnant when she came to the GDR. For her, however, staying was not an option. The only decision left to her was whether to return to a camp in Tanzania or Angola, the latter also being the conflict area Mohlala departed towards with a heavy heart in October 1988.

3.5 “Nobody Needed Me When I Got Back”: Return to Angolan Exile, the Namibia Agreement, and Camps on the Move

Mohlala’s return to Angola coincided with a particularly difficult period for the ANC. It was the time of the Namibia Agreement, when South Africa had finally signed the United Nations Security Council’s resolution 435 to end its state of war with Angola (Saeboe 2002: 186–189, Shubin 2008: 267–278; Saunders 2019: 352).³¹¹ The resolution had already been adopted in 1978, but South Africa, backed by the Western powers’ refusal to put any serious pressure on the apartheid state, had rejected signing it until 1988; anti-communism and SWAPO’s socialist orientation had served as an excuse here. As all South African and Cuban troops had to withdraw from Angola and South West Africa, the agreement paved the way for Namibia’s independence in 1990. But it also meant the withdrawal of the MK, consisting of a large number of exiles who—unlike the South African and Cuban soldiers—had no home country to return to, because the apartheid regime was still in power. Hence, Mohlala returned to a camp structure in Angola that was on the move, as he remembered: “People were preparing, some commanders and some units leaving for Mbarara.” A glance at a map gave me an idea of the distance he was actually talking about. A district in the southwestern part of Uganda, Mbarara was more than 3,000 kilometers away from Luanda as well as from Alexandra, the township where he had grown up. Saeboe writes that moving MK cadres from Angola to Uganda could be seen as tantamount to a worsening of their already difficult living conditions: “Upon arrival in Uganda the events that had taken place in Angola were repeated. The cadres were left in the bush to build dwellings. For some of them Uganda became a two-year bush camp with even worse conditions than in Angola” (2002: 190).

Mohlala’s narrative connects this situation of dissolving structures and uncertainties with his efforts to return to the GDR and reunite with his newly established family. Another historical event built into this part of the interview—one that allowed the ANC to see the light at the end of the tunnel and makes the MK’s

³¹¹ Saunders also stresses that South Africa’s occupation of Namibia’s main port continued until 1994 (2019: 354).

retreat appear as just one step back before moving two steps forward—is the release of Mandela in February 1990 and his subsequent visit to Zambia. The same month, the apartheid regime also lifted the ban on the ANC, the SACP and other important anti-apartheid groups such as the Pan African Congress. At a narrative level, these events seem to justify Mohlala’s growing detachment from the African continent and the ANC’s military structures, of which he had previously been a part.

“Nobody needed me when I got back” summarizes best what he told me about this period. It begins right at the Luanda airport where he and his comrade arrived. The ANC functionary there, responsible for receiving incoming cadre, was surprised by their arrival, given that no one had informed him about their return. To make the absurdity complete, at one point even the commander in chief, who had visited them in Quedlinburg and is drawn here by Mohlala as a benevolent, fatherlike figure, appeared and wondered why the two were not continuing their studies in East Germany. Looking for a meaningful job, Mohlala then started to assist in the clinic of the ANC’s transit camp: “I didn’t just want to sit and do nothing, [only] because I’m coming back from a school in the GDR and nobody knows about it. So, let me try to work in the clinic and help.” The way he recalled his practical work there provides more information about this specific camp and the people he cared for:

My job was to be called or get a list with the names of people who had to undergo medical check-ups and preparation, who had to be brought to a vaccination center. Some of them needed to be brought to a hospital for further examination. I was the one who did this job, bringing these people to the hospitals for vaccination or getting some lab results. For those who were going to Europe, a clinical picture had to be made. What about HIV? Are any tests necessary?³¹² And I brought them there. So I knew that they are going to this place, they are going to that place; they are going to the GDR, they are going to the Soviet Union. And there were those who were in poor health: we had some victims from the Angolan civil war. There was a period when the GDR and the Soviet Union were sending us experts or military trainers, arguing that they needed to save time and money. For further training, and to train future experts, we could send some people to the GDR and the Soviet Union. So, there were those who were prepared for the GDR or the Soviet Union.

Though all of these cadres were using pseudonyms, those who were going to be trained in the GDR in military combat work were more reserved and conspirative, he recalled; after their return, they did not report much and behaved like highly specialized military experts—not arrogant, but a little snooty. In Mohlala’s opinion, they even looked with a slight condescension at those who were trained in the Soviet Union. The latter would, he explained, lack discipline and one would

³¹² On the role of HIV, see Folland 2019.

not want to be trained by them. The returnees stayed only very briefly in Angola until they were quietly incorporated into the South African underground via Mozambique. Mohlala emphasized that the military trainees from the GDR were a kind of elite, an image further cultivated through their use of the German term *Genossen* instead of comrades.

3.5.1 Rereading Anna Seghers in Africa: In Transit to the GDR

While making these observations during his work in the camp in Angola—a transitory space by definition—Mohlala kept in touch with his girlfriend, mainly via letters, and did his best to find a way back to the GDR. In this context, an analogy emerges between his narrative and Anna Seghers’ novel *Transit*, a classic of German exile literature. Seghers, who later became a prominent intellectual in the GDR, wrote it in the early 1940s while in Mexican exile. Her semi-biographical novel narrates in a tragicomic way the grueling situation of refugees in Marseille, trying to escape the advancing German troops via the sea route to the Americas but trapped in a constant waiting state or limbo. To board a ship and reach a safe haven, Seghers’ refugees needed at least two different travel documents, such as a boarding card for the right vessel and a visa from the country a passenger sought to enter. Obtaining the visa often took so long that the only vessel available had already left; meanwhile, waiting for the next appropriate vessel often took so long that the visa, valid only for a given time, would have already expired. This vicious circle resulted in often grotesque scenes in the consulates’ waiting rooms in Marseille. In Mohlala’s narrative, it generated similar though less dramatic scenes at the ANC offices in Zambia, Angola and East Berlin—less dramatic in the sense that, as opposed to Seghers’ refugees, Mohlala’s life was not threatened by advancing troops.

Just like Seghers’ refugees, in Angola Mohlala needed more than one document to get out of the transitory space he was trapped in—a permission letter from the ANC to leave for the GDR and a flight ticket. Achieving both was complicated. First, Mohlala was fortunate to get an assignment to go to Zambia, where he attended a conference of the health department of the ANC and also witnessed a visit by Mandela. This gave him the chance to see a chief representative of the ANC, who was stationed in Angola but also attended the conference, as well as his brother, who was in Zambia at the time, too. Meanwhile, Mohlala’s girlfriend in Berlin had already sent a letter to this representative in which she expressed her will to marry Mohlala. Additionally, she put constant pressure on the ANC office in Berlin by asking if any news about his return had arrived. Mohlala, still in Zambia, even succeeded in buying a one-way ticket to Berlin with the help of a

comrade's East German wife, who worked at Interflug. The problem was that the ticket, just like the visas in Seghers' novel, was of limited validity and expired before he could organize the permission letter.

Now short of money, Mohlala talked to the representative about his problem. His answer evokes again the dilemma of Seghers' refugees, while illustrating once more the role of Scandinavian countries in the ANC's solidarity network: "Man, it's not a problem. Sweden has popped out pocket money for the health workers in Luanda. So, you're part of that. I will take a little bit and buy you a ticket to Berlin. But first you must get your permission here." In the military headquarters, Mohlala's commander was positive about his request. But when Mohlala went to the ANC office, he was told that—contrary to what the representative had just said about the Swedish money—"the ANC doesn't finance personal problems." It was only after he assured the ANC functionary that his brother was willing to buy him a flight ticket that the functionary finally agreed. The way Mohlala remembered the letter's receipt still reveals what it must have meant to him back then:

My letter arrived in Luanda in a diplomatic bag, so somebody from the residence had brought it to the transit camp. 'Hey, comrade Bango, here is a letter.' I opened the letter. Ja, permits me to leave for Berlin, GDR. So [a second] ticket was bought. The other one, which I had bought myself through this lady, had expired. I said okay, I will keep it as a souvenir. I will show it to my girlfriend and say this is what I did. I had tried to come, but things never worked out until these letters arrived.

3.6 Return to a Socialist Country in Full Capitalist Transition: Marriage and Job Search in East Berlin Aided by Almuth Berger

Mohlala came back to the GDR in April 1990. It had taken him 18 months to achieve this, and the baby he had had to leave behind in 1988 was now a toddler of almost two years. But, just as the ANC's exile structures in Angola were being disbanded in 1989, so were the GDR's national structures in 1990. And just like the South African exiles in Angola, who were facing an uncertain future, so were the East Germans, who were revolting against a communist regime which was one of the closest allies of the ANC. It was, thus, a paradoxical and confusing political situation Mohlala was returning to. Fortunately, he arrived during that brief historical moment of reformist spirit between the end of 1989—when the communist regime gave in to public pressure, commenced negotiations with the opposition and, in March 1990, was voted out in the GDR's first and last democratic elections—and October 1990,

when the GDR joined the FRG and ceased to exist as a nation state. He was even more lucky that, only a few weeks after his return, in May 1990, he was able to marry his girlfriend—who knows if it would have been that easy after reunification?

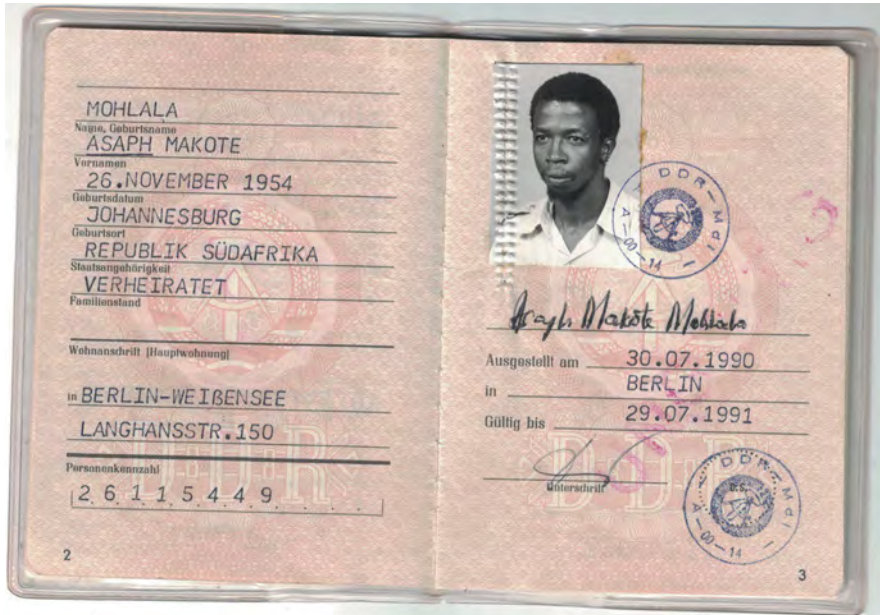


Fig. 24: Mohlala’s *Fremdenpass* (GDR passport for foreigners, permission granted from A. Mohlala).

Mohlala still lacked a South African passport and had only an identification certificate from Zambia. His marriage provided him with a *Fremdenpass* and a residence permit for three years (fig. 24). The next task was to find a job. Given the social atmosphere of the time, with its rapidly increasing and virulent racism, I wondered what his experience was like during his search for a job. Mohlala surprised me by mentioning Almuth Berger, a prominent East German figure of the transition and post-reunification period, and the support she gave him. Berger is a Protestant theologian who participated in the late GDR’s opposition and reform movements, raising political awareness about the precarious situation of and discrimination against foreigners; she had already started working with Mozambican labor migrants and confronting the increasing racism of the late GDR.³¹³ In 1990, the two last

³¹³ Berger also published on these topics as well (e.g. Berger 2011). For a biographical entry on Berger in a “Who Is Who” of the GDR, see Müller-Enbergs et al. 2010.

governments of the GDR appointed her as commissioner for foreigners, a position she held again, on a lower level, in the federal state of Brandenburg after reunification. The role that Berger played in Mohlala's search for his first job in Germany demonstrates the importance of her engagement but also the limits which social reality placed on it.

Mohlala had heard about Berger while he was applying for jobs and, thereafter, got into contact with her. She helped him by asking the chief physician from the *Königin-Elisabeth-Krankenhaus*, a hospital in East Berlin, if there was a suitable vacancy for him.³¹⁴ Then Mohlala successfully applied there for a job and began to work as a nurse in the internal medicine department. From what he told me, however, it is difficult to discern the exact reasons why his contract was not renewed after his first year. He said that the working atmosphere was really disagreeable and that he was mobbed by some of the nurses, because he did not have the same qualifications as them but received the same wage. At the end, the hospital's administration pointed to the restructuring process the hospital had undergone following reunification—it merged with another hospital—arguing that there were already too many integration measures of other personnel taking place. The only job they offered him at that point was disinfecting hospital beds. Although bureaucratic minds might view Mohlala's initial employment as generous or unjustified in terms of his formal qualifications, bed disinfection was the negation of everything he had learned and done so far professionally. That he subsequently found a job in a nursing home and worked in the eldercare sector for almost twenty years further indicates that it must have been other than professional reasons why his job contract was not renewed, given the two professions' many similarities. Even though he spoke only positively about the later job, working in eldercare was a step back, not only in terms of income but also of status and responsibilities. Moreover, Mohlala saying he was mobbed out of his first job reminded me of what C.B. had told me about a turning point in his own professional career.

3.6.1 Racist Workplace Experiences during Another ANC Exile

C.B. came to the GDR in 1982, when he was 25 years old. After attending an obligatory 6-month language course, he began an apprenticeship as an agricultural machinist. After half of it was over, he realized that it was not the right profession

³¹⁴ The hospital, situated in Berlin-Lichtenberg, changed its name in 1992 into *Evangelisches Krankenhaus Königin Elisabeth Herzberge*.

for him and that he would rather build, instead, upon his time in Tanzanian exile, where he had worked as an educator for children in the ANC’s Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO).³¹⁵ The GDR (and the ANC) fulfilled his wish, enabling him in the second half of the 1980s to study at Potsdam to become a primary school teacher. The only problem was that his internship took place during reunification, and when the children aged 6 to 10 that he had been previously teaching without any problems suddenly became more aggressive and started to insult him with racist remarks, he decided to quit his studies. Based on the assumption that Mohlala’s career as a hospital nurse might have ended at least partly for the same reasons as C.B.’s career as a teacher, I wonder what has been lost due to all the racism which accompanied German reunification: in C.B.’s case, a committed teacher who would have been the perfect role model of the kind that Germany’s post-migrant society so badly needs in its urban public schools; in Mohlala’s case, an experienced nurse who was used to working resourcefully under conditions as difficult as those in the ANC’s Angolan camps.

3.6.2 A Satisfying Job: Working in a Nursing Home in East Berlin

Mohlala’s remembrance of his second job in the nursing home, also situated in Weißensee and with him as the only Black there, is marked by the friendly relationships he maintained with some of the inhabitants and how much they liked him and his children, who sometimes visited their father at work. He told me of just two troublesome points. During the first ten years of working there, he was treated by some of his colleagues from “the old guard” as a standby worker, whose shift could be changed overnight. He did not articulate the possibility that he was treated like this for racist reasons; and, even if this would have been the case, it changed for the better after the older colleagues retired. As he explained, “after my tenth year of working there it really became nice.” The only other stressful moment he remembered was when the era of digitalization began, and he had to practice computerized (patient) record-keeping at home to keep up with. Beside these two points, however, what he told me about his work in the eldercare facility sounded to me like a very positive and fulfilling stage of his professional life—a successful career that had wondrously brought him from the

³¹⁵ SOMAFCO was an educational institution of the ANC in Tanzania, consisting of primary and secondary schools as well as a day-care center, established with the support of a large variety of foreign donors from all around the world. Its objective was to educate young exiles following the Soweto uprising as well as children of exiles (e.g. Morrow et al 2004).

medical section in the ANC's exile camps to a nursing home in Berlin Weißensee. It only ended a little too early, when he was in his mid-50s, because of an illness.

3.6.3 “For Me, It Was Really a Pity” or What does David Hasselhoff have to do with the ANC's Freedom Charter?

Despite this generally positive assessment of his work experience in reunified Germany, considering Mohlala's life until October 1990, it comes as no surprise that in his narrative the accession of the GDR to the FRG turned out to be disappointing:

For me, it was really a pity. But now, when the Germans, most from the East, were the ones who were looking for . . . like this song, *Looking for Freedom*. People were looking for this, you know, in a society you cannot do good and you cannot do right. There will always be this question of ‘good things are not done for us’ and this and that. But if people are ever really fair with themselves, we have seen these difficulties before that in another system—systems are different—you find yourself facing hard times.

In a way not unusual in Germany, to highlight a certain East German naivety during reunification, Mohlala refers here to the US-American actor and singer David Hasselhoff's famous live performance of the pop song *Looking for Freedom*.³¹⁶ Furthermore, he connects the growing frustration that many East Germans expressed regarding certain aspects of their country's capitalist transformation—including economic hardships and structural domination by West Germans—with the disappointment he was already feeling in 1990, when the majority of the East German electorate voted for the GDR's rapid accession to the FRG. He subsequently drew a comparison between his new and his old country by switching to the transition process undergone by South Africa,³¹⁷ with its ongoing economic problems and corruption, thereby creating a link between the “freedom” in Hasselhoff's song and “freedom” as defined by the ANC in 1955. In this vein, Mohlala reminded me that, in 2015, the year of our interview, the South African government was celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Freedom Charter, during which president Zuma—confronted with corruption allegations himself—emphasized

³¹⁶ Hasselhoff's live performance of the song in Berlin in front of a huge crowd after the opening of the wall in 1989 made it a popular anthem of German reunification, and the song is often used as a means to criticize negative aspects of this transformation.

³¹⁷ The comparison he makes between the East German and South African transition process is interesting because, contrary to Klaas Kunst (see p. 54, n. 49), Mohlala knows from personal experience about the historical links between the GDR and the ANC.

that the economic situation and the sharing of the country’s wealth still needs to be improved. Mohlala’s implicit message was clear: while life in reunified Germany brought some hardships for Easterners, their living conditions have still been much better than in South Africa, where the ANC, against the backdrop of the Soviet Union’s collapse and being put under pressure during the negotiated transition, committed itself to neoliberal capitalism in the 1990s (e.g. Habib/Padayachee 2000). “But now okay, I’m here. People have not learned how to see the outside world. I mean here, in East Germany, the people have not learned to see what is happening in life, what should be done or what should not be done.” This is an interesting statement insofar as Mohlala, though rather implicitly, turns his exile experience into a specific form of knowledge which helps him to deal with the ambiguous situation he has been confronted with since reunification.

3.7 Racism

At this point, I asked Mohlala about racist experiences, and he confirmed that, at least in this respect, former West Berlin is the much more relaxed place for him. While his African friends in the former Western part “are never looking at time,” he does: when he goes to a meeting of their *Verein* (association) *Mayibuye*, for example, the latest he would be out is until 9 pm. In contrast to Blacks who live in the city’s West, Mohlala feels uncomfortable when he returns to his home neighborhood too late and, for reasons of safety, uses his car when it is dark. These security measures are the price he has to pay to continue living in *Weißensee*, a formerly Eastern district. Partridge compares such mobility restrictions put upon Blacks, PoC or asylum claimants in East Germany since 1990—as well as many migrant workers’ forced return to their countries of origin—with the mobility or travel restrictions put upon East Germans before 1990, with the important difference that the latter restrictions “did not expose the less mobile subjects to imminent violence, as is now the case” (2009: 350).

Nevertheless, *Weißensee* has long become Mohlala’s home. He even joked in a typically Berlin way about the reactions of those living in other parts of the city when he tells them where he lives. “Many people say: ‘*Weißensee*, ja?’ I say hey, it’s a trip when you go there. Ja, it’s a trip. It’s a long ride, or distance [from more centrally located areas in Berlin]. But otherwise . . . so many years I’ve stayed here, so I haven’t been terribly troubled.” The only racism in the GDR he explicitly remembered as such began around 1988, when he started to visit his girlfriend in Berlin and regularly had to change the train for a tram at the railway station in Berlin-Lichtenberg, a district which soon turned into a racist hot-spot: “At that time it was starting, the writing on the walls here, *Ausländer raus* [foreigners

out] . . . it didn't fare me well to see such a thing. Or a shout: 'Ausländer raus!' Or [imitating monkey sounds] 'Huhu, Huhu, Huhu'. What's all about this?" For Mohlala, the East German people really did change, and he still has no explanation for it. The only answer left to him is to be careful: "This is how I've tried to train myself, to see a thing that is not so easy, ja? It's not so easy."

3.8 Citizenship and Belonging

Against the backdrop of the GDR's close relationship with the ANC and the FRG's close relationship with the apartheid regime, it seems worthwhile to look more closely at how Mohlala brings up the question of citizenship and belonging in his narrative. To begin with, in 1976, when he went into exile and left the country without legal permission, he had no passport at all: "I was a schoolboy and, at that age and as a Black [person], I was not liable to have a passport without a reason."³¹⁸ In 1984, when he entered the GDR for the first time, he had a provisional travel certificate from Angola with a visa for the GDR, which expired after the end of his medical training in 1988 and his return to Angola. In 1990, when he entered the GDR the second time, he had a new travel certificate, this time from Zambia but, again, with a visa issued by the East German embassy in Angola. Marrying a citizen of the GDR in May 1990 provided him with a residence permit for three years, a time span reduced to only a year (July 1991) following German reunification, because "the new laws were now those of the Federal Republic of Germany." The German *Ausländerbehörde* (Immigration Authority), notorious for its often arbitrary practices with regard to status assignments and recognition of documents, demanded a second document confirming his identity beside his marriage certificate but rejected his Zambian travel document because it had already expired. The conundrums of Seghers' *Transit* narrative arise once again here. Consequently, Mohlala had to get his travel certificate renewed by the Zambian embassy. However, because of the political changes that had been taking place at the same time in South Africa, Mohlala was actually able to apply for a passport and, thus, citizenship from his home country via the South African embassy. Yet again, however, he needed another identity certificate for this bureaucratic act:

³¹⁸ For South Africa's emigration policy during apartheid and its restrictive handling of passports or travel documents, see e.g. Shapiro 2016; for the apartheid-era Pass Laws, see e.g. Savage 1986. Until 1986, Africans from the age of 16 had to carry identity passes under threat of arrest; this internal passport system was implemented to restrict and control the Black populations' movement within the country. For reflection on South Africa's "denationalized" citizenship in the context of the anti-apartheid struggle and exile, see Klug 2000.

this time, an affidavit from his South African relatives. Moreover, exiles such as Mohlala or C.B., who were members of the MK and had been militarily trained, needed to fill out an application for (temporary) immunity, for they were considered as some sort of terrorists. Mohlala recalled in a particularly humorous way how he was finally invited to an interview at the embassy so that the responsible employee could assure himself about Mohlala's true South Africanness:

So, he took me into his office: 'Hi Mac, would you mind joining me for tea?' Yes, it's okay. 'With milk and sugar?' I said: You know, I've been in exile for so long, and the question of milk in my tea I have just done away with, but I drink it with sugar. And I don't want it strong, I want it weak. 'Would you like to have some biscuits?' Ja, I'll have some. 'Aha.' He really wanted to know who I am . . . okay, I played the game. 'Ek is'n Bure . . . but a nice Bure' [in an Afrikaner dialect: I'm a Boer . . . but a nice Boer.] Ah, that's good, that's great. 'Do you go to church?' No, I'm not a church goer. I left church some years back. 'Ah. Do you like Jesus?' Jesus? I don't know him. 'Aha, that's good. Do you know what, Mac? We will write a declaration that you are a South African. I have already noted you are a South African when you wanted your tea weak and without milk.' That was the point! I'm a South African [laughing].³¹⁹

At the end of the 1990s, Mohlala—now in possession of a permanent residence permit from the FRG—asked at the Berlin civil registry service how to obtain German citizenship. He was told that he could apply for it but that he would also have to give up his South African citizenship, because both countries did not support dual citizenship. So he kept his South African citizenship. At the time of our conversation, however, one of his daughters had informed him that the South African side had changed its stance and that dual citizenship was now possible in certain cases. Mohlala then told me about his regular travels to South Africa and the annoying procedures he always has to undergo at the airports. Whereas the South Africans protract his entry because of the airport personnel's confusion about his permanent residence in Germany and his wife passing through different controls (for EU citizens), the Germans make his re-entry an unpleasant experience because of his Blackness:

Female immigration officers are more friendly than male ones, but recently this became better. Passports are now being checked in the first European airport that you enter, which means London, Paris, or Amsterdam. This has made my entry to Germany much more relaxed. Only customs is still giving me problems. I inform them about my wife and she says: 'That's my husband. Now what?' Then they let me go.

³¹⁹ Before Mohlala told this story to me, he had already told it to Thabo Thindi (*Exile Faces*, video interview Asaph Makote Mohlala, min. 27:00–28:00). Both versions are basically the same but differ in details, so I combined them here.

