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African Internationalisms and the Erstwhile Trajectories of Kenyan Community Development: Joseph Murumbi's 1950s

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Abstract

This article sheds new light on the relationship between internationalism, decolonisation and ideas about development through a reassessment of an overlooked period in the life of Joseph Murumbi (1911–90), cultural collector and Kenya's second vice-president. It follows Murumbi's engagement with three internationalist spaces during the 1950s: in the Afro-Asian worlds of India and Egypt he honed his vision for community development and the practical coordination of internationalism; in London he pushed British activists to take a more internationalist approach to anti-colonialism in a case of 'reverse tutelage'; disillusioned with the British Left, in Scandinavia and Israel he questioned the translatability of community development and the practical role of external sympathisers as Kenyan independence approached. Murumbi's trajectory confirms the inseparability of internationalism and nationalism in 1950s Africa, reinserting internationalist thought into narratives of Kenyan freedom struggles and suggesting how alternative visions for post-colonial Kenya were lost. Moreover, we argue, this reassessment of Murumbi's life advances the burgeoning scholarship on internationalisms in the decolonising world by showing that Murumbi's internationalist practices and his interest in the supposedly 'local' question of community development drove one

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another. Murumbi thus shows us a particular set of entanglements between the 'local' and the 'global'.

Keywords

Afro-Asianism, community development, decolonisation, internationalism, Kenya, Joseph Murumbi

On 17 March 1953, Joseph Murumbi waited anxiously at Eastleigh Airport, Nairobi. Following the mass arrest of Kenya's nationalist leadership in October 1952, the 'Kapenguria Six' trial of Jomo Kenyatta and his comrades rumbled on. Kenya's Mau Mau emergency was underway. Murumbi, an activist in the Kenya African Union and ally of Kenyatta, knew the eyes of the British colonial state were upon him as he sat in the departure hall among a crowd of colleagues to bid farewell to the Nigerian lawyer H.O. Davies – the only African member of Kenyatta's legal defence team. Then it happened: in a cloak-and-dagger manoeuvre, organised with the Indian High Commission, an Air India employee slipped a ticket to Bombay into Murumbi's hand. As Davies' entourage dispersed, Murumbi walked onto the tarmac and into the aircraft unchallenged. He had escaped Nairobi.¹

Murumbi's departure to independent India became the first leg in a decade of travel and exile across the global 1950s. This article is about those journeys: Murumbi's physical movements across Asia, Europe and Africa, and, more crucially, his intellectual voyages. The significance of these journeys is increasingly apparent in light of historiographical calls to advance our understanding of twentieth-century internationalisms (in the plural) and their relationship to decolonisation and development, as well as the loosening of Kenya's own national historiography in transnational directions. Refashioning the image of Joseph Murumbi by analysing his little-studied activities abroad during the 1950s over his more famous post-independence career, this article recovers a set of internationalist visions that were less state-centric than dominant models of the day

1 Anne Thurston and Alan Donovan, *A Path Not Taken: The Story of Joseph Murumbi, Africa's Greatest Private Cultural Collector and Kenya's Second Vice-President* (Nairobi 2015), 63–5. This volume contains the most thorough set of recollections by and about Murumbi. It is comprised mainly of Thurston's transcribed interviews with Murumbi towards an ultimately unpublished autobiography during her years working for the Kenya National Archives in the late 1970s. Alan Donovan was Murumbi's close friend in later life and, in 1972, co-founder with Murumbi of the *African Heritage* art gallery in Nairobi. *A Path Not Taken* was published by the Murumbi Trust, established by Donovan in 2003 to preserve Murumbi's cultural legacy. See also Karen Rothmyer, *Joseph Murumbi. A Legacy of Integrity* (Nairobi 2018).

and that had the supposedly 'local' question of community development at their core.

Murumbi, Kenya's second minister for foreign affairs and second vice-president, has certainly not been forgotten. In Nairobi, the entire ground floor of the Kenya National Archives (KNA), as well as the former provincial commissioner's office, display Murumbi's vast collection of African art to tourists and residents. In 2009, the Murumbi Peace Memorial was opened to mark his place of burial in the capital. The visibility of his cultural collection and his importance in the foundation of the KNA in the 1960s explains why his paternal role in the Kenyan heritage sector looms large.² Moreover, given Murumbi turned away from political life following his brief seven-month stint as vice-president during 1966, it is no surprise that he is accounted for as a conflict-averse 'moderate' against the turbulent backdrop of postcolonial Kenyan politics.³ The focus on Murumbi's journeys related in this article revises the *nature* of the contribution for which he is remembered.

Murumbi's work confirms the inseparability of internationalism and nationalism in 1950s Africa and further elucidates East Africa's position within a postwar 'world historical opening' when 'a range of solutions to the problem of colonial emancipation' emerged.⁴ The history of mid-twentieth-century internationalism as thought and practice has burgeoned over the past decade. By looking beyond (western-dominated) international organisations, historians challenge the assumptions that pipe-dream internationalisms competed along Cold War lines.⁵ They explain how transnational connections nourished, rather than opposed, territorial 'nationalist' freedom movements, especially where networks of cultural actors

2 On the memorial, see <http://friendsofcitypark.org/things-to-do/joseph-murumbi-peace-memorial-garden/> (accessed 24 August 2020). On the significance of his cultural collection in a broader theoretical framework, see Marian Nur Goni, 'La collection de Joseph Murumbi (1911–1990): « un ouvrage d'histoires (de l'art) potentielles »', unpublished conference paper (2019). On Murumbi's role in the foundation of the KNA, see Riley Linebaugh, 'Locating the Past: Kenya's National Archives and the World (1963–1980)', unpublished seminar paper, *GlobalHistoryAfrica@Warwick*, 24 February 2021.

3 For example, the Murumbi episode of Hilary Ng'weno's television documentary series *Makers of a Nation: The Men and Women in Kenya's History* (NTV Kenya 2010). See also Stephen Mutie, 'Contesting the Subaltern Narrative: The Trickster Trope in the Kenyan Political Autobiography', *Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies*, 6, 2 (2020) 98–118, which focuses on the post-independence period in its analysis of *Path Not Taken*.

4 Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham, NC 2015), 1. On the importance of internationalisms to Kenyan nationalisms in a later period, see Duncan Omanga and Kipkosgei Arap Buigutt, 'Marx in Campus: Print Cultures, Nationalism and Student Activism in the Late 1970s Kenya', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 11, 4 (2017), 571–89. On the understudied importance of East Africa in this moment, see Ismay Milford, Gerard McCann, Emma Hunter and Daniel Branch, 'Another World? East Africa, Decolonisation, and the Global History of the Mid-Twentieth Century', *Journal of African History* (forthcoming, 2021).

5 Significantly, Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin (eds), *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge 2017); Talbot C. Imlay, *The Practice of Socialist Internationalism: European Socialists and International Politics, 1914–1960* (Oxford 2017); Manu Goswami, 'Imaginary Futures and Colonial Internationalisms', *The American Historical Review*, 117, 5 (2012), 1461–85.

converged with those of top-rank politicians.⁶ Joseph Murumbi is a perfect candidate for such a story. In that sense, this article tells of a ‘mobile intermediary’ who spent much time outside his country of birth – a category of individuals increasingly acknowledged as pivotal to the pragmatic mechanics of independence struggle as scholars disassemble nationalist historiographies and write new ‘connected’ histories of decolonisation.⁷ However, even though he worked primarily in English, Murumbi’s life cannot be properly narrated through normative, western conceptions of mobile urbanity. His worldviews and activism were also indebted to alternative ‘vernacular’ cosmopolitanisms rooted in his Indian Ocean heritage.⁸

Murumbi also has a specific contribution to make to our understanding development thinking within this evolving picture of internationalism. The study of ideas about development is slowly taking heed of advances in the disaggregation of ‘third world’ internationalisms, although, as Priya Lal argues, there is still a long way to go in recognising the role of non-western actors in the history of international development.⁹ This article argues that Murumbi advanced specific notions of ‘community development’. This term, encompassing a range of ‘bottom up’ and ‘self-help’ visions, gained traction in colonial and international parlance from the interwar period and saw its heyday during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Yet, many of its pioneering thinkers (and practitioners) did not hail from the apparatus that surrounded the United Nations or western non-governmental organisations.¹⁰ Instead, Murumbi’s engagement with community development responded to his own journeys, meetings and observations across his 1950s, which themselves arose from the context of the Kenyan freedom struggle: his internationalist convictions and pursuit of community development solutions drove one another.

Murumbi was exceptional as a thinker and activist in ways which will become clear. He was also exceptional as an archivist and benefactor. His extensive

6 Su Lin Lewis and Carolien Stolte, ‘Other Bandungs: Afro-Asian Internationalisms in the Early Cold War’, *Journal of World History*, 30, 1 (2019), 1–19; Ljubica Spaskovska, ‘Constructing the “City of International Solidarity”: Non-Aligned Internationalism, the United Nations and Visions of Development, Modernism and Solidarity, 1955–1975’, *Journal of World History*, 31, 1 (2020), 137–63; Rachel Leow, ‘A Missing Peace: The Asia-Pacific Peace Conference in Beijing, 1952 and the Emotional Making of Third World Internationalism’, *Journal of World History*, 30, 1 (2019), 21–53.

7 Afro-Asian Networks Research Collective, ‘Manifesto: Networks of Decolonization in Asia and Africa’, *Radical History Review*, 131 (2018), 176–82; Ismay Milford, ‘Harnessing the Wind: East and Central African Activists and Anticolonial Cultures in a Decolonising World, 1952–64’, PhD thesis, European University Institute (2019).

8 On ‘vernacular’ understandings of cosmopolitanism, see Nile Green, ‘The Waves of Heterotopia: Toward a Vernacular Intellectual History of the Indian Ocean’, *American Historical Review*, 123 (2018), 846–74. Also Sugata Bose, ‘Different Universalisms, Colorful Cosmopolitanisms: The Global Imagination of the Colonized’, in Sugata Bose and Kris Manjappa (eds), *Cosmopolitan Thought Zones: South Asia and the Global Circulation of Ideas* (New York NY 2010), 97.

9 Priya Lal, ‘Decolonization and the Gendered Politics of Developmental Labor in Southeastern Africa’, in Stephen J. Macekura and Erez Manela (eds), *The Development Century: A Global History* (Cambridge 2018), 173–93.

10 Corinna R. Unger, *International Development: A Postwar History* (London 2018), 103–9; Daniel Immerwahr, *Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development* (Cambridge, MA 2015); Subir Sinha, ‘Lineages of the Developmentalist State: Transnationality and Village India, 1900–1965’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 50, 1 (2008), 57–90.

personal papers (he was an avid letter-writer and document collector) are publicly consultable in his country of birth rather than stored in the archives of a western institution or family ‘tin trunk’.¹¹ Murumbi’s capacious archive is an important part of Kenya’s contemporary cultural inheritance. Its content should be placed more centrally in modern Kenyan histories; a means to decentre Mau Mau in narratives of Kenyan decolonisation and further insert Kenya into contemporary international history writing.

Following a brief assessment of Murumbi’s life prior to his departure from Kenya, this article explores his interaction with three internationalist spaces during the 1950s. First, in the framework of Afro-Asianism, we track Murumbi to New Delhi and Cairo, where he conceived his vision for community development and the practical coordination of internationalism. Second, while Murumbi spent much of the decade in London, we follow in the vein of Priyamvada Gopal’s intervention on the ‘reverse tutelage’ of black and Asian anticolonial actors in shaping British public and private spheres, to argue that Murumbi guided – and ultimately became disillusioned with the failures of – the Socialist International and its British subscribers.¹² Third, Murumbi leads us to spaces often overlooked in histories of later 1950s non-aligned internationalism, African decolonisation and models for educational and community development: Scandinavia and Israel. We leave Murumbi in the early 1960s, as a statesman in the pan-African world, preaching his ‘bottom-up’ development philosophies honed during a decade of action in Asia and Europe; one potential path for Kenya’s postcolonialism.

Joseph Anthony Zuzarte Murumbi was born in Eldama Ravine, Kenya, in June 1911 to Peter Zuzarte, a Goan clerk-turned-shop trader, who arrived in Kenya via Aden and Zanzibar in 1897, and Murumbi, the daughter of the Maasai *laibon* (spiritual leader) of Uasin Gishu.¹³ As the imperial frontier advanced in the early twentieth century, the presence of pioneering Goan administrators and traders in rural East Africa is well-documented.¹⁴ Shortly after his birth, the family moved to Londiani where Peter set up shop. In 1918, Murumbi was sent to India for education at the Anglo-Indian Jesuit schools of St. Joseph’s, Bangalore, and St. Pancras Boys High, Bellary, remaining in India on graduation to work as a clerk for the Burma Shell company. Murumbi returned to Kenya in 1933, by which time

11 Murumbi Africana Collection (MAC) at the KNA. For example, the papers of Eridadi M.K. Mulira, one of Uganda’s pioneering political thinkers of the mid-twentieth century, are archived at Cambridge University. On ‘tin trunk’ archives, see Karin Barber, *Africa’s Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and Making the Self* (Bloomington, IN 2006).

12 Priyamvada Gopal, *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonialism and the Making of British Dissent* (London 2019), 8.

13 In Thurston’s lengthy interviews with Murumbi on his childhood he refers to his mother only as ‘Murumbi’, the family name that he retained. Thurston and Donovan, *A Path Not Taken*, 14–17.

14 Mervyn Maciel, *Bwana Karani* (Braunton 1985); Cynthia Salvadori, *We Came in Dhows* (Nairobi 1996); Vivek Menezes, *The In-between World of the African Goans*, <https://www.livemint.com/mint-lounge/features/the-in-between-world-of-the-african-goans-1555659088733.html> (accessed 1 September 2020); Lawrence Mbogoni, *Miscegenation, Identity and Status in Colonial Africa: Intimate Colonial Encounters* (Abingdon 2018).

his parents had separated and he began to negotiate the personal and professional tensions of his South Asian and African ancestry.¹⁵

In later life, Murumbi maintained that his Indian and Roman Catholic education remained an 'anchor in my life'. He praised the financial and spiritual support he received from the St. Pancras principal, Father Callenberg, when Peter's shop was burned down and during Murumbi's nine months' famine relief work in south India after graduation. 'That was the beginning of my political conscience', he recalled.¹⁶ His youthful experiences serving in poor Indian villages, and in a decade of clerical work thereafter, would have a lasting legacy at the centre of this article: his attentiveness to community development and education as routes to better futures.

Peter Zuzarte died in 1935 and, given his clerical experience in India, Murumbi secured a clerking job in the Kenya Medical Department in Nairobi. In 1941, he enlisted as clerk, soon Chief Clerk, in the Somalia Gendarmerie in Mogadishu where he met his first wife. In 1948, he became a clerk in the trade department of the British Military Administration in Somalia. He was promoted to Controller of Imports and Exports, a position he held until his return to Kenya in 1952. In Nairobi, he settled for a senior clerkship in a transport firm having rebuffed a secretive work offer from the Kenya Police Criminal Investigation Department, which was impressed by his administrative competency.

Back in Nairobi, Murumbi attended meetings of the East African Indian National Congress (EAINC), where he was patronised by the Kenyan Asian lawyer and Nehruvian N.S. Mangat and the radical Kenyan Goan trade unionist-cum-journalist, Pio Pinto. Pinto soon recruited Murumbi into the Kenya African Union (KAU) 'Study Circle', where the newly arrived Murumbi cut a relatively junior figure, largely peripheral to KAU's competing factions.¹⁷ It

15 Anne Thurston, 'Emergence of a Nationalist: An Interview with Joseph Murumbi, Part II', *Kenya Past & Present*, 11 (1979), 1. For a detailed personal history, as well as extensive lists of his correspondence and associates, see Part I of the 'Murumbi Africana Collection' handbooks in the KNA. Also The UK National Archives (TNA) FCO 141/6887 'Personalities: Joseph Murumbi', released after the 2011 'Hanslope Disclosure' of previously suppressed secret Colonial Office files. On Hanslope, see David Anderson, 'Mau Mau in the High Court and the "Lost" British Empire Archives: Colonial Conspiracy or Bureaucratic Bungle?', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39, 5 (2011), 699–716.

16 Anne Thurston, 'The Formation of a Character: An Interview with Joseph Murumbi', *Kenya Past & Present*, 10 (1979), 5.

17 For the most informative description of Murumbi's time in KAU, see Anne Thurston, 'Emergence of a Nationalist', 3. In his authoritative account of KAU, John Spencer briefly notes how its leaders were impressed with Murumbi's political speeches at meetings in 1952 and mentions the audacious departure to Bombay but gives little fished detail of Murumbi's KAU activities. John Spencer, *KAU: The Kenya African Union* (London 1985), 251, 253–4. John Lonsdale in 'KAU's Cultures: Imaginations of Community and Constructions of Leadership in Kenya after the Second World War', *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 13, 1 (2000) cites an unpublished typescript of Murumbi's autobiography, held by Murumbi's wife Sheila, but does not comment on Murumbi's activities specifically. We have not found this manuscript. Eric Masinde Aseka refers to Murumbi as KAU's 'liaison officer' to Kenyatta's multiracial legal team at Kapenguria in *Jomo Kenyatta: A Biography* (Nairobi 1992), 56. See also the memoirs Bildad Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom, 1921–1963: The Autobiography of Bildad Kaggia* (Nairobi 1975), 78–102; Fenner Brockway, *Towards Tomorrow: The Autobiography of Fenner Brockway* (London 1977), 177–91.

was here that Murumbi made the acquaintance of Kenyatta. Amidst the quickfire detention of KAU's primary Kikuyu leadership under emergency regulations, Murumbi was quickly thrust into the spotlight. In November 1952, he hosted the visiting anticolonial British MPs Fenner Brockway and Leslie Hale with whom, as we shall see, he would work in London through the Congress of Peoples Against Imperialism (COPAI) and Movement for Colonial Freedom (MCF). Murumbi soon found himself acting secretary-general of the decimated KAU on his way to India to represent Kenya's anti-imperial struggle to the world. Such mobility emerged from historical Indo-African ties, within Kenya and across the Indian Ocean, in advance of his better documented liaisons with the British Left.

The young Murumbi lived a not entirely untypical early twentieth-century Indian Ocean life. These were, however, origins far removed from the central and western Kenyan ethnic patriotisms of founding fathers Kenyatta and Oginga Odinga, or the multi-ethnic African urbanity of Tom Mboya, his more famous colleagues in the first independent Kenyan government. In Kenya's political pantheon, Murumbi, a mixed-race first-generation immigrant, was an idiosyncrasy. Keith Kyle noted that his imperfect knowledge of Kiswahili and other Kenyan languages left him estranged from certain inner circles of the ruling party, Kenya African National Union (KANU).¹⁸ This 'outsider' position is reflected in his role as only a minor character in the legend of Kenya's freedom struggle and Mau Mau, which dominates historiography of the country's decolonisation. Kenya's foremost historian, Bethwell Ogot, mentioned Murumbi in passing as a peripatetic activist who 'preferred to discuss the Kenya problem in a global context'; someone difficult to place in the story of Kenya's 1950s. 'What is to be done with the likes of Murumbi?', pondered Ogot.¹⁹ Murumbi may not have spoken fluent Kiswahili, but he did speak Portuguese, Italian, Hindi and English, a marker of his existence across colonial structures. It was precisely his liminal and shifting position between overlapping worlds – Kenyan, Goan, Indian, European, pan-African – that enabled him to traverse postwar internationalist networks with such skill to enrich and fortify Kenya's independence struggle. There is much to be done with Murumbi.

Murumbi's time in India over 1953 sprang, like many anticolonial tours of the 1950s, from relationships between what Sugata Bose terms the 'expatriate patriots' of the imperial Indian Ocean, those mobile anticolonial activists who attempted to accommodate ethnic and spatial difference to resist empire 'through an interplay of nationalism and universalism in their normative thought and political practice'.²⁰ In 1952, Pinto introduced Murumbi to Apa Pant, Jawaharlal Nehru's High

18 Keith Kyle, *The Politics of the Independence of Kenya* (Basingstoke 1999), 238.

19 Bethwell A. Ogot, 'Mau Mau and Nationhood: the Untold Story', in E.S. Atieno Odhiambo and John Lonsdale (eds) *Mau Mau and Nationhood: Arms, Authority and Narration* (Oxford 2003), 23–4.

20 Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge, MA 2009), 151.

Commissioner to East Africa since 1948. Given febrile colonial anxieties about Pant's solidarity with Kenya's nationalist leadership during Mau Mau, Murumbi's trip was initially publicised as a 'non-political' endeavour to study community development in India, where Nehru had launched a Community Development Program with Gandhian rhetoric a year previously.²¹

Following his clandestine departure from Nairobi and safe in India, Murumbi made a series of well-attended public appearances at Indian National Congress (INC) and Goan National Congress events alongside his host Chaman Lall, a veteran Indian barrister and parliamentarian, who had been sent to Kenya to serve on Kenyatta's defence team at Kapenguria. In New Delhi, Murumbi met Nehru and ran into the then relative stranger, Odinga, who Murumbi would replace as Kenya's vice-president in 1966. Odinga was on his own Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) sponsored tour.²² Before the Indian parliament, Murumbi decried Britain's violent suppression of Mau Mau, a cause celebre in India as Kenyatta was finally convicted to seven years hard labour in April 1953.²³ Murumbi's well-reported tour generated Indian public awareness and sympathy for Kenya's plight. Equally, Murumbi argued, African liberation movements offered much to South Asian agitation. In Bombay, he called for more forthright Goan resistance to Portuguese imperialism from his kinsmen. 'Goa must be made politically conscious', resisting 'religious propaganda' which aimed to keep colonial subjects pliant. He argued Kenya provided one model of such resistance.²⁴ In a speech before the Indian Council for Cultural Freedom, Murumbi advocated closer Indo-African cultural ties to anchor the 'brotherhood' necessary to realise anticolonial victories. His own Afro-Asian heritage was not lost in his rhetoric and its reception.²⁵

Such exhortations on Mau Mau and Goan nationalism were not, however, his only concerns. The community developmental rationale of his trip was no mere window-dressing to assuage nervous British onlookers. In Delhi, Murumbi called for a bespoke East African scholarship scheme at Indian institutions, building on the ICCR programme for African students active since 1947.²⁶ He specifically cited the expulsion of striking students at Uganda's Makerere College in June 1952 as a

21 'Trip Sponsored by Kenya Union', *Times of India* (20 April 1953); Apa Pant, *A Moment in Time* (London 1974), Ch. 4; Sinha, 'Lineages of the Developmentalist State'; Gerard McCann, 'From Diaspora to Third Worldism: India and the Politics of Decolonising Africa', *Past & Present*, 218, Supplement 8 (2013), 258–80.

22 A. Oginga Odinga, *Two Months in India* (Nairobi 1966).

23 'Mr. Joseph Murumbi', *Times of India* (12 April 1953). Murumbi recalled how Nehru spoke with 'vehemence and disgust' about Kenya on hearing Murumbi's 'emotional' speech and, as a result, lodged protest about Kenyatta's trial with the British High Commissioner in Delhi. Thurston and Donovan, *A Path Not Taken*, 67.

24 KNA MAC/KEN/81/1 Handwritten speech for address to Goan National Union, 1 July 1953.

25 'Indo-African relations. Plans for closer ties', *Times of India* (23 June 1953).

26 Gerard McCann, 'The Trumpets and Travails of "South-South Cooperation": African students in India since the 1940s', in Kenneth King and Meera Venkatachalam (eds) *India's Development Diplomacy and Soft Power in Africa* (forthcoming).

critical sign of growing colonial repression in the region.²⁷ As we shall see below, the significance of education as a pragmatic tool of African anticolonialism was a key facet of Murumbi's internationalism.

What he witnessed in over four months in India in 1953 also instilled in Murumbi deep faith in 'experimental' cooperative movements, particularly in rural arenas. He judged that 'the problem in Kenya is not only Mau Mau. It is also economic. The former "effect" is the product of the economic "cause"'. India's progress in cooperative rural 'self-help' schemes made a great impression on Murumbi, 'point[ing] the way to a new world for the millions in Kenya in need of help'.²⁸ In a letter to Pinto in January 1953, Brockway noted Murumbi's insistence that cooperative development in education was a Kenyan priority; in turn, Murumbi asked the Fabian Colonial Bureau to pass on details of successful community development programmes in eastern Nigeria for study.²⁹ Chaman Lall and Murumbi talked at length about the transformative importance of progressive policies of land reform for India's citizenry, something they agreed could not be replicated in Kenya until the 'White Highlands' were redistributed to African farmers. They disagreed on the zeal and rapidity with which these 'self-help' schemes could be enacted in Kenya. Murumbi was 'careful not to take the extreme line', both on violent land expropriation that would aggravate colonial vengeance in the short term and in refusing to coerce rural Kenyan leaders in adopting new development programmes. Success required the careful cultivation of a new 'psychological frame of mind'.³⁰ However, it was clear that cooperative solutions to African problems preoccupied Murumbi and, as we argue, would be a recurring theme as his theoretical interests pivoted towards Scandinavian and Israeli socialist experiments in the late-1950s.

In August 1953, Murumbi moved onto Cairo, funded by the Indian parliamentary 'India-Africa Council' onto which Murumbi was co-opted thanks to his cordial relationships with INC officials. In Delhi, Murumbi had also befriended Tayeb Slim of the Tunisian Neo-Destour Party, a temporary refugee in India, delegate to the 1953 Asian Socialist Conference in Burma and later first Tunisian High Commissioner in London. Slim made arrangements for Murumbi's arrival in Egypt where Murumbi stayed for a month, developing contacts with Gamal Abdel Nasser and other Arab leaders.³¹ Such acquaintances of

27 National Archives of India: 6(217)-G1/49, Apa Pant to B.N. Nanda, 7 January 1953. On links between the strike and wider politics, see Milford, 'Harnessing the Wind', 39.

28 KNA MAC/KEN/81/1 Murumbi's report to KAU of his visit to India 1953, 1; 'Developing rural craft in East Africa', *Times of India* (28 September 1953).

29 KNA MAC/KEN/71/3 Brockway to Pinto, 28 January 1953; KNA MAC/KEN/82/1 Margery Nicholson to Murumbi, 25 September 1953.

30 KNA AHC/8/14 V.C. Martin, 'Agrarian reform in Kenya', 22 June 1953; KNA MAC/KEN/81/1 Murumbi's report to KAU of his visit to India 1953, 1.

31 For memories of the acquaintances and affiliations that facilitated Murumbi's trips to India and Egypt over 1953, see Thurston and Donovan, *A Path Not Taken*, 65–74.

the early 1950s would bear fruit during Murumbi's tenure as Kenyan foreign minister at the Organisation of African Unity in the 1960s.

Murumbi's Cairo sojourn was always to be time-limited, one leg of an international tour on expanding airline routes across the 'Bandung era'.³² Generating publicity in North Africa was Murumbi's main goal as Cairo, like New Delhi, emerged as an anticolonial hub.³³ At Egypt's expense, a small Kenya office in Cairo was established to produce press releases on sub-Saharan affairs for local audiences and broadcast anticolonial programming for consumption in East Africa through Radio Cairo. These were the first shoots of Nasser's full-throated support for African liberation movements that culminated in the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organisation in 1957.

Murumbi was cast headlong into Cairo's radical environment. In August 1953, two articles praising the 'gallant resistance' of Kenya's forest fighters and lauding Murumbi as 'a delegate of Mau Mau' appeared in the Egyptian daily, *Al-Tahrir*, edited by Anwar Sadat (later Egypt's third president, who Murumbi met on the trip). This provoked remonstrations from the British Embassy in Cairo to the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Mahmoud Fawzi, who simply affirmed Egypt's unyielding commitment to the self-determination of all peoples.³⁴ The British protested Murumbi's liaisons with Ugandan students at Al-Azhar University and the public transcription of anti-British conversations – about affairs 'internal' to the British empire – in the North African and syndicated world press.³⁵ London kept a close eye on Murumbi in India and Egypt and attempted to use the British High Commission in Delhi to forge an 'information policy' to deny Murumbi's claims about the situation in Kenya. Murumbi later recalled seeing a file on his activities 'nearly two or three inches thick' in the Colonial Office.³⁶ Such surveillance stemmed not only from the deepening of Indo-Kenyan relations through Apa Pant, India's High Commissioner in Nairobi, the Kenyan-Goan political organiser Pio Pinto and the many African students resident in India in the mid-1950s. It also reflected growing colonial anxiety at the collaboration of a wider array of African nationalists, particularly led by Nkrumah's Gold Coast/Ghana,

32 Su Lin Lewis, 'Skies that Bind; Air Travel in the Bandung Era', in Stephen Legg, Mike Heffernan, Jake Hodder and Benjamin Thorpe (eds) *Placing Internationalism: International Conferences and the Making of the Modern World* (London 2021), p. 312.

33 Reem Abou-El-Fadl, 'Building Egypt's Afro-Asian Hub: Infrastructures of Solidarity and the 1957 Cairo Conference', *Journal of World History*, 30, 1 (2019), 157–92; James R. Brennan, 'Radio Cairo and the Decolonization of East Africa, 1953–64', in Christopher J. Lee (ed.) *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives* (Athens, OH 2010), 173–96; Ismay Milford, "'Shining vistas" and false passports: Recipes for an anticolonial hub', *Afro-Asian Visions* (2016), at <https://medium.com/afro-asian-visions/shining-vistas-and-false-passports-recipes-for-an-anticolonial-hub-f631e19b1046> (accessed 20 August 2020).

34 'British Complain to Egypt', *The Times* (29 August 1953).

35 TNA FO/371/102721 Telegram from Cairo to Foreign Office, 27 August 1953.

36 KNA AHC/8/14 Confidential report on High Commission information policy in New Delhi, 12 August 1953. Thurston and Donovan, *A Path Not Taken*, 66.

with newly independent Asian statesmen through organisations such as the Asian Socialist Conference (ASC) as the pace of decolonisation quickened.³⁷

Founded in 1953, the ASC, based in the newly independent socialist state of Burma, provided a new arena for Asian socialists to debate the nature of post-colonialism within and beyond the strictures of the Cold War. It was also, crucially, a forum to support ongoing freedom struggles across Africa and Asia. Murumbi's time in Asia coincided with this rapid institutional expansion. He read the ASC journal *Socialist Asia* and corresponded with leading Southeast Asian politicians such as Indonesia's Wijono.³⁸ In the same fashion as his serendipitous ascent in KAU, Murumbi was soon in a leadership role. In 1954, he was recruited onto the Coordinating Committee of the new ASC 'Anti-Colonial Bureau' alongside Nnamdi Azikiwe, later the first president of Nigeria, Ram Mahohar Lohia, of the Indian Praja Socialist Party and first head of the Indian National Congress foreign department in the 1930s, and Reuven Barkatt of the Israeli Mapai party.

Murumbi attended the second ASC gathering in Bombay in November 1956 where he spoke in an 'emotional tone' of Kenya's travails, his comradeship with Tunisia's Tayeb Slim and his revulsion at French brutality in Algeria.³⁹ He met with Heinz Putzrath of the German Social Democratic Party and two representatives of Israel's Mapai: David Hacoheh, who had spent the previous two years as the Israeli envoy in Burma, and Menahem Bargil, who was also representing the International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY), a youth international under mainly Scandinavian leadership which, in the 1950s, publicised its ostensibly non-aligned socialism in the decolonising world.⁴⁰ These networks would become formative to Murumbi's thinking over the coming years. Murumbi also formed a point of contact between these European and Afro-Asian networks: in 1957, for instance, Murumbi encouraged a Swedish cooperative trading organisation to reach out to Slim to proffer advice on improving Tunisia's economic competitiveness.⁴¹

Through the ASC, Murumbi encountered the Socialist International (established in 1951 in Frankfurt) whose commitment to decolonisation was quickly critiqued by Asian and African socialists. The Gold Coast-born head of the

37 Gerard McCann, 'Where was the *Afro* in Afro-Asian Solidarity? Africa's "Bandung Moment" in 1950s Asia', *Journal of World History*, 30, 1 (2019), Part II; Mélanie Torrent, 'A "New" Commonwealth for Britain? Negotiating Ghana's Pan-African and Asian Connections at the End of Empire (1951–8)', *The International History Review*, 38, 3 (2016), 573–613.

38 KNA MAC/KEN/83/2 Correspondence with the Asian Socialist Conference. On the ASC, see Su Lin Lewis, 'Asian Socialism and the Forgotten Architects of Post-Colonial Freedom, 1952–1956', *Journal of World History*, 30, 1 (2019), 55–88.

39 Alijah Gordon, *On Becoming Alijah: From the American Revolutionary War through Burma, 1957* (Kuala Lumpur 2003), 275–7.

40 Ismay Milford, 'More than a Cold War Scholarship: East-Central African Anticolonial Activists, the International Union of Socialist Youth, and the Evasion of the Colonial State (1955–65)', *Stichproben – Vienna Journal of African Studies*, 34 (2018), 19–43.

41 KNA MAC/KEN/82/3 J.W. Ames to T. Slim, 24 May 1957.

ASC Anti-Colonial Bureau, Jim Markham, derided the Socialist International's weak approach to anti-imperialism relative to its Cold War commitment to anti-communism: 'It is only in an independent country that democratic socialism can take shape to combat the evils of communism [...] dependent peoples have nothing to safeguard or defend against the evils that tend to further enslave them because they are already enslaved.'⁴² As we shall see, Murumbi also came to bemoan the timidity and eurocentrism of the Socialist International. Murumbi's early internationalist forays across Afro-Asia facilitated and shaped the intellectual and political labour in Europe that would occupy him for most of the 1950s. Contrary to the thrust of much Kenyan and British historiography, Murumbi was no 'moderate', despite his performances to British officials: he was a man demanding action, not just rhetoric, across a diverse array of (often conflicting) internationalist circles.

When Murumbi landed in London in September 1953 his intention was to stay for six weeks, before continuing to Gold Coast/Ghana, Nigeria and the USA before returning to Kenya. His arrival turned out to be the beginning of a nine-year period of exile. Yet, despite making London a temporary home with his second wife Sheila, Murumbi's internationalist and development convictions were not derivative of the concerns of the British Left. If anything, a closer look at Murumbi's London years shows that British activists looked to him for ideas, while his own thinking evolved as he looked beyond London, increasingly disillusioned with the possibilities of British internationalism.

Murumbi arrived in London at a moment of transformation in the relationship between internationalism, socialism and British anticolonialism. The British Left was turning away from explicitly internationalist forms of anticolonial activism through COPAI and the Socialist International, towards parliamentary lobbying on the back of the mass British membership of MCF, founded in 1954 under Fenner Brockway. Meanwhile, Mau Mau, the exile of the *Kabaka* of Buganda and the campaign against the Central African Federation (in which Murumbi had been involved from Nairobi) all brought East and Central Africa into the British press spotlight.⁴³ Murumbi's publicity work in India and Egypt attracted negative British coverage and he was repeatedly forced to correct misreporting to insist his visits had been to seek technical aid and scholarships. Specifically, he repudiated the statements attributed to him in *Al-Tahrir*, and threatened libel action against *The Times*, which had described Murumbi as an 'emissary of Mau Mau'.⁴⁴

42 James Markham, 'The Heart of the Matter', *Socialist Asia*, 3, 9/10 (1955), 11–13.

43 On Kenyan opposition to the Central African Federation, see Ismay Milford, 'Federation, Partnership, and the Chronologies of Space in East and Central Africa', *The Historical Journal*, 63, 5 (2020), 1325–1348. On the British press and decolonisation, see Rosalind Coffey, "'Does the Daily Paper Rule Britannia?': The British Press, British Public Opinion, and the End of Empire in Africa, 1957–60', PhD thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science (2015).

44 'British complaint to Egypt', *The Times* (29 August 1953); 'Mr. Joseph Murumbi', *The Times* (21 November 1953); 'Mr. Murumbi's Plans For Kenya', *The Times* (26 September 1953); TNA

In this context, Murumbi found himself at the centre of British efforts to coordinate anticolonial activism and thus in a strong position to shape the priorities of British anticolonial lobbyists. During the autumn of 1953, through Brockway and existing pan-African organisations in London such as the West African Students Union (who briefly hosted him), Murumbi addressed meetings of trade unions, cooperatives and Labour Party branches in Sheffield and Manchester.⁴⁵ He was often accompanied by other resident East Africans or those passing through Britain, such as Abu Mayanja, co-founder of the Uganda National Congress and one of those expelled from Makerere following the 1952 student strike to which Murumbi had alerted his Indian patrons. When MCF formed in 1954, Murumbi became its first Joint Secretary, one of the organisation's two full-time staff. The other was Douglas Rogers, who, in a case of 'reverse tutelage', wrote at length to Murumbi in the early 1960s. Rogers recalled Murumbi's enthusiasm for community development and repeatedly requested to work with him in Kenya, a request which eventually bore fruit when Rogers later edited the Kenyan weekly *Pan Africa* under Murumbi's chairmanship.⁴⁶

MCF benefitted from Murumbi's practical approach to internationalism and his contacts with Asian socialists, but Murumbi himself was aware of the dynamics that pervaded MCF's formation. He read through the proceedings of the 1948 Congress of the Peoples of Europe, Asia and Africa at Puteaux, France, which neither he nor any other East African leader attended.⁴⁷ This was the occasion of COPAI's founding and, Anne-Isabelle Richard argues, the final meaningful collision of internationalism, socialism and anticolonialism in Europe.⁴⁸ Foreshadowing the dynamics between the Socialist International and the ASC, the meeting failed to find agreement of approach between European delegates and those from the colonial world (who were vastly outnumbered): the latter prioritised "the latter prioritised political independence over international economic cooperation and feared that the anti-Soviet stance of the western European delegates would commit them to Cold War factionalism.

FO/371/102721 British Embassy, Cairo, to Foreign Office, 28 September 1953; KNA MAC/KEN/87/3 'Libel action, 1953'.

45 On WASU, see Hakim Adi 'Pan-Africanism and West African Nationalism in Britain', *African Studies Review*, 43, 1 (2000), 69–82; Hakim Adi, 'African Political Thinkers, Pan-Africanism and the Politics of Exile, c.1850–1970', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 30, 2–3 (2012), 263–91. On Murumbi's London activities, see TNA FCO 141/6887 'Joseph Murumbi'.

46 KNA MAC/KEN/75/7 Douglas Rogers to Murumbi, 31 October 1961. This folder also contains lengthy correspondence. On Murumbi in MCF, see minutes of a meeting of the MCF East and Central African Committee, 2 September 1954, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), Personal Papers of Thomas Fox-Pitt, PP MS 6/05/03. On Rogers, see June Milne, 'Douglas Rogers (1919–2002)', *West Africa*, 4351 (2002).

47 The full proceedings can be found in KNA MAC/CON/197/1.

48 Anne-Isabelle Richard, 'The Limits of Solidarity: Europeanism, Anti-Colonialism and Socialism at the Congress of the Peoples of Europe, Asia and Africa in Puteaux, 1948', *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'histoire*, 21, 4 (2014), 519–37.

MCF was partly a response to COPAI's failed internationalism: despite maintaining broadly internationalist values, MCF was geared towards support among the British public and the forging of contacts with nationalist political parties across the colonial world.⁴⁹ However, by 1955, as MCF grew and COPAI seemed unable to coordinate its various branches, Murumbi was among the voices calling to revive or replace COPAI and resolve the broader tensions surrounding the commitment to decolonisation on the western European Left. In an attempt to revive links with French socialists, especially in the context of mounting tensions in Algeria, Murumbi called for a conference to be held in France, because French socialists were 'doing little to help North Africans'. The immediacy of the North African question was clear to Murumbi given the contacts he formed with Tunisian exiles in Delhi and Cairo, and increasingly so after the global media profile of the Asian-African Conference at Bandung in April 1955. However, Murumbi found COPAI's French contact, Jean Rous, 'awkward and obstinate' and the conference had to be relocated to Britain.⁵⁰

To this World Conference for Colonial Liberation in Margate, 5–7 November 1955, 40 delegates attended, representing over 30 organisations, including the ASC, IUSY, nationalist parties from across colonial territories and European anticolonial protest groups. Murumbi supported the formation of a World Council for Colonial Liberation (WCCL), conceived to coordinate the work of nationalist liberation groups and anticolonial organisations on a global scale. He was elected with the highest number of votes onto its General Council, along with U Thwin (ASC) and Hedi Baccouche (Tunisian Neo-Destour). In keeping with this internationalist ethos, the conference also founded an International Council for Economic and Social Co-operation, which would be nominally 'non-political' and thus able to gain consultative status at the UN Economic and Social Council. This was an internationalist vision which co-existed with the more state-centric apparatus of the UN but was not encompassed by it. These new organisations were not to overshadow Murumbi's community development ambitions: he dedicated his speech to the question of education, arguing that in Kenya, where the colonial government spent almost 20 times more per head for 'European' children compared to 'African' children, low literacy rates were used to deny 'readiness' for political independence despite Kenyans' longstanding calls for investment in education.⁵¹

However, the published Margate proceedings obscure the political tensions that ran through the conference, with Murumbi serving as representative of the ASC and the MCF, as well as the newly formed WCCL. Murumbi was at the centre of efforts to find common ground between the Socialist International (who declined an invitation to co-sponsor Margate) and the ASC. In mid-1956, executive

49 Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918-1964* (Oxford 1993), 182–83; 231–33.

50 KNA MAC/COPAI/156/11 Murumbi to Douglas Rogers, 29 March 1955.

51 International Institute of Socialist History, Amsterdam (IISH) International Meetings and Organisations files IMO159, 'Report of the Conference' (1955).

members of the ASC Anti-Colonial Bureau, including Murumbi, were asked to comment on a 'Memorandum on a concrete and time-bound programme for the Freedom of Colonies', drawn up by Labour Commonwealth Secretary John Hatch under ASC pressure.⁵² Like the writings of Jim Markham, the Gold Coast-born secretary of the ASC Anti-Colonial Bureau, Murumbi's annotations of the memorandum suggest his frustrations with the paternalism of European socialists. Murumbi criticised the absence of plans for education and land redistribution and, where the Belgian socialist party advocated political systems in postcolonial states that were 'inspired by Western democracy', Murumbi crossed this out and replaced it with simply 'democratic', adding 'Why Western?' in the margin.⁵³

As the limitations of the British-dominated Socialist International became clear to Murumbi, so did those of MCF. In May 1957, he resigned as Joint Secretary. While his resignation has been attributed to MCF's insufficiently radical stance towards the Suez crisis, there is evidence of a much wider frustration, notably relating to the WCCL.⁵⁴ Murumbi organised the WCCL from Britain almost single-handedly since Douglas Rogers had moved to Accra in early 1956, invited by Kwame Nkrumah to help set up a press for the Convention People's Party (a role previously inhabited in embryonic form by Markham before his despatch to the ASC in 1953).⁵⁵ From Accra, Rogers saw even more clearly the importance of an explicitly internationalist stance against colonialism. He advised Murumbi that '[t]he work of the World Council must be kept quite separate from that of the MCF. Do not let Fenner persuade you to part from this'. For the WCCL to succeed, Rogers believed, it must 'not appear to be dominated by the British'.⁵⁶

Murumbi was all too aware of this. By mid-1957, he declared himself 'rather suspicious' of the activities of the British Labour Party when it came to organising an internationalist response to colonial policy.⁵⁷ He found his efforts to coordinate the WCCL hampered by what he perceived as European prioritisation of the Cold War conflict over decolonisation, especially after the Soviet invasion of Hungary in November 1956. For example, following the ASC Bombay meeting, Murumbi travelled to Athens to discuss holding an international anticolonial conference together with the Greek Anti-Colonial League. The League envisaged a conference under the auspices of Murumbi's WCCL to include anticolonial groups across both sides of the Iron Curtain, as well as nationalist liberation groups from

52 Imlay, *The Practice of Socialist Internationalism*, 422–33.

53 KNA MAC/CON/205/4 Annotated copy of the 'Memorandum on concrete and time-bound programme for the Freedom of Colonies', nd [1956]. The first draft of the memo dates from October 1955.

54 Stephen Howe attributes Murumbi's resignation to the Suez Crisis, but does not account for the delay, see MCF Central Council minutes, 2 May 1957, quoted in Howe, *Anticolonialism*, 245. Murumbi refers to his resignation, without reference to Suez or any specific factor in Thurston and Donovan, *A Path Not Taken*, 79. MI5 reported that Murumbi was less active from 1955: TNA KV 2/2552. MCF's archive at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) lacks full meeting minutes for much of the 1950s.

55 Milne, 'Douglas Rogers (1919-2002)'; Howe, *Anticolonialism*, 245.

56 KNA MAC/COPAI/156/11 Rogers to Murumbi, 31 July 1956.

57 KNA MAC/KEN/82/7 Murumbi to Bargil, 27 May 1957.

Africa and Asia. But Murumbi refused to let them use the WCCL name, telling the organisers that inviting communist organisations did nothing to help the anticolonial cause. He claimed that the communists involved in the Greek League were not really interested in the colonial problem at all, refusing to understand the conflict on their doorstep in Cyprus as one of colonialism.⁵⁸ This echoed the anti-Soviet elements of Murumbi's annotations on the Hatch memorandum mentioned above: with reference to Poland and Hungary, Murumbi noted the necessity of talking about Soviet imperialism in the same framework as European colonialism.⁵⁹ These convictions about the relationship between Cold War Europe and meaningful anticolonial solidarity make clear that 'radical' in Murumbi's understanding of anticolonialism simply did not map onto 'radical' within the European Left. Conveniently, this enabled him to cast his politics as 'moderate' for the ears of the British press.⁶⁰

Indeed, by 1957, alternatives for internationalist coordination of anticolonialism were on the horizon. As Murumbi told the Greek League, African delegates would prefer to attend a conference on 'African soil'.⁶¹ This was becoming an increasingly realistic prospect. In mid-1956, Rogers relayed to Murumbi that the Ghanaians 'dare not, for diplomatic reasons, take any general initiative in the fight for colonial liberation', in the same vein as Nkrumah turned down his personal invitation to Bandung in 1955, sending instead a small observer delegation including Markham.⁶² The Suez crisis, symbolically at least, shifted the possibilities of anticolonial solidarity, as did Sudanese independence in January 1956 and Ghana's own independence in March 1957. Subsequent successes in organising large-scale pan-African and Afro-Asian conferences are well-documented – and Murumbi was heavily involved.⁶³ After attending the Conference of Independent African States and the first All-African Peoples Conference (AAPC) in Accra (April and December 1958 respectively), Murumbi was a primary organiser of the second AAPC in Tunis, January 1960, utilising connections made in Cairo and pursued while working at the Moroccan Embassy in London from 1960 to

58 KNA MAC/KEN/79/4 Report on visit to Athens, January 1957; KNA MAC/KEN/82/7 Murumbi to Bargil, 27 May 1957.

59 KNA MAC/CON/205/4 Annotated copy of the Memorandum on concrete and time-bound programme for the Freedom of Colonies.

60 The Labour-aligned *New Statesman* described Murumbi as 'moderate' in 1953, see TNA FCO 141/6887. See also 'Towards permanent peace in Kenya: A moderate's plan', *Manchester Guardian*, 26 September 1953, 7.

61 KNA MAC/KEN/79/4 Report on visit to Athens, January 1957.

62 KNA MAC/COPAI/156/11 Rogers to Murumbi, 31 July 1956. On Nkrumah's difficulties in organising West African conferences prior to independence, see Marika Sherwood, 'Pan-African Conferences, 1900–1953: What Did "Pan-Africanism" Mean?', *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 4 (2012). On Nkrumah and Bandung, see McCann, 'Where was the *Afro*?'; Robert Vitalis, 'The Midnight Ride of Kwame Nkrumah and Other Fables of Bandung (Ban-Doong)', *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, 4, 2 (2013), 261–88.

63 For example, Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York NY 2008); Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism: A History* (London 2018).

1961.⁶⁴ Around the same time, George Padmore, Nkrumah's African Affairs advisor in Accra, invited Murumbi to work at the Bureau of African Affairs.⁶⁵

During the mid-1950s, when British anticolonialism appeared introverted, Murumbi insisted on the necessity of an explicitly internationalist, socialist, anticolonial front which was not beholden to early Cold War alliances. He thus disrupts the claim that Puteaux in 1948 was the last meeting of these ideals, at least among anticolonial thinkers. Murumbi's dogged pursuit of this vision (perhaps misguided given that by 1957 both the WCCL and ASC were fizzling out) was certainly not inspired by his work with MCF and the British Left. If anything, it was a response to the tendency of European anticolonialism to function within the constraints of the Cold War and the inability of the western European Left to act on the priorities of their contacts in the decolonising world. Murumbi may not have experienced unbridled success, but there was little sense, as colonial intelligence reported in 1961, that he was 'resigned to his quiet, comfortable life in London'.⁶⁶

Murumbi's networks had of course never been confined to those around his London base. As we have seen, the ASC put Murumbi in touch with people outside of a typical map of anticolonial networks in the late colonial world, namely in Israel and Scandinavia. Existing work on the relationship of both these regions with sub-Saharan Africa focuses mainly on state-sponsored projects of the 1960s.⁶⁷ For Murumbi in the late 1950s, both regions appeared as places that had built 'developed' democracies from agricultural bases, not only on a faster timescale than much of the 'West' but with explicitly socialist principles, pioneering rural cooperatives and community-led education. Israeli foreign policy in the Middle East in the mid-1960s, which would see many third world leaders eschew Israeli aid, was not predictable a decade before. In 1958, an Afro-Asian Institute opened in Tel Aviv to offer (subsequently well-attended) courses in cooperative development to students from decolonising nations. In critical dialogue with these contacts, Murumbi arrived at a socialist, anticolonial worldview that hinged upon practical but critical community development policies, especially relating to education.

64 Richard Cox, *Pan-Africanism in Practice; an East African Study: PAFMECSA 1958-1964* (London 1964), 34.

65 Thurston and Donovan, *A Path Not Taken*, 76–7. Murumbi had been invited to Ghanaian independence celebrations in 1957.

66 TNA FCO 141/6887, secret note from Kenya Director of Intelligence and Security, 27 June 1961.

67 Karl Bruno, 'An Experiment in Ethiopia': The Chilalo Agricultural Development Unit and Swedish Development Aid to Haile Selassie's Ethiopia, 1964–1974', *Comparativ*, 27 (2017), 54–74; Tor Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa. Vol. 1, Formation of a Popular Opinion (1950–1970)* (Uppsala 1999); Tore Linné Eriksen, *Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa* (Uppsala 2000); Christopher M Morgenstjerne, *Denmark and National Liberation in Southern Africa* (Uppsala 2003). Yotam Gidron, *Israel in Africa: Security, Migration, Interstate Politics* (London 2020); Zach Levey, 'The Rise and Decline of a Special Relationship: Israel and Ghana, 1957-1966', *African Studies Review*, 46 (2003). Older literature on Israel and African includes Bernard Reich, 'Israel's Policy in Africa', *Middle East Journal*, 18, 1 (1964), 14–26.

Murumbi's interest in educational advocacy stretched back to his Indian sojourn, when he vowed to secure scholarship opportunities for East Africans. In Britain, he pursued this task at the Loughborough Cooperative College in particular. By 1963, Murumbi had such a reputation in Kenya for being able to secure scholarships abroad that he was receiving a constant stream of letters from young people who hoped to study in Sweden, Egypt or Israel.⁶⁸ Murumbi thus played a pivotal role in facilitating the higher education opportunities that in part constituted networks of global decolonisation – which extended far beyond scholarships in colonial metropolises.⁶⁹ But, in the late 1950s, long before the timetable for Kenyan independence was secured, he began to think about the relationship between education and decolonisation in completely different terms, turning his attention towards basic education *within* Kenya and the question of the translatability of pedagogical practices across cultures and continents. Like his internationalism more broadly, this specific attention to educational diplomacy is almost entirely unexplored in analyses of Murumbi as a Kenyan leader.

In 1957, following the Bombay ASC meeting, Murumbi visited Denmark to study Scandinavian approaches to education and rural development, and to secure scholarships. He left impressed by Danish 'Folk High Schools', which had been introduced in the mid-nineteenth century with the objective of mass popular education along Christian and nationalist lines for rural communities. By the mid-twentieth century, they existed in various forms across Scandinavia, serving as centres for adult education too, especially with technical and agricultural emphases. Murumbi understood this model within the same political project as scholarships, writing enthusiastically to Tom Mboya, who would soon organise his own famous 'Airlift' of Kenyan students to the US. Mboya was tasked with recruiting Kenyan students for scholarships at the Danish *Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke* (Association for International Co-operation), making clear to recipients, half of which should be girls, that they were expected to be 'useful' on their return.⁷⁰ This was in line with what Murumbi told his contact in Denmark, that the intention was not to train a small elite, but to produce 'trained workers who will go back home and train others'.⁷¹ Indeed, with their focus on democracy over competition, Murumbi imagined Folk Schools *within* Kenya too. As he told Mboