

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 *Fernsehdienst* 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 *Fernsehdienst* 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
Nr. 10
10.08.1982
Bist Friedrichstr. 100 zur
maligen
AUSREISE
für Tage
und Wiedereinreise in die DDR
bis 10.08.82
03. Aug. 1982


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.

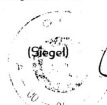
Mwaungulu
Name, auch Geburtsname
Mahoma
Vorname
03. Januar 1932
Geburtsstag
Kilwa
Geburtsort
Malawi
Staatsangehörigkeit
Wohnanschrift
Kinder
02.08.1982
ausgestellt am
Gebührenfrei

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, we 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. (Therkauf 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 *Nkrumaism 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 Druzhby 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.

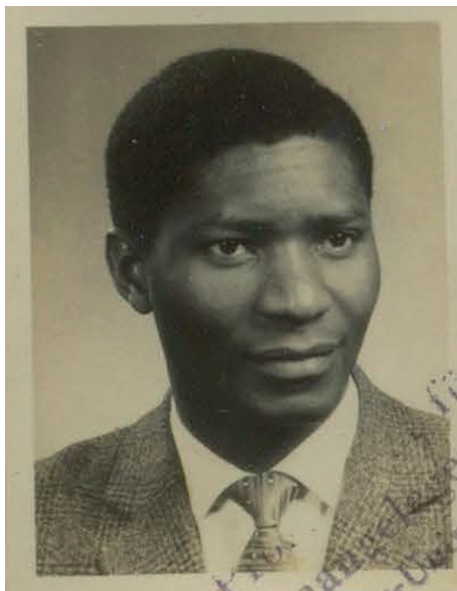


Fig. 5: Portrait photo from Mwaungulu's student book, 1960 (permission granted from University Archive Leipzig).

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 Miethe 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 propaganda 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 (l.), 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 translation).

¹⁴⁹ Saxonian State Archive Leipzig, 20250, Bezirksbehörde der Volkspolizei Leipzig, Nr. 448, Vorkommenisse 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.

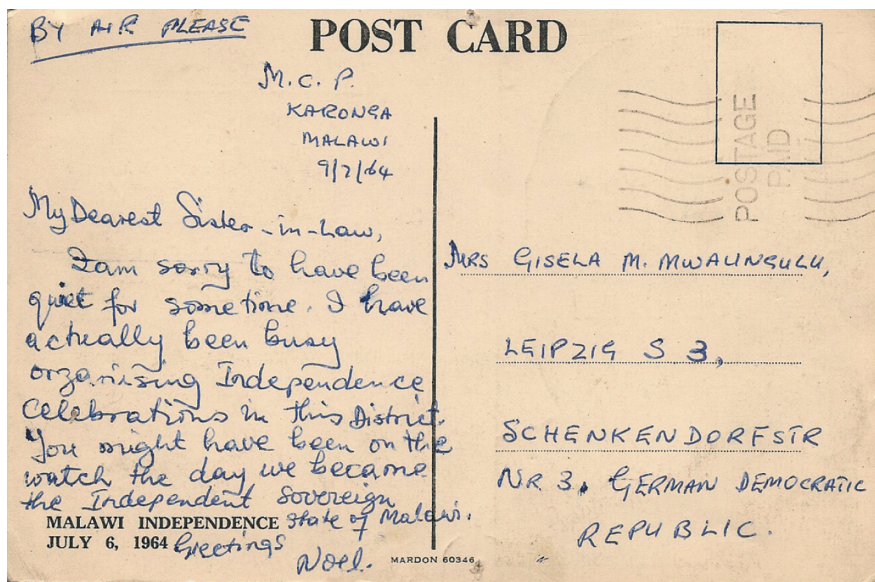
enemy” notwithstanding, the GDR administrators took it as a positive sign that, during this visit, Banda “could not be persuaded to explicitly take a stand against the GDR.” Moreover, the report quoted an unnamed student from Nyasaland who was studying in Leipzig at the time the report was written and, 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.

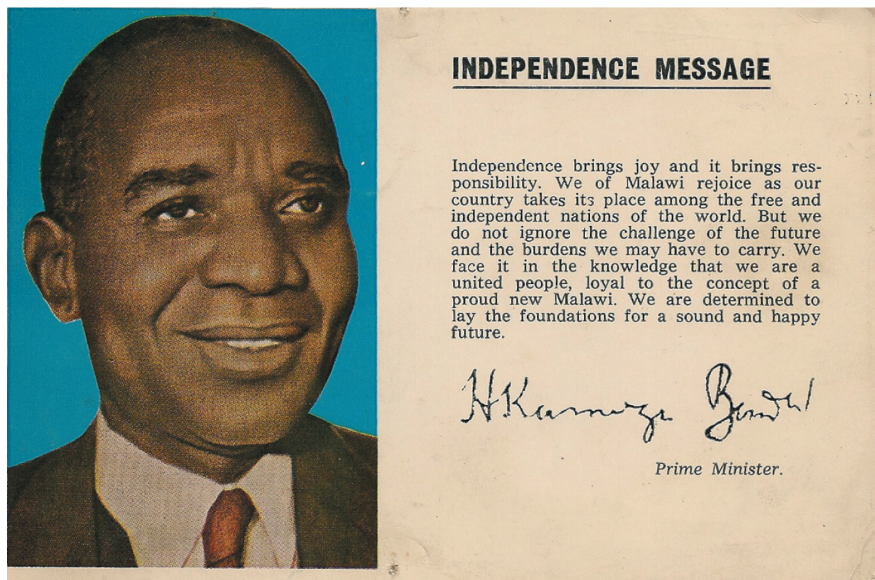
Kapote Mwakasungura, one of Mwaungulu’s fellow Malawian exiles in Tanzania, to whom I will return below, wrote me that, although it is true that Mwaungulu had a village mate who had studied in India and was with the Economic Development Department, Mwaungulu himself had no opportunity to work for the 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 Hussel 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 Hussel 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*a 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 Chiume 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 Sahllins, 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 Comsomol 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 Inter-shops, 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-Missionarische 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 reist 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 Freiberufler, 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 bleibt sehr aktiv in der Afrikanischen Community. Er engagiert sich bei der Aufklärungsarbeit über die Geschichte Afrikas, unterrichtet Deutsch und Kiswahili und gründet den Verein Umoja-Center. Als Afrika-Kenner bekommt er Aufträge vorzutragen, wovon er leben kann.

1989
Als die Berliner Mauer fällt, sieht Mahoma seine Familie wieder. Seine Tochter Nachona hatte bereits 1988 seine Enkelin Ilanga zur Welt gebracht.

1990 – 1998
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 Kiswahili. Des Weiteren engagiert er sich im Alphabetisierungsbereich.

28. Nov. 2004
Mahoma stirbt im Urban-Krankenhaus (Berlin-Kreuzberg) 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.

Mahomas Lebenslauf in Kürze: Knollys Mwanjongo
Satz, Layout, Textkorrekturen: 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 Kilwa, Tanganyika (heute Tansania)

Sein Vater arbeitet zuerst als Krankenpfleger und 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 im 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

1940
seine hochschwängere Mutter, Mahoma und zwei Brüder kehren nach Karonga, Malawi zurück.

1940 – 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. Ihn wurde einen 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 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 Zwangszusammenschluss von Nord- und Südhodesien 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 Jungfida 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 im Bureau for African Affairs in Accra

1960 – 1964
Studium der Fachrichtung Volkswirtschaft an der Karl-Marx-Universität in Leipzig

Privat
1979 Eheschließung mit Giselä Edlich
die mittlerweile drei Kindern das Leben geschenkt hat.
Nachona (1961)
Lusko (1963)
Lutamy (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 Mwanjongo).



Fig. 21: Mahoma Mwaungulu (l.) 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 childrens' 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.