Hearing this, I could not but wonder why he holds on to his South African citizenship. One reason is because it serves as a bond between him and his relatives:

The thing is there are some traditions or the understanding of kinship. So, among South Africans, there is generally no understanding [of me giving up my South African citizenship]. If I would say: Okay, I'm now a citizen of Germany, a Black German, then my South African relatives would ask me, 'How can that be?' It's like 'You're moving away from us'. They'd interpret it as if I'm turning away from them. Only, I'm a . . . Black South African now. But Mohlala—you're coming from Mohlala, you keep your surname or family name, but . . . this means Black Mohlala. For my part, I'm not like that, but at some point it clicks. I still have a faith. I also can't explain that.

3.9 Visiting South Africans, Being a Black German, and Other Economic Issues

Following this insight into his diasporic identity, he told me about a trip he and his wife had taken during their last visit to South Africa, when his uncle led them to the burial ground of his ancestors. Nowadays a privately owned plantation where a white South African plants mango trees, the Mohlala's had been displaced from there long ago. It took his relatives a long time until "the Boer"—Mohlala uses this term exclusively—allowed them to search for the grave and place a tombstone on top of it. Initially, "the Boer" was unfriendly and aggressive but, in the meantime, facilitated by government policies that included a payment of compensation, he became more friendly even though he only speaks Afrikaans with them.

"It's nice being there . . . but when I'm out, I'm now a Black German," is how Mohlala summed up his travels to South Africa. Curiously, he repeatedly used the German declension for "Black German" in its feminine form (*eine schwarze Deutsche*), perhaps because he hears it so often from his daughters. His children and wife are also the main reason why he wants to be buried in Germany, another theme difficult to talk about with his South African kin. It is, therefore, important to him to familiarize his African relatives with his German family. His efforts towards maintaining family contact internationally even prompted one of his distant brothers and sister-in-law to visit them in Weißensee two times. Thanks to the double income Mohlala and his wife had back then, they were able to cover the costs for the flight tickets. A more unpleasant matter was the economic calculus imposed on these family reunions by the German state in the form of an official affidavit of financial support that their African guests needed for a Schengen (EU) visa that Mohlala and his wife had to sign at a German public authority.

Regarding economic issues, it is worth mentioning that having been a part of the organized South African exile system could bring small financial benefits as

well, but receiving them demands a South African bank account. Most of the South African exiles I interviewed mentioned having such an account—a financial arrangement which additionally binds them to their country of origin. Whereas Mohlala only told me about his demobilization from the military’s medical sector—a procedure that brought him some ZAR 20,000 (around \$ 6,500 in the early 1990s), “a very lousy sum of money,” of which he had to ‘lend’ a part to the functionary who gave it to him—C.B. and Jeannette Selby said that they still receive a small pension from the South African state. In this regard, post-apartheid South Africa seems to be acknowledging those who had been banished from its territory, participated in the struggle, and later decided not to resettle there again (figs. 25–28).



Fig. 25: The ANC in exile in the GDR: second and third sitting in the front row (l.-r.) are Arnold and Jeannette Selby, sixth and seventh are Oliver Tambo (on a visit to the GDR) and Anthony Mongalo, who served as the ANC’s ambassador in the GDR at the time. The picture was taken in the 1980s at the ANC’s mission in Pankow, East Berlin, by Eric Singh. This and the following three pictures from the 1980s were given to me by Stanford Moagi (permission granted); Asaph Mohlala is not in these pictures.



Figs. 26–28: Exiled ANC members together with a Palestinian student and their German teacher at a lake; together with other foreign students and East Germans at a skittles evening in Wernigerode; group picture showing them together with other foreign students and their German teachers. All pictures were taken during the same excursion in Wernigerode (permission granted from S. Moagi).

3.10 Conclusion

Mohlala’s life story as a member of the ANC’s armed wing, the MK, can be seen as an example of an African exile’s biography in which the GDR appears to really be the stronghold of international solidarity that it claimed to be: a socialist space on the borders of Western Europe where, after years of privation, a Black South African of humble background could learn a civilian profession, start a family, return to the country, and settle down. But Mohlala’s biography also reveals how much effort it took to reach this state. The kind of political exile he was involved in as well as the GDR’s corresponding migration policies were not really meant for a permanent stay, so who knows what would have happened to him if the German reunification and the fall of South African apartheid had not taken place. Furthermore, his life story illustrates some of the ANC’s inner workings as well as the organization’s global connections from the perspective of a relatively low-ranking member. Meanwhile, his experiences also illuminate the MK’s precarious position within Southern Africa and the role which the Eastern bloc played in supporting it, with Mohlala traveling from South Africa to Tanzania, the Soviet Union, Angola, Denmark and Zambia, making his way to the GDR, with war-torn Angola as the postcolonial space he repeatedly had to return to before eventually making the GDR and, later, a reunified Germany his home.

On the other hand, Mohlala’s memories of Quedlinburg, where the GDR had established one of its centers for the training of foreign students in the medical sector, can enrich and challenge existing scholarly accounts. What becomes obvious from Mohlala’s account, for instance, is the important role which his political organization, the ANC, played for its members being trained in the GDR. Although Mohlala’s memories also point towards some interesting differences between the ANC and SWAPO regarding their respective member’s behavior in exile, his membership in the ANC offered him a relatively safe space within the GDR—never free of tensions or ambiguities and disciplinary by definition but, nevertheless, a space in which it was possible for him to meet his East German wife through interaction between the ANC and the FDJ. Read together with Young-sun Hong’s findings about the training of foreign students in Quedlinburg during the 1960s and 1970s, Mohlala’s biography also demonstrates that, throughout the whole training program’s existence, it was possible for African men to establish romantic relationships with East German women. However, the question remains of how to reconcile Mohlala’s memories with some of Hong’s more critical findings. First, beside relying exclusively on archival sources, Hong covers only the period before the 1980s. It is, thus, likely that her account misses the improvements in the medical training program that occurred, which seem to have led to a higher level of contentment for the students. Second, as a member of the ANC, Mohlala

benefitted from the close relationship between his political organization and the GDR and was able to build on a social network that facilitated his stay there, a dimension which Hong's account does not include.

Ultimately, however, Mohlala's narrative does reveal a certain tendency to downplay the GDR's authoritarian characteristics. For instance, when he talked about the difficulties he and his comrades faced to practice German with native German speakers in their leisure time, he did not question the GDR's practice of separating them from their German peers. The same holds for the restrictions put upon their ability to travel by train or that there was no official body on the East German side—at least none he knew about—which might have helped him to stay with his German girlfriend and newborn child in Berlin, instead of being sent back to Angola by the MK. Yet, by and large, all of this changes little or nothing in the apparently positive impact which the GDR had on his life in exile, which would also seem to explain Mohlala's critical view of the GDR's demise and the ensuing German reunification.

Though my interest in African exile began much earlier, I only learned about Mohlala through watching his interview in *Exile Faces* in 2014, at a time of increasing German media interest in migration from Africa to Europe. Building on a statement made by Thabo Thindi—one of the creators of *Exile Faces*—in the following epilogue I reintroduce Mahoma Mwaungulu and Jeannette Selby—the South African exile whom Jana Simon portrayed as the grandmother of Felix S.—and reconnect to my introductory chapter by reflecting on the self-ascriptions of African exiles and the inherent tensions between the figure of the exile and that of the refugee.

4 Epilogue: African Exiles and the Awkward Figure of the Refugee

Most of the people that I interviewed, actually all of them, did not come on a refugee status, they came as exiles. Which makes it just a terminology difference between the refugee now and then, but you know, the refugee and living in the country as an exile, is just the same. Because you cannot live in your country. And seeing how the people who come here to seek for help, how they are being treated by the government of Germany [. . .] is very sad. And then I could imagine what would have happened to us if the people [who came during the apartheid era] would have had the same treatment, you know we would still fight apartheid today. That's why I think we need to engage more in refugee-related methods to change the situation, to change the politics of the world.

(Thindi 2015)

Thabo Thindi made the above statement in 2015 in an interview about his project *Exile Faces*.³²⁰ Beside making forced displacement and the impossibility of return the core features of both the exile and refugee, Thindi links the exile, as conceived within his project, with a specific configuration of the African refugee, as it appeared in Germany in the 2010s. I have argued at the beginning of this study, in the chapter on the exile, that I would have considered the refugee to be the more appropriate anthropological key figure of mobility, given its seemingly inflated use in the Western media and public discourse during the years following the Arab Spring. Since a good part of my research took place against the backdrop of these specific conjunctures, I want to give an example here of how the Western figure of the African refugee might influence the self-conceptions of those in exile.

4.1 The Berlin Refugee Protests of the 2010s

The refugee of Thindi's formulation came to public awareness in Germany during a series of refugee protests unfolding between 2012 and 2015. Following a nationwide protest march by asylum seekers³²¹ from different parts of the world against

³²⁰ Interview with Thabo Thindi for the podcast *Exile Faces*, afrikakzent 2015, min. 04:10–05:21, <https://www.akzent-tv.de/video/exile-faces/> (accessed 2 October 2023). On its webpage, afrikakzent describes itself as “an African-German association which wants to reach a wider public by creating a multimedia-based sphere for an exchange of views with regard to the cohabitation of Africans and Germans within the German society as well as in Africa.” <https://www.afrikakzent-media.org/> (accessed 2 October 2023).

³²¹ I use the asylum seeker here as synonymous with the refugee.

restrictive laws targeting their rights, groups of refugees begun a hunger strike at the Brandenburg Gate in the German capital's center, erected a protest camp on Oranienplatz—a public square in the culturally diverse district of Kreuzberg—and occupied an empty school building in the same neighborhood. Especially in the latter two events, Black Africans played a prominent role. According to Elena Fontanari (2019), most of them had fled Libya in the aftermath of the Arab Spring and the NATO-supported rebellion against the Gaddafi regime. As a consequence of the changes that these events provoked in Libya—among them a worsening of the living conditions of migrant workers from sub-Saharan Africa, accompanied by increasing anti-Black racism—they crossed the Mediterranean and came to Europe via the Italian island of Lampedusa, where the Italian state issued them travel documents for the Schengen Area. Some of the refugees then traveled to Germany and stayed there for more than three months, thereby challenging the Dublin Regulation, which restricts the movement of refugees within certain European countries and only allows them to claim asylum in the first country of entrance.³²² It is precisely this regulation which explains why the refugee (or migrant) figure of the Black African who clandestinely crosses the Mediterranean under life-threatening and highly adventurous circumstances—a familiar figure in coastal countries such as Spain at least since the early 2000s—was something relatively new to the German public.³²³ Even though Thindi's description does not mention this particular group of Africans explicitly, his ideas must be understood within the context of their sudden presence in Germany and their participation in the Berlin refugee protests.

Oranienplatz in Kreuzberg was occupied in 2012, and beginning in 2013 the number of African refugees coming to Berlin via Italy increased (Fontanari 2016: 147). If Mahoma Mwaungulu, whose transnational political activism turned into a more local engagement for Berlin's African community after his expulsion to the city's West in 1982, would have only lived eight years longer, a brief walk of a few hundred meters from his apartment building to Oranienplatz would have led him directly to the occupier's protest camp. He is also the only exile within my sample whose political activism continued after the global transformations of the 1990s as well as being the only one who underwent the asylum-seeking procedure of the pre-unification FRG. Mwaungulu experienced a form of status insecurity and

³²² For a detailed description of these protests, see Fontanari 2016: 140–151 & 192–231; for the role of the Dublin regulation, see Fontanari 2019: 25–28. The Schengen Area—consisting of most of the EU as well as a few other European countries—is a zone of free movement that in 1985 abolished internal borders between member states.

³²³ To my knowledge, this type of migration from Africa to Europe already started in Spain in the early 1990s, but back then it consisted predominantly of young men from Morocco.

treatment by the West German authorities similar to what the Lampedusa refugees experienced thirty years later. It is thus rather unlikely that he would not have become actively involved with the protesters' demands and precarious situation. Several remarks which he made in the early 2000s on such recent forms of African migration to Europe further suggest this. In addition, the South African exile Jeannette Selby, whom I also interviewed, addressed the 2012 protests directly and commented on them in a particular interesting way, pointing toward certain tensions within the self-ascriptions of African exiles in Germany provoked by the host country's dominant discourse on race and migration. These tensions interest me, because Joanna Tague and Anja Schade both emphasize the significance of self-ascriptions.

4.2 Self- and Foreign Ascriptions: Exile or Refugee?

Just as Tague argues with regard to the Mozambicans in Dar es Salaam, Schade does not ignore the polysemy and ambiguity of the term exile and its often synonymous use with regard to the refugee in work on apartheid-era South African exiles. Given Schade's disciplinary background, it is also important to recall Idesbald Goddeeris' observation with regard to the preferred use of exile among political scientists. Accordingly, Schade problematizes the blurred and often synonymous use of the terms exile and refugee, referring to Bernstein who, in *The Rift*, remarked the following:

Exiles are those who leave with the intention of returning. They have not chosen to emigrate. They do not regard themselves as refugees, although they were so classified by organisations such as the UNHCR and others. Sometimes refugees become exiles. And some exiles, losing the intention of returning and abandoning political involvement, become émigrés. (1994: xii)

Bernstein highlights here the South African exiles' rejection of the term refugee. It is similar to what Doerte Bischoff argues in the European context of the flight from national-socialist Germany, when "many refugees emphatically claimed the term exile for their self-description" (2018: 8, own translation). Following this hierarchical logic of the displaced, Schade decides "to denominate those South Africans as exiles who had to leave South Africa because of their engagement for or membership in an organization which was opposed to apartheid and who continued the political struggle against apartheid from abroad" (2004: 63, own translation). Such a conceptualization sounds convincing but, nevertheless, has its weak points, as the example of Asaph Mohlala has shown, whose political commitment and affiliation with the ANC only began in exile. In a later work, Schade acknowl-

edges the lack of research on the self-conceptions which the South Africans had of themselves during their stay in the ANC camps in the African Frontline States (2018: 190). I emphasize this because Schade continued to reflect on the exile figure in another contribution, within a volume on German exile studies (2018b). In the volume's preface, Bischoff acknowledges the need of younger scholars to inscribe themselves into already established fields of research (2018: 9). But she also problematizes this by mentioning how, in Germany, new research fields on more recent forms of forced migration have been developing without any consideration of already existing analyses from German exile studies; she makes an even stronger argument when she writes that, in the Jewish case, there is no clear line to draw between a *political* exile and a *Jewish* exile (2018: 8). Thus, Bischoff concludes,

more important than establishing supposed strict rules of how to use terms like exile, emigrant, displaced person, asylum seeker, refugee, or migrant is a sensitive, discourse-analytical perspectivation of the contexts in which they are used, also from a historical point of view which additionally describes the corresponding effects of their meaning as well as implicit exclusions, depreciations, and taboos. (2018: 9, own translation)

This argument could just as well be applied to research on African exile. Schade, meanwhile, insists that “exile is in so far a particular form of emigration since in contrast to emigrants who are willing to settle down in the host country, exiles seem to reveal a more pronounced will to return, as well as a more pronounced political, artistic, or intellectual engagement with the conditions of the home country” (Schade 2018b: 26, own translation). Beside such attempts to define exile, Schade raises a further question which I find of particular importance for Western research on African displacement: “Where should the research on exiles be situated—in the national history of a person’s country of origin, or in a person’s country of arrival?” (2018b: 21, own translation). Even though it could be argued that the question is based on a problematic premise, given that “national history” is an ideologically determined construct and not a fixed entity, it implicitly questions certain logics of an institutionalized Western knowledge production which become manifest, for instance, in the relative lack of attention Western academia pays to non-Western histories. Research on African exile (or “Third World” exile in general) mirrors this inequality, just as the West’s implicit equalization of refugees with the “Third World,” as argued by Malkki, mirrors the split between the richer and “the poorer nations” (Prashad 2014).

Within the German context, however, contrasting the figure of the exile with the refugee demands one more clarification. There is the difficulty of translation: the most common German term for the refugee is *Flüchtling*. The exiles I am concerned with know German very well—they are used to this term and sensitive to

its connotations. *Flüchtling* combines the German verb *flüchten* (to flee) and the suffix *-ling* which is used for diminutives. According to Anatol Stefanowitsch, in cases where this suffix is used to denominate persons, the corresponding term easily gets a pejorative connotation (2012).³²⁴ Stefanowitsch also argues that *Flüchtling* refers to the act of fleeing from something, whereas *refugee* refers to someone searching for a place of refuge and, thus, bears a more positive connotation.³²⁵

The Lampedusa refugees who raised their voices during the refugee struggles of the 2010s did not simply affirm a Western way of life. Rather, strongly to the contrary, together with the other refugees and their supporters, “a political discourse was developed around colonialism and the responsibility of Europe” (Fontanari 2016: 204). Instead of simply affirming the Western lifestyle, they accused the West of being co-responsible for their coming to Europe—an argument difficult to dismiss, even just considering NATO’s role in the Libyan civil war. In what follows, I seek to show how the South African Jeannette Selby, against the backdrop of her own exile, initially struggled with these protests and the corresponding figure of the refugee, while the Malawian Mahoma Mwaungulu offers a perspective from which these phenomena can be integrated into a broader history of African displacements.

4.3 Jeannette Selby, the Grand Dame of the South African Exile Community

On a Friday morning in October 2014, I am sitting with Jeannette Selby in her apartment, located in one of Berlin’s quiet and green southwestern districts. She has invited me to breakfast so we continue our conversation about her exile experience. Selby, age 83 at the time of our conversation and widowed since her husband’s death in 2002, entered the GDR in 1961 (figs. 29–30). She was trained there as an English–German interpreter; hence most of our conversations were held in German. In a former meeting, I had tried to conduct a more structured interview which did not really work. Our subsequent conversations, such as the one quoted from below, turned out to be more associative and, sometimes, we both had trouble following each other’s mental leaps. At the same time, Selby’s memories are full of anecdotes whose ambiguous character challenges East–West stereotypes. For instance, she told me how she once defended her dual citizenship from being

³²⁴ <http://www.sprachlog.de/2012/12/01/fluechtlinge-und-gefuechtete/> (accessed 2 October 2023).

³²⁵ It is also because of this connotation that leftist German activists tend to use the term *refugee* or *Geflüchtete* instead of *Flüchtling*, since the refugee struggles rather than passively acts.



Figs. 29 and 30: Jeannette Selby together with her late husband Arnold Selby in the GDR, date unknown; Jeannette Selby, Berlin, April 2019 (permission granted from J. Selby).

revoked by a West German civil servant by mobilizing her East German networks from the GDR era. During the chaotic period of German reunification, Selby—until then stateless—had managed to obtain South African as well as German citizenship, thanks to an East German acquaintance who worked at the local citizen's office in Selby's residential district in former East Berlin.³²⁶ Years later, after Selby had already moved to former West Berlin because of comparatively stronger racism in the city's East, her German passport had to be renewed, but the local citizen's office refused to do so, for Selby had inadvertently answered "yes" to a civil servant's question as to whether she also had a South African passport. But she was able to keep her dual citizenship by, again, asking an East German friend for help and getting her passport renewed at the registration office of an eastern district. Hence, whereas in the western part of the formerly divided city she had been told that "Mandela is free now, you can go back to South Africa," in the eastern part she was welcomed back as an *Ossi*,³²⁷ as she said, and no one asked about her South African citizenship.

In the days before our 2014 conversation took place, the events memorializing the 25th anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall had attracted my attention. I used this occasion to direct our talk towards the GDR and Germany's divided past when Selby, to my great surprise, suddenly switched to talking about the refugee protests:

*Did you witness the memorial celebrations for the fall of the Wall?*³²⁸

Yes, I thought it was dramatic, too. I worked in a company close to the Wall. At that time I still had to learn conversation. When I graduated from university, I was put into this company. That is what the GDR all did for us.

You mean the GDR really provided a full vocational training?

Everything [. . .] and that's why I say what they did with their population was not all right. But we were not sent to the GDR to support the population. We came for learning.

³²⁶ In Germany, all people residing in the country need to register the address where they presently live at the local citizens' office (*Bürgeramt*), repeating the procedure for every change of residence.

³²⁷ *Ossi* is an abbreviation for *Ostdeutsche/r* (East German) which, like its counterpart *Wessi* (for West Germans), is generally used informally and can be considered derogatory or as a sign of solidarity, depending on context and intention/reception.

³²⁸ Conversation with Jeannette Selby on 24 October 2014 in Berlin, conducted in German (own translation).

And you think that this is something which the GDR did in a very positive way, no? Yes. Very [. . .] look at how these people here [. . .] it cannot be that they make claims here. Climbing on top of a house and all this. I do not agree with these refugees.³²⁹ I do not.

Baffled by this criticism of the refugee protests, I asked Selby how she would have expected Germany to handle the matter, arguing that these people were refugees and that some of them had come to Germany via Lampedusa. Her response surprised me even more. She said that she also did not have an answer, and even was afraid to talk about it, but that the refugees should be sent to work in the countryside on the fields. To strengthen her argument, she referred to Heinz Buschkowsky, a former mayor of Berlin-Neukölln, another district with a large migrant community. Buschkowsky had gained a rather dubious popularity through a polemical book titled *Neukölln ist überall* (Neukölln is everywhere) in which he criticized Germany's migration policies. As Selby said, he argued that these policies were misguided because they would turn certain groups of migrants into passive receivers of social welfare, instead of integrating them into the labor market. I answered that I would partially agree with this critique, remembering the case of thousands of stateless Palestinian refugees living in Neukölln for over a decade without being able to obtain a work permit, as I had once heard a local politician complaining at a conference. Selby concurred by recalling again some of her experiences from the GDR:

Exactly! And look at . . . look what's going on there! That wasn't . . . ok, now they can complain and everything, but in this regard the GDR took care of us. And the organizations, as well. Our organizations, the ANC and the (South African) Communist Party, we only sent 100 people here at a time. And they were trained, our army was trained here. I went there and took care of them. I know it! And then they were sent back. Those who had finished their training were sent back . . .

Of course, and there they had to continue fighting . . .

Because there was a law and that's why they left the country. But here . . . every savage³³⁰ comes here. And Africa is . . . for how long are we liberated now? Fifty years! And everyone comes here and says . . . look, Oranienplatz I went in there and looked at what's going on there. I said this can't be true! They . . .

³²⁹ Note that it is Selby and not me who is introducing here the German term *Flüchtlinge* in our conversation.

³³⁰ Selby uses here the German term *Wilde*.

But what would you recommend that these people do? What should they do to improve their situation? What can they do?

I also don't know . . . I don't know.

After having admitted her helplessness in how to deal with the situation, Selby again surprised me by including Western governments in her criticism, saying “the money that was taken from our Africa is many times more than what you have spent on the refugees.” Did she finally remember the radical rhetoric of the anti-apartheid years, I thought? Nonetheless, she continued to doubt the legitimacy of the refugee protests, now arguing that they would lack an organized political structure, thereby again comparing these new refugees with the political exile as she had experienced it herself almost half a century ago. That the current protests were on fragile ground and the refugees faced a rather precarious future was true, of course. Considering her feasible objections, I told Selby about some of the events which the protesters had organized with the help of their supporters. I was becoming emotionally more involved, starting to speak faster and with more insistence to convince her of my opinion. I argued that, with the Dublin Regulation, it was almost impossible for people from a country like Mali to get into a situation where they could apply for asylum in Germany, because they generally did not come directly to Germany via airplane. Selby then asked why the refugees did not want to build up something in their countries, a question which I countered with the need for corresponding infrastructures in their home countries and the rather vague argument of neocolonial structures. This last point I made via a reference to the time she spent in Ghana—which she commented on as having been wonderful³³¹—and the book *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, which Kwame Nkrumah, then still the Ghanaian president, published in 1965, only a few years after her stay in Accra. Still unconvinced, she dryly commented that Nkrumah wrote it “back then,” as if his analysis was completely outdated.³³² In search of a better example, I turned to her home country and the Marikana massacre where, following a strike for a wage increase at a platinum

331 Jana Simon's account of Selby's exile in Accra stands in stark contrast to the brief and exuberant positive way Selby refers to it here during our conversation; according to Simon, Selby even attempted to commit suicide during her time in Ghana (Simon 2011: 154–157, here p. 156).

332 For a recent discussion of the term “neocolonialism,” which argues for “global capitalism” as the more proper concept to describe the economic entanglements of today, see Hirschhausen/Kreienbaum 2019. However, “global capitalism” neglects the crucial role which Western colonialism historically played in globalizing capitalism.

mine of the British Lonmin company in 2012, more than 30 strikers were eventually shot by South African police forces.³³³

And the situation in South Africa? With Marikana, of which you also talked about? What are the reasons? I mean, it seems very . . .

Well, Marikana was really terrible . . . because the police went out again, and it was Black policemen who shot Black miners.

*Yes. The Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin showed a documentary about it; it was really dramatic, I thought . . .*³³⁴

Yes, yes.

. . . it also showed the previous communication between company representatives in London, the South African government, and the police, reconstructed by the film makers. It seems that there were indeed orders to take violent action against the miners, even though they already wanted to give up. It also reveals economic background information which, if it is true, lays bare how international economic policies influence such events.

But . . . moreover, these – two thirds, I think. No . . . I don't know anymore if it was one or two thirds—a huge part of these workers were foreigners. They were from Zimbabwe and Malawi and all these countries.³³⁵ They came to this place! And they have . . . the women, you know, there is such a mess going on there again. Because there was also no real . . . there is also no real . . . [she searched for the right word, sounding thoughtful and affected]

. . . also no good admission policy towards the migrants, true?

They weren't. South Africa was not able to. They weren't able because . . . Mandela committed a mistake. Mandela, when he came out of prison, said we open the door. Because the Africans had taken us all in.

Of course, they have helped you.

333 The event led to a public debate and an official inquiry. Lonmin's largest customer is the German company BASF.

334 Deasai, Rehad: *Miners shot down*. Uhuru Productions 2014. <https://www.minersshotdown.co.za/> (accessed 2 October 2023). For the event in the *Haus der Kulturen der Welt* during which the movie was screened, see p. 71, n. 73.

335 It seems that Selby confuses here historical labor migration to South African mines from other African countries, such as Malawi, with the concrete situation at Marikana. According to Micah Reddy (2013), all of the killed miners in Marikana were indeed migrants but mostly internal ones from Pondoland.

They have not helped us! That's not true!

But there were camps in Angola, or Zambia . . .

No, no. That's not true, that's not true.

How was it? Well . . .

In Angola weren't South Africans, there were Namibians.

*Ok. But what about the ANC camps? There were some camps.*³³⁶

We had camps in Tanzania, they gave us a lot of support. Nyerere gave us a lot of support. Mozambique gave us a lot of support.

There were camps, as well?

Yes, yes. We had a huge camp there. I was there!

It means that there was also support from other African countries.

But not the group which is here now. From Congo, the Congolese, the Ghanaians—Ghana did . . . only those who were sent there by the ANC. But these were not flows of refugees. They wanted . . . they didn't want to leave. Only when the Soweto uprising occurred, the young ones, the students and so on, then came a batch of young people out of South Africa. But the ANC was there to collect and support them.

Where did they take them to? To the military camps, meaning Angola, Mozambique? No, not Angola, Mozambique and Tanzania, you said.

Yes, they all came there . . .

And to the GDR . . .

. . . and then they were in Zambia. Zambia—Kaunda also gave us a lot of support. *And now . . . what do you think, why are all these migrants coming to South Africa?*

Because they are in search of a better life!

³³⁶ Selby forgets here about the important role which Angola played as a training ground for MK cadres like Asaph Mohlala. Maren Saeboe writes that, when “close to thirty thousand MK soldiers were registered for integration and demobilisation back in South Africa in 1992 [. . .], the majority of these must have been trained in MK's main training ground, Angola” (2002: 190–191). However, it is possible that Selby jumps over this period because, in 1989, the MK had to leave Angola, as a consequence of the Namibia agreement which ended the South African-Angolan war (see p. 224).

Taken together, these parts of our conversation contain several noteworthy aspects. Selby, a warm-hearted and empathic person, is not an academically trained political activist or an organic intellectual in the Gramscian sense. Instead, she became engaged with politics as a young, ‘coloured’ woman through a romantic relationship with an older white communist—a relationship which roped her into the anti-apartheid struggle. Together with her daughter, who was still a child at the time, the relationship caused her to end up in exile, sustained by the ANC/SACP’s transnational networks. In other words, it was not solely genuine engagement with politics but also an emotional commitment which drew her into the struggle, providing her future husband with the necessary care and affection the latter needed to pursue his political objectives. This is in no way meant to devalorize her later political work and development of political consciousness or put into question her right to distinguish between historically specific forms of African migration, as she is doing here. But it helps to better understand how she came to make such a distinction.

It is against the backdrop of her specific experiences as a formerly exiled member of the ANC that she tried to draw a clear line between organized political exile during the era of decolonization, on the one hand, and the more recent forms of African migration to Europe—here in one of its most precarious manifestations via the Mediterranean route—on the other. But organized political exile during decolonization could just as well be understood as another variation within a centuries long history of African displacements provoked by Africa’s encounter with the West, at least if one follows Carpenter and Lawrance’s arguments regarding *Africans in exile*. Such a perspective would enable us to put the more recent African migrations and the corresponding refugee protests in a more affirmative relationship with the exiles of the decolonization and Cold War eras than Selby seemed to be allowing. At one point, she even argued that the contemporary migrants (or refugees) should stay in their countries and help develop instead of leaving them, thus ignoring that there might be good reasons for these young Africans to search for a better life abroad, even though there was no racist white regime in their home country oppressing them, as was the case in South Africa.

Selby is a former exile who has lived for several decades in Germany, first in the East and then following reunification. That she jumped from my question about the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall to her life in the GDR, praising the educational opportunities which the socialist state offered to her, and then immediately connecting it with the refugee protests, implies that she was seriously concerned about the refugee’s situation. Moreover, she analogized her own situation as an exile in the GDR with the situation of these refugees. In search of an answer, however, some of her spontaneous arguments echoed Germany’s broader public discourse on migration of the time, expressing a general

discomfort with the refugees' protests and criticizing the refugees for daring to make demands toward the German government. Her emphasis on being hesitant to talk about it recalled the popular argument made by proponents of a more restrictive immigration policy that it is almost impossible to raise problematic issues such as crimes committed by migrants because of a liberal hegemony within the media and politics. Unaware of the EU's immigration policies and the FRG or Italy's corresponding laws, but also seemingly unconcerned about the Libyan war or the structural problems of many African countries, she contrasted the GDR's migration politics, the East German treatment of the ANC exiles and the latter's discipline with the protesting refugees' disobedience and Buschkowsky's provocative arguments about migrants and their descendants in Berlin-Neukölln.

To me, during the interview Selby's arguments sounded as if she was showing no solidarity at all with the refugees, which, given my involvement with and support for them, of course upset me. I could not counter her arguments without becoming emotionally charged and politically opinionated. Knowing her own exile biography, I expected Selby to be aware of the historical and structural processes that I thought were indispensable for understanding the then current wave of migration. How was it possible that her long commitment to the ANC did not provide her with such a knowledge, I thought? Was I totally misguided by my academically achieved point of view? She even justified her criticism by referring in an affirmative way to some of the GDR's restrictive practices towards migrants, such as making it almost impossible to turn a temporary stay into permanent residence status. The same with her referring uncritically to Buschkowsky. But what about her own decades-long stay in the GDR and the FRG as well as the double citizenship as a German and a South African she finally achieved? Why did she not consider it a privilege to be a citizen of both Europe and Africa's economically strongest countries? And why did she put so much emphasis on the national backgrounds of these refugees when the broader German public typically just considered them to be some miserable Blacks from some failed African states? Did I seem to be reproducing a Eurocentric image of Africa by neglecting to seek out any deeper significance in refugees' national origins? Hence, our dialogue seemed to mirror some of the frictions between the refugee protesters from Oranienplatz and their white European supporters with regard to their different educational and social backgrounds, as described by Fontanari (2016: 204).

Our lively conversation continued, during which we talked about Afrikaans and its ambiguity, which language she uses in South Africa when she visits her family, and which language she feels most secure in: English or German?

Now I feel again more secure in English. Much more!

Better than German?

Yes. No, I don't know. German and English is . . . recently I was sitting in the train and some people were talking. Then one of them asked me which language I speak . . . she was an Iranian, she thought I am Persian . . . then we befriended. I said: No, I'm not an Iranian, I'm also not a Persian, I'm also not a Turk, I'm also no Sy . . . [laughing] What are you then? I say: I'm South African. Ah, nonsense, she said . . . Recently someone [else] said to me in the train: Why do you speak such good German? You are also a refugee. I say: I'm not a refugee and have never been one.

By this point, I seemed to understand her better. In spite of having been a part of the (South) African political exile, and in spite of having become a German citizen, Selby can still be instantly and mistakenly marked as a refugee—even after more than half a century of living in Germany and even within a population as diverse as Berlin's. The interest of a scholar such as myself in her exile biography is only the other side of the coin. Not only did she experience a very different (East) German migration regime and host society, while also taking part in a concrete political struggle, but she must have also experienced the fallouts of the German discourse on African refugees and unwanted migrants in a very different way than myself as well—as a form of being increasingly labelled or stigmatized by others. Why should she be outright sympathetic with Africans whose presence and actions had been fueling a public debate which made unknown passengers in a subway train remind her of being different?

4.4 A Matter of Lived Experience? Mwaungulu on Clandestine South-North-migration

But let us change the time and subjects of conversation and end this epilogue by looking at how Mwaungulu thought about South–North migrations comparable to those which would later result in the refugee protests. In 2003, the German journalist Renate Schönfelder interviewed the more than 70-year-old Mwaungulu for a public radio station (see p. 87). Asked by Schönfelder about what motivated him to work with younger African migrants in Berlin, Mwaungulu answered as follows:

No, this is a motive which for us . . . a motive which for me is very important because it is exactly how I grew up: we need to continue raising the consciousness of our youth. That was the motive. The other thing—of course I realize that Africans are now coming here not because of political reasons but due to economic reasons in Africa. They don't know the lan-

guage [i.e., German] and they need to learn and so on, and my motive has been to raise a new consciousness among the Africans so that we can continue the struggle. We think that we have had independence only on paper, but now, in the new millennium, we need to continue the struggle for Africa's real development, for the real human dignity of Africans. And we think about pan-Africanism, with African unity, what Europe stole from us, already back in the time of Nkrumah we wanted to start with unity. But then we realized: No, this is utopian. Now we are doing it by ourselves—I don't know if this is also utopian in Europe. This is something I feel very bitter about, when I think about the past . . . but as long as I live we will continue to struggle so that all people can live in peace together. We have to live together as humans, also with the Africans here. What we need is for these people to be treated with dignity and respect here, despite all the difficulties in Africa. We want to see that they are integrated into this society here. Language plays a significant role in this process. But we are not only teaching the language. We also put on a lot of events on the current problems not only in Africa but also here, because they are a part of this society. It is not only a problem of the racism of the skinheads³³⁷ but also [problems among] our people, some of whom are doing negative things here sometimes. This is also something which we want to correct so that the people in Berlin can live well together. (Schönfelder 2003, own translation)

Mwaungulu had spent the late 1950s in Ghana and the mid 1960s in Tanzania—the years in which the two countries replaced each other as the political centers of African decolonization. Moreover, his life in exile provided him only with citizenship from Malawi, a country which according to Western standards ranks among the world's poorest and even inspired a critical essay on ideas of poverty in *A Companion to Moral Anthropology* (Englund 2012: 283–301). His specific experiences provided Mwaungulu with a perspective on African displacements in the *longue durée* that problematizes the notions of independence and national sovereignty; meanwhile, from a South African exile's perspective such as Selby's, questioning the sovereignty of African nation-states is much more difficult, given South Africa's longer history and stronger performance as a national unit. Likewise, Mwaungulu calls for pan-African unity from within the African diaspora in Europe, even though he admits that this might be just as utopian as it was in the Africa of the late 1950s and 1960s. His vision, however, includes younger generations of Africans migrating to Europe, during the 1990s and 2000s, while admitting individual misbehavior by some of them within a German host society that never asked them to come. In Mwaungulu's eyes, these unwanted Africans left behind fragile states whose postcolonial development turned out not to be real,

337 Mwaungulu, who fell victim to racist attacks by Germans on three different occasions (the first time in the GDR, the other two times immediately after reunification), emphasizes this term.

and one could rightfully add the Africans from the refugee protests of the 2010s to this group. Just like their forerunners, they are living testimonies to decolonization's insufficient outcomes and have continued to trod the routes which their elders, such as Mwaungulu, Selby and Mohlala, have traveled before them—only the countries of origin of today's newcomers are formally independent, whereas those of their predecessors were not or, as was the case with South Africa, were ruled by apartheid.

5 Conclusions: Post-revolutionary Spaces in Search of Approval

What are we to make of the exile biographies portrayed in the foregoing thesis? One answer can be found in a discussion between the Black East German scholar Peggy Piesche and the Black South African artist Thabo Thindi, held on one of the rare occasions when the anticolonial policy of the GDR was publicly debated in the formerly Western part of Germany.³³⁸ The discussion was about Thindi's biographical interview documentary *Exile Faces*, which includes interviews with Eric Singh, Jeannette Selby and Asaph Mohlala, ANC members who lived in exile in the GDR and whom I have featured to varying degrees in this study. Arguing that the majority of South Africa's Black people still faced the same kind of structural poverty and oppression as during apartheid—poignantly adding that most of them would always be “slaves to muscle”—Thindi asked when Western nations would stop extracting minerals from African countries for almost nothing except “this crazy thing that they call *Entwicklungshilfe* or *Entwicklungszusammenarbeit*” (development aid or development cooperation).³³⁹ Piesche, a trained literary scholar and cultural scientist, hesitated a moment before responding to Thindi's rhetorical question by proposing that, in his biographical interviews, all conducted in Germany more than two decades after reunification, “a post-revolutionary space unfolds that is seeking approval from a world which actually held it back to achieve this moment.”³⁴⁰

The world Piesche is speaking of here is the postsocialist world that emerged after the Soviet Union's collapse and the triumph of global capitalism or—more precisely narrowed down to the setting of my study—the newly re-formed FRG, a Western capitalist state that incorporated its Eastern state socialist counterpart, the self-dissolving GDR, through democratic elections. Put differently, these exiles, triggered by the negative effects of Western colonialism and attracted by international communism, passed from the so-called Third World through a geopolitical sphere called the Second World, intended as a corrective to the capitalist and racialized political economy that the West or the First World's colonial expansion had created. With the GDR's dissolution and German reunification, however, all of these

338 *Artist Talk: Thabo Thindi in conversation with Peggy Piesche: “Exile Faces” – South Africa and the GDR.* Part of the programme of the exhibition *Things Fall Apart*, Iwalewahaus, University Bayreuth, 26 May 2016, Evening Session, 7–10 pm (see p. 2, n. 1).

339 *Artist Talk: Thabo Thindi in conversation with Peggy Piesche*, 01:07:45–1:09:43 (own transcription).

340 *Artist Talk: Thabo Thindi in conversation with Peggy Piesche*, 01:09:45–01:10:13.

exiles ended up in the FRG, one of the core countries of that very same political-economic system, thereby creating the post-revolutionary space in search of approval that Piesche is speaking of. This remains an exilic space, for the dominant part of the world in which it unfolds has done everything possible to thwart any serious effort to rid the global economy of its colonial and racist legacy. Curiously, the exile experience of the Malawian Mahoma Mwaungulu, whose life story has acted as the empirical core of this study, already anticipates this space in 1982, when he was expelled to the FRG, which had supported the anti-communist dictatorship of Hastings Banda in Malawi that had forced Mwaungulu into exile, while the GDR, breaking off its relations with a Malawian exile movement but continuing its support for the South African ANC and the Namibian SWAPO, still existed.

Piesche's response also foreshadows another finding of my analysis of Mwaungulu's life story: even in his particular case—that of an African exile who was expelled to the West, i.e. the old FRG—the prevailing picture of the GDR appears to be more that of a decolonial space of possibilities than that of a racist space of limitations, which the GDR of course also was, as Mwaungulu's experiences confirm as well. The fragmentary picture of the GDR as a decolonial space of possibilities, however, is strengthened by Asaph Mohlala's account, even though Mwaungulu's account is more critical of the GDR than Mohlala's. After all, Mwaungulu—and the example of his home country of Malawi, which went from being a vanguard African state to a reactionary one, seems to support this—had his reasons for believing that decolonization, if it was to have more than symbolic meaning, was an endeavor necessarily directed against the political economy of the West. How could the FRG, this “radically economic state” whose very root “is precisely economic” and in which “continuous economic growth will take over from a malfunctioning history” (Foucault 2008: 86), approve the struggles of these exiles without denying its very own *raison d'être*?³⁴¹ Possibly only insofar as those struggles have remained incomplete: Malawi continues to make it to the top of Western rankings of extreme poverty, while South Africa, despite its much higher degree of industrialization, continues to struggle with extreme levels of poverty and social inequality, still along racial lines. From this perspective, it even makes sense that the GDR's expulsion of Mwaungulu and the latter's claim for asylum in the FRG turned Mwaungulu into one of Paul Tabori's hardcore exiles: “the men and women who

341 While discussing the West German project of nation building and national identity, Nitzan Shoshan (2016: 14) uses this quote from Michel Foucault's 1979 lecture on neoliberal capitalism in his ethnography on right-wing extremism in East Berlin after German reunification. On the fundamental opposition of various white neoliberal thinkers to international projects that sought to reshape the global economy in favor of the global South, such as the New International Economic Order, and on the explicit racism of some of these thinkers, see Slobodian (2018).

remain at the bottom of the ladder,” where they are “legally, economically, and psychologically” (1972: 29) set apart during the arduous process of whether or not to be granted asylum. The underlying lesson is that the political economy of the West must not be touched.

I began this study with a longish chapter titled “Exiles,” wherein I reflected on the figure of the exile, which always invokes that of the refugee too. I discussed exile as a key anthropological figure of mobility, as proposed by Andreas Hackl, moved on to exile in its African manifestation as well as referencing reflections on exile from African intellectuals, and performed a close reading of the German post-reunification literature on the South African exile community in the GDR, the most prominent case of African exile there. My principal findings are that anthropologists tend to use exile in a highly metaphorical sense, whereas political scientists hold on to stricter definitions that focus on exiles who remain actively engaged with the politics of their homelands. The figure of the African exile in Eastern bloc countries, almost unheard of in the West but spotlighted throughout this dissertation, stands in utmost contrast to a figure through which the West promoted its own moral superiority and which played a formative role for the Western understanding of the refugee during much of the Cold War: that of the white Eastern European dissident who fled communist repression and sought asylum in the democratic, white-dominated West. Beginning in the 1980s, this refugee figure was replaced in the Western imagination by that of the Third World refugee, a figure depicted in the form of a dark and anonymous collective desperately seeking entrance to the world’s most prosperous areas. This genealogy makes it all the more difficult in Western thinking to imagine Africans living in exile in the Eastern bloc; for the latter had never been able to keep pace with the more sophisticated and resource-intensive lifestyles of the Western world and would, therefore, not be considered as attractive for those seeking not only political freedom but also a better life in exile.

German exile studies, a marginal but inspiring research field still looking for a way to enter into dialogue with migration studies, has focused almost exclusively on Jewish and German exile during the era of National Socialism, thus narrowly determining the concept of exile in German academia to a certain extent. I am reminded of this exile by the observation made by the East German diplomatic couple Ilona and Hans-Georg Schleicher that returnees—mostly former members of the anti-fascist, communist resistance against National Socialism, among them also Jews—played important roles in the GDR’s Africa and solidarity policies. In Western humanities more generally, but particularly in literary and cultural studies, the so-called mobility turn, together with a rather selective reading of Edward Said’s writings on exile, have facilitated an aestheticization and depoliticization of exile, while Western studies on the African diaspora, with its strong focus on the Black

Atlantic, have only paid little attention to the Second World as another promising site of inquiry. Christopher J. Lee's reissuing of Alex la Guma's propagandistic travel account *A Soviet Journey*, a lesser known work by this communist South African writer and ANC member, offers some new perspectives here. Studies on exiled Southern African liberation movements, on the other hand, often invoke the Eastern bloc as a space closely linked to social advancement, where members of these movements were able to study at universities or take advantage of other forms of higher education that would otherwise have been nearly impossible for them to achieve in their countries of origin. Suggesting a rather positive image of African exile in the Cold War's East, the case of the South African ANC is particularly revealing, for the close alliance between the ANC and the South African Communist Party as well as the generous support offered by the Soviet Union and its allies, intimately links one of the most important struggles for Black liberation in the twentieth century to international communism.

My analysis of African writings on exile, exemplified through essays by Paul Zeleza and Es'kia Mphahlele, has revealed that many of the contradictions and paradoxes in the concept of exile characteristic of the Western discourse also exist within its African branch. Moreover, the significance that the nation state has for the modern understanding of exile, be it in its European or postcolonial African forms, can hardly be overestimated. Interestingly, despite the fact that Zeleza mentions Alex La Guma or that Mphahlele delineates an African discourse of exile that becomes more economic the further it penetrates the south of the continent, even in these writings of two outstanding African intellectuals the exile of Africans in Eastern bloc countries is mentioned only in passing. This points to the implicit Western focus that underlies a good part of international knowledge production. Through my close reading of German post-reunification literature on the South African exile community in the GDR and a brief sketch of how a migrant artist's project on this topic came to be, I have in turn analyzed why this type of exile has not gained greater attention in academia and the German public sphere at large. In doing so, I have tried to raise awareness about the subtle logics that influence German scholarship on the GDR to this day, such as the striking underrepresentation of East Germans in the academy, the difficulty of finding funding when a research project on the GDR does not focus on its dictatorial aspects, and an implicit Eurocentrism, methodological nationalism and anti-communist bias towards the GDR that easily motivates scholars and students alike to interpret any relations between the GDR and Africa in predominantly negative terms. The scarcity of literature and art projects that have emerged until now on the South African exile in the GDR—the scholarly work of Anja Schade and Thindi's *Exile Faces* stand out in this context—point towards an outsider discourse initiated by white and Black East Germans, predominantly Black South Africans and Black West

Germans, with me as a white West German being an exception to this rule. In this vein, the historian Patrice G. Poutrus has rightly noted a conspicuous reluctance on the part of German scholars after 1990 to research the relatively small group of exiles (or political emigrants) who lived in the GDR, regardless of the country or continent from which these exiles came, because studies on this group might provide a more positive or at least different picture of the much-maligned state-socialist East Germany than studies on larger and less-privileged groups of foreigners who lived there, such as African and Asian labor migrants, usually do.

Following this mixture of outlining the discursive setting and examining the current state of research came the extensive empirical chapter “Mahoma Mwaungulu: ethnography of an intra-German expulsion.” Mwaungulu, the first African exile from the GDR whom I had personally met, inspired in me a great interest in the topic that eventually became the focus of the years of research that have culminated in the present thesis. At the beginning of the chapter, I used an ethnographic vignette of my fieldwork, juxtaposing two audiovisual testimonies of Mwaungulu’s life in the divided Germany—a documentary from West Berlin by the African-American cultural worker and community activist Donald M. Griffith and a TV movie from the GDR based on a short story by the Jewish returnee and communist author Hedda Zinner. I underlined the posthumous character of my biographical research on Mwaungulu as well as my live encounter with him in 2002 in Berlin: Mwaungulu passed away in 2004, while I only commenced my research in 2007. Hence, whereas biographical research in anthropology typically builds on close interaction between the researcher and the researched individual and highlights the collaborative process of the life story interview—often at the expense of the global-historical structure—my approach differs in that I never conducted such an interview with Mwaungulu. Instead, I found several life story interviews that others had conducted with him, while I only personally interviewed some of his family members and friends.

Mwaungulu was born in 1932 of Malawian parents in Tanzania during the colonial era. He then lived in Malawi and Uganda before crossing the African continent in 1953 to Ghana, from where he departed to the GDR in 1960. Later on, having returned to independent Malawi in 1964 only to be forced into Tanzanian exile, he spent half a year in Cuba before returning in 1967 from Tanzania to the GDR. In 1982, the GDR authorities expelled him to West Berlin, where the two of us met three decades later. Such a global setting makes posthumous biographical research a true challenge. First, I collected a variety of archival sources that I found on Mwaungulu and his political party, the exiled opposition movement The Socialist League of Malawi (Lesoma), in German and Russian archives. Second, I supplemented these sources with movies, newspaper articles, book extracts, liter-

ature discussions and the various interviews that I conducted with Mwaungulu's friends and East German family members as well as interviews that former Lesoma members in Malawi had conducted with each other. In addition, I attended as many public events that dealt with the life of Africans and other People of Color in the GDR as I could find, or—as in the case of the discussion between Piesche and Thindi mentioned at the beginning, which I could not attend in person—asked the organizers to record the event and provide me with audio files. My principal idea was to create a thick and multivocal ethnographic account of Mwaungulu's life and transnational network as well as the particular setting he was living in as an African exile, based on such a variety of sources that a multitude of different narrative levels and perspectives would emerge. The original life story interviews, all structured chronologically, served me as a thread for my writing, while the heterogeneous body of literature that I researched gave me an idea of the unknown places and past events Mwaungulu had talked about in his interviews. Given that I neither traveled to Malawi nor any other African country for my research, this method sometimes made me feel like an odd armchair anthropologist. Nevertheless, it seems to have worked quite well, although it required a quite a lot of research effort—and a bit of luck, too.

For instance, when a friend recommended to me a new book on Ghana's foreign policies during the Nkrumah period, I found therein references to two files from the George Padmore Research Library in Ghana that mention Mwaungulu as a candidate for study in the GDR. Mwaungulu had worked in Padmore's Bureau of African Affairs in Accra and said in one of his interviews that he had received his scholarship to study in the GDR precisely through this bureau. These Ghanaian files were, in fact, the missing link I needed to verify a connection between the Caribbean pan-Africanist Padmore and the GDR, something I had searched for in vain in German archives. Mwaungulu's mentioning of Padmore in his life story interviews had already led me to Padmore's political work for the Comintern in Hamburg during the Weimar Republic, hence supporting my argument that the GDR's solidarity policies must be understood in the context of earlier expressions of anticolonial communism in Germany and elsewhere. Likewise, it was rather coincidental that at the time I found funding—thanks largely to my physical disability—and was able to work in earnest on this study, two former members of Lesoma published *Malawi's Lost Years*, a book about the Malawian exile community provoked by the Banda dictatorship and conceived initially to become a book about Lesoma's history. The latter was a task I was similarly working on, after I had found old party documents and letters from party members in Mwaungulu's private estate. When I informed the two authors of *Malawi's Lost Years* about my project, they provided me with several unpublished interviews of former Lesoma members that gave me a Malawian perspective on the political

history that had shaped Mwaungulu's exile. Moreover, the publication of *Malawi's Lost Years*, however marginal its reception, indicated a Malawian interest in the resistance against the Banda dictatorship. I saw this as further confirmation of the relevance of my research on Mwaungulu, just as I saw Thindi's *Exile Faces* as further justification for including exile biographies from South Africa to my study, which add a comparative perspective to Mwaungulu's life story.

This comparative perspective is important for several reasons. First, the histories of Malawi and South Africa are closely linked, due to strong labor migration from Malawi to South Africa and the good relationship between the Banda regime and apartheid South Africa. Second, the much more numerous and prominent exile of South Africans in the GDR superimposed itself on the rather singular case of Mwaungulu, who was sometimes even presented in the GDR as a South African. Third, taken on its own, Mwaungulu's life story is of course not sufficient to understand African exile in the GDR in all its ramifications; nor is the inclusion of South Africans like Asaph Mohlala or Jeannette Selby sufficient to do so. However, one of the aspects that makes Mwaungulu's life story so thought-provoking is his expulsion from the GDR, which blocks any teleological account of socialist solidarity. The latter is a tendency against which at least some approaches that deal exclusively with the exile of South Africans in the GDR may be less immune, as my analysis in the "Exiles" chapter has shown. On the other hand, while Mwaungulu's expulsion may thus be beneficial when (re)considering African exile in the GDR, it can easily be instrumentalized and taken as evidence of the GDR's alleged hypocrisy toward Africa, thereby confirming preconceived notions without bothering to look more closely. Hence the importance of adding alternative narratives such as Mohlala's, which gives testimony regarding what was arguably one of the most important and consistent forms of East German solidarity with an African exile movement.

Correspondingly, Mwaungulu's life story has much more to teach us about the GDR than only the obvious fact that a stateless exile, regardless of whether he was Black and from Africa or not, could simply be expelled at the whim of the socialist regime, despite his ongoing support for the cause of socialism. What makes his story so unique is what we learn about his background and what motivated him to study in the GDR. We learn about his thirst for education, which challenged the British colonial school system and led him to the GDR via Uganda and Ghana, or about his participation in the struggle against the Central African Federation, a key moment in African decolonization. Or that he represented the Malawian independence movement during the heyday of pan-Africanism in Ghana, where he was taught by Kwame Nkrumah and worked with George Padmore, two key figures of decolonization. Or that he came to one of the GDR's internationalist hot spots, Leipzig, with the first wave of African student migration, married an East German and

achieved extraordinary German language skills while graduating in political economy to help build up a non-capitalist economy in Malawi—for he understood very well the crucial role that colonial exploitation has played in Western capitalist development. Or that he experienced Malawi's transformation into a pro-Western dictatorship at first hand, lived in a Tanzanian refugee camp and later returned to the GDR's capital, East Berlin, as a stateless exile. Or that he and his wife had three East German children and that he lived in the GDR for almost two decades, during the first years of which he held a high position in the UASA—the self-organized Union of African Students and Workers in the GDR—and, over the years that followed, socialized with many other Africans in the GDR, among them South African exiles. Or that he worked in such different fields as writing a dissertation at the Hochschule für Ökonomie Bruno Leuschner, the GDR's most prestigious university of economics; acting in the East German film business; teaching Marxism-Leninism at the College of Solidarity; and interpreting for a Christian missionary church at a time when the GDR authorities had already abandoned him and his original political cause: the struggle against the Banda regime. All this adds to the variety of detailed insights into *why* an African freedom fighter would be attracted by international communism and how he came to live in exile in the GDR.

That Mwaungulu also served as the representative of Lesoma—a Malawian exile movement whose struggle did not fit into the GDR's solidarity policies due to its hopelessness and, therefore, did not receive official support, although Mwaungulu still managed to organize some support from the GDR's solidarity committee—adds another international level to these engagements, one that most likely sealed his later expulsion. Parallel to the insights accumulated during his everyday life in the GDR, this transnational level of political activism constantly reminds us of what was going on in Southern Africa and Malawi and, thus, of the main reasons for his exile. Hence my decision to break up the structural narrative of his life story by including two relatively long digressions on Lesoma's history as well as on Mwaungulu's almost completed dissertation, *Problems and Perspectives of Malawi's Industrial Development*. Both offer ways to widen the focus of this work and engage seriously with the postcolonial history of a country that was ruled for four decades by a dictatorship, received a considerable amount of West German development aid—including military training—but of whose existence many Germans do not even know. The subchapter on Lesoma reconstructs the previously untold story of a crucial part of the politically organized exile community provoked by this dictatorship, thereby revealing a crucial aspect of Malawi's postcolonial history that is, for instance, missing in Kings M. Phiri's otherwise insightful study of the country's ambiguous role during the liberation struggles in neighboring Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Meanwhile, reconstructing the story of Lesoma through Mwaungulu's exile archive inscribes a larger collective dimension regarding Malawi's then deter-

ritorialized opposition into the broader field of African socialisms and national liberation movements in Southern Africa, a research field from which Malawi has thus far been excluded.

In the subchapter on Mwaungulu's dissertation, in turn, I have argued that some scholarly works written by Africans in the GDR should be read in the context of other radical Black thinkers, such as the Guyanese Walter Rodney, and Western Marxist schools of thought, including dependency theory. These thinkers and schools of thought are heavily marginalized in German scholarship and only rarely considered by German scholars when discussing the GDR's Africa policies. Hence, reading Mwaungulu's dissertation in this context helps to deprovincialize dominant forms of (West) German thinking about the GDR through highlighting the continuing relevance of a "political economic critique in the theorizing of the global Black condition" (Burden-Stelly 2017: 216), meaning especially the theorizing of anti-Black racism. Another important aspect that I have discussed in this subchapter is the ongoing debate in historical science about how to evaluate Malawi's close relationship with apartheid South Africa, a topic to which Mwaungulu devoted several pages in his dissertation.

Mwaungulu's increasing problems with alcoholism and abusive behavior towards his wife, together with exhibiting other symptoms of what some East German officials called the "emigrant disease," prompted me to take a comparative look at the high rate of mental health problems among the most prominent group of exiles in the GDR, namely the Chileans who fled the Pinochet dictatorship. According to Sebastian Koch, the GDR—and Mwaungulu's life story confirms this—did not really find a way to effectively deal with such problems. This is a noteworthy finding if we remember that a good part of the GDR's founders had survived the Nazi regime as political emigrants in the Stalinist Soviet Union and, thus, must have known about the psychological hardships of exile. My reconstruction of Mwaungulu's exile in the GDR ends with his work for a Christian missionary church—his last resort before expulsion to West Berlin—thus evoking the concept of church asylum within a state-socialist German setting. I see therein a rather ironic twist, given the GDR's secular and anticolonial stance as well as Mwaungulu's earlier accounts of how the missionary schools in colonial Malawi tried to curb his political consciousness. In sum, Mwaungulu was an outsider and an insider of GDR society at the same time. His tireless political commitment and activism left their marks and make him traceable almost everywhere, from his early life in Africa to the GDR and beyond. I thus have ended the chapter by reconnecting with its introductory section, which began with my discussion of Griffith's documentary on Mwaungulu, to give a brief overview of how Mwaungulu's life continued in the FRG after the traumatic experience of being expelled from the GDR and separated from his children.

Subsequently, “Asaph Makote Mohlala: ‘I had to fight my way back,’” the shorter empirical chapter of my study, takes as its point of departure a life story interview that I conducted with a South African in the former eastern part of Berlin. Mohlala, whom I came to know about through *Exile Faces*, belongs to a younger generation of African exiles, many of whom are still living in reunified Germany, particularly in Berlin. Born in 1954 in a South African township, Mohlala is one of the Soweto Kids who fled South Africa in the aftermath of the Soweto uprising in 1976 and joined the ANC’s armed wing, MK. In contrast to Mwaungulu’s life story, I have added no archival sources to Mohlala’s account, relying instead only on support from the literature to clarify or discuss in more detail certain aspects of what Mohlala told me about his life. His exile has encompassed countries like Tanzania, the Crimea in the Soviet Union and, above all, Angola. The latter brings to the fore the war that apartheid South Africa waged against it: an African state that was weakened by internal power struggles following the war of independence against Portugal and serving as a host country and training ground for MK as well as a retreat for Namibian freedom fighters and refugees. Mohlala’s haunting account of how he worked for several years in this war-torn country as a medical assistant in the MK’s exile camps—at some point, Cuba, the Soviet Union and the US all were involved in this internationalized conflict—shows what it could mean to be a Black South African in exile and why quite a few of them have special memories of the GDR. What saved him in early 1990 from being redeployed from Angola to the MK’s new host country, Uganda, was that he had done a four-year medical training course in the GDR before, which tied him to the East German state via a German girlfriend and their common child. Through extreme efforts, he was able to return to the GDR and marry his girlfriend, just a few months before the country dissolved and joined the FRG.

I have paid particular attention to what Mohlala told me about his four years of training as a medical assistant in Quedlinburg, a small town in the rural part of the GDR, far from the urban centers of Leipzig and Berlin. Mohlala’s memories of his life there are exclusively positive, strikingly in contrast with the rather critical examination of this training program by Young-sun Hong, whose research, contrary to mine, is based only on archival sources. This seems to confirm arguments of scholars such as Ulrich van der Heyden and Marcia Schenck, who point out that research on foreigners in the GDR should also include oral history accounts. Compared to Mwaungulu’s more ambiguous experiences with the GDR, however, Mohlala’s first stay in the GDR must be viewed against the backdrop of the strong institutional backup that the ANC, as an established and recognized exile movement, offered its members, for better or worse. While it was at one of the ANC’s official gatherings in the GDR that Mohlala met his future East German wife, it was also the ANC’s military order that forced him to temporarily leave

this woman and their newborn child behind and return to Angola. Against the backdrop of these privations, Mohlala's account depicts the GDR as what its advocates always wanted it to be: a European stronghold of international solidarity and anticolonial commitment that, situated on the borders of Western Europe, offered support and a safe haven to African freedom fighters. Notably, Mohlala's account is almost completely free of any serious ambiguities or contradictions. That my interview with him took place in former East Berlin, where he continues to live with his wife in spite of the racism that became particularly strong there in the first years following reunification, can be interpreted as another confirmation of his memories.

My final chapter or epilogue, "African exiles and the awkward figure of the refugee," reconnects with the introductory chapter, "Exiles," through juxtaposing the popular Western figure of the African refugee with that of the African exile as presented in my study. I have used an excerpt from one of the many inspiring conversations that I had with Jeannette Selby, a South African freedom fighter and former exile of Mwaungulu's generation. Just like Mohlala, Selby is still living in Berlin as I write these words. She traveled to the GDR via London with her small daughter to meet there with her white South African husband, a member of the SACP, in 1961, the year the Berlin Wall was built. Selby and Mwaungulu knew each other, and it was at an early stage of my research on his life that I first heard of her, though we only met later. What struck me about this particular conversation was Selby's critical view on the refugee protests that took place in 2015 in Berlin. Together with an older statement that Mwaungulu made on similar forms of African migrations to Europe, it motivated me to reflect on the self-ascriptions of exiles with regard to their displacement, which must be understood in relation to their everyday lives and the German mainstream discourse on migration as well as with consideration of my own bias when I look at their lives.

To conclude with a personal note, studying these exiles has fundamentally changed my perception of my country's history. That applies to my perception of the GDR, but above all to my understanding of the capitalist basis of the FRG, which today forms the political-economic foundation of the reunified Germany. For me as a white West German, this is uncomfortable knowledge. Given the FRG's widespread anti-communism and close historical ties to South African apartheid and the Malawian Banda regime, not to mention the many mainstream politicians who were (or still are) openly racist and apologists of colonialism, it has been instructive to learn through these exiles just *how* important communism was for African decolonization, in spite of all its shortcomings and dictatorial aspects. The only thing that still puzzles me is that I came to these and other insights through the damaged life of my late neighbor, Mahoma Mwaungulu.

Appendix

Table of contents of Mahoma Mwaungulu's manuscript *Probleme und Perspektiven der industriellen Entwicklung Malawis* (Problems and Perspectives of Malawi's Industrial Development)³⁴²

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³⁴² PhD dissertation (uncompleted). Hochschule für Ökonomie "Bruno Leuschner," Berlin (East) 1973. All translations into English are mine.

³⁴³ Page 44 is missing.

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Mwaungulu: Theses from his manuscript *Probleme und Perspektiven der industriellen Entwicklung Malawis*

1. The aim of this work is to demonstrate the objective necessity of industrialization to overcome Malawi's backwardness and, after analyzing the [country's] existing economic and social problems and the government's policy to solve them, to show the prospects and possible paths towards achieving an industrialization which serves the well-being of the people. At the same time, this is intended to contribute towards investigation of the particularly complicated development problems of Malawi, which is one of the most backward among the developing countries and which—given the government's capitalist orientation—is facing particularly serious theoretical and practical contradictions and obstacles on the way to achieving socio-economic independence.

2. Malawi's backwardness is characterized by the following main features:

- The prevailing forms of pre-capitalist relations of production that persist in agriculture as the national economy's main sector form an extremely inadequate basis for extended reproduction. On 86% of the land area, the majority of the African peasants still practices semi-natural economy with primitive means of production and backward methods.

- With concentrated cultivation of monocultures, the European agricultural sector has maintained its colonial orientation. The generated profit is largely withheld from the national economy through profit transfer abroad.
- In all branches of the national economy, the level of development of the productive forces and the level of labor productivity are extremely low, especially in the countryside, where 91.8% of the population lives.
- The working class is numerically weak and lacks the qualitative characteristics necessary for a modern economy. In the absence of industry, a significant part of the workforce is exported abroad as migrant workers.³⁴⁴
- The per capita productivity of the employed as well as the national income per capita are very low.
- As a result of economic backwardness in all areas, there is an acute lack of capital. The currency and customs system, as an important part of the national economy and an important set of instruments for carrying out political and economic tasks, is controlled by British imperialism. As a former British colony, Malawi is still a member of the sterling bloc through which British imperialism maintains a currency climate which favors its interests, obtained through non-equivalent exchange and capital export.
- The dominance of all sectors of the economy by foreign capital is a serious obstacle for the development of the national economy.
- The sales opportunities and conditions for the products produced in the country have only been developed to the extent that they correspond to the interests of foreign monopoly capitalists and representatives of their interests in Malawi.
- Production, exchange and distribution of goods are managed in such a way that the internal market remains backward.

3. Malawi's backwardness is, first of all, the immediate result of the historical conditions created by the principles of imperialism. The British colonial system led to stagnation of the productive forces and, relatively speaking, partially to their decline; the lack of or one-sided development of essential economic sectors led to the deformation of the entire economic structure. Because of the capitalist path of development followed by the government, the necessary steps to overcome the colonial economic structure have not yet been taken. The more the capitalist

³⁴⁴ This paragraph has been crossed out by hand in the manuscript. A reason for this might be that Mwaungulu, following his expulsion to West Berlin, made a halfhearted attempt in the 1980s to complete his PhD at the Freie Universität Berlin and was trying to revise his dissertation for this purpose, an idea which he finally gave up.

mode of production develops, the more its immanent contradictions emerge and intensify alongside those already existing.

The colonial infrastructure is characteristic of the colonial process of reproduction, which is still the crucial factor that impedes economic development. Preservation of the colonial economic structure as well as semi-feudal and semi-capitalist relations of production means that Malawi remains an object of exploitation within the international capitalist division of labor. It is neither a stimulus for increasing the productive force's level of development in agriculture or development of the entire economy.

4. The increasingly intensified neocolonial exploitation, which is the economic aspect of British imperialism's strategy towards Malawi, is the characteristic feature of the country's economic development. Great Britain, as the former colonial power, plays the main role in neocolonial exploitation. It is supported by semi-feudal and semi-capitalist forces in Malawi, European landowners, foreign monopolies operating in Malawi, and the collective neocolonialism of all imperialist states and the ruling bureaucratic bourgeoisie.

5. The only solution to the task posed by history—overcoming the backwardness resulting from historical, economic, political, and socio-cultural factors—is the accelerated development of material production. This is where the historical necessity of Malawi's industrialization lies. Industrialization as an all-round process of Malawi's economic development is objectively necessary in order to remove the outdated relations of production preserved by the colonial system and the remnants of colonial rule and neocolonialism, which tries to cement Malawi's dependence through international monopoly capital.

6. Confronted with the aspirations of people in developing countries to consolidate their political independence and improve their standard of living, neocolonial ideologues are forced to refrain from what they had previously denied—the need and opportunity to industrialize developing countries. Instead, they are now offering definitions of industrialization that fit their interests. The main content of these definitions is primary development of agriculture as a basis for the development of small-scale industry or a focus on infrastructure, which is equated with industrialization. The main purpose of these concepts is to create more favorable opportunities for development and exploitation of the raw materials of the developing countries. Economic growth, however, cannot be advanced by developing individual branches of the economy but only by carrying out socio-economic transformation as a whole.

7. The Marxist-Leninist conceptual definition of the industrialization of the developing countries shows the only proper way to achieve a single-minded and comprehensive industrialization, which not only includes elimination of obsolete relations of productions, colonial remnants or neocolonialist dependence; it also offers the corresponding developing country the epistemological foundations to analyze its concrete conditions methodically and systematically, in order to decide on this basis the way of its political, economic and social self-determination.

According to the Marxist-Leninist point of view, industrialization is to be understood as a comprehensive, unified process of transforming the entire economic and social structure of a developing country. With the help of modern technology, large-scale machine production and the application of science as an immediate productive force, this transformation accelerates in all areas advanced reproduction on the basis of increasing social labor productivity and eliminating the country's pre-capitalist and capitalist relations of production as well as their concomitant social conditions.³⁴⁵ In this process, the social and economic conditions are inextricably linked.

The aim of industrialization on a Marxist-Leninist basis is to create the pre-conditions for satisfying the material needs of the entire people. This aim corresponds with the objective interests of all members of society. It is the basis for their active participation in the development of social production, modern technology, mastery and application of science, establishment of new economic branches and transition to large-scale machine production.

8. The implementation of industrialization depends in part on the availability of usable natural resources and on the country's potential for a continuous and complex industrialization. Malawi's economic-geographic conditions are characterized by the following factors:

Located in the southeastern part of the African continent, with a population of four million people the country covers an area of 127,368 km². It borders the United Republic of Tanzania in the North and Northeast; the Portuguese colony Mocambique in the East, South and Southwest; Zambia in the West; and has no

³⁴⁵ Note that, in the German original, these two sentences are one, with quite a complex syntactic structure: "Nach marxistisch-leninistischem Standpunkt ist die Industrialisierung zu verstehen als ein umfassender einheitlicher Prozeß der Umgestaltung der gesamten ökonomischen und sozialen Struktur eines Entwicklungslandes, die mit Hilfe der modernen Technik, der maschinellen Großproduktion, der Anwendung der Wissenschaft als unmittelbare Produktivkraft, die erweiterte Reproduktion auf der Basis der Erhöhung der gesellschaftlichen Arbeitsproduktivität, der Beseitigung der vorkapitalistischen und kapitalistischen Produktionsverhältnisse als auch der sozialen Verhältnisse des Landes in allen Bereichen beschleunigt."

access to the ocean. The most salient geographic feature is Lake Malawi, which covers a quarter of the total area.

Contrary to colonial estimations, Malawi has a number of natural resources worth extracting (such as bauxite, hard coal, corundum, ore, graphite, cyanite, apatite, and others); foreign monopolies have already started to exploit some of them. With thorough geographic investigation, the scale of existing mineral resources is substantially expandable. Of the 23 million acres of arable land, only 25% is cultivated with agricultural products, mainly grain for the population's own needs. Only a small part of the land is used to grow agricultural export crops on the European plantations, especially tea, peanuts, cotton, tung and sugar cane. Livestock breeding has been of little importance in Malawi to date. Hydropower remained completely unused as an energy source until independence was achieved. Lacking an industrial base, the 90.7 million kwh of energy currently generated by the Nkula Falls Power Plant is also largely unused and, instead, exported to Mocambique. Potential energy reserves, however, are many times higher than the total amount of energy currently being generated. Malawi's socio-economic structure is characterized by a strong south-north divide. The southern region, with its more favorable climate for the European colonialists, is more densely populated, has a better developed domestic market and a significantly higher level of economic development than the 'dead North', which was completely neglected by the colonialists and suffers most from the consequences of colonial disproportionality.

9. As part of the strategy of British colonialism, Malawi served as a reservoir of cheap labor for economically more developed areas, sales market for the imperialistic monopolies, and as a reserve for raw materials for foreign monopolies that operate in- and outside the country. Thus, the current economic structure, in its essence and manifestations, is the result of the British colonial system. It is characterized by

- a complete lack of basic industry, with the exception of a negligible construction industry and an energy industry in an early stage;
- an underdeveloped extractive industry (Malawi's mineral resources were to be reserved in case other colonial supplies ran out);
- a weak, marginally developing light industry, leading to steadily increasing dependence on imported consumer goods;
- a timber industry that makes completely inadequate use of the country's timber wealth;
- a relatively well-developed textile and leather industry run by European monopolies;

- a relatively strongly developed food and luxury food industry in the hands of foreign monopolies. It is the main branch of industry and focuses on the processing of tobacco and tea, such that constantly increasing food imports are necessary;
- agriculture, the most important economic branch, which creates 40 % of the gross domestic product, despite the low level of the productive forces;
- a poorly developed, colonial-oriented transport network;
- the penetration of almost all sectors of the economy by foreign capital.

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AAPC | All-African People's Conference |
| ABF | Arbeiter- und Bauernfakultät (Workers and Peasants' Faculty) |
| ANC | African National Congress (of South Africa) |
| BASF | Badische Anilin- & Soda-Fabrik (Baden Aniline and Soda Factory) |
| CAF | Central African Federation |
| CGWU | Commercial and General Workers' Union, Nyasaland |
| CPSA | Communist Party of South Africa |
| CPSU | Communist Party of the Soviet Union |
| CPUSA | Communist Party of the United States |
| DafriG | Deutsch-Afrikanische-Gesellschaft (German-African Society) |
| FDJ | Freie Deutsche Jugend (Free German Youth) |
| FDGB | Freier Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (Free Federation of German Trade Unions) |
| FNLA | Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (National Liberation Front of Angola) |
| FRELIMO | Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Mozambique Liberation Front) |
| FRG | Federal Republic of Germany |
| GDR | German Democratic Republic |
| HfÖ | Hochschule für Ökonomie Bruno Leuschner (University of Economics Bruno Leuschner) |
| HKW | Haus der Kulturen der Welt (House of World Cultures) |
| ICFTU | International Confederation of Free Trade Unions |
| KMU | Karl-Marx-Universität Leipzig |
| LESOMA | The Socialist League of Malawi |
| MCP | Malawi Congress Party |
| MK | Umkonktho we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) |
| MPLA | Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola) |
| NAC | Nyasaland African Congress |
| NAMOLA | National Movement of Labour |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NGO | Non-governmental Organization |
| OAU | Organization of African Unity |
| OSPAAAL | Organization of Solidarity of the People of Asia, Africa & Latin America |
| PYM | Pan African Youth Movement |
| PDP | Pan-African Democratic Party (Malawi) |
| RBI | Radio Berlin International |
| SACP | South African Communist Party |
| SADC | Southern African Development Community |
| SED | Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany) |
| SODI | Solidaritätsdienst-international e.V. |
| SOMAFCO | Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College |
| SWAPO | South-West Africa People's Organisation |
| UASA | Union der afrikanischen Studenten und Arbeiter in der DDR (Union of African Students and Workers in the GDR) |
| UFMD | United Front for Multiparty Democracy |

| | |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| UNITA | União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) |
| WFTU | World Federation of Trade Unions |
| ZANU | Zimbabwe African National Union |
| ZAPU | Zimbabwe African People's Union |
| ZK | Zentralkomitee der SED (Central Committee of the SED) |

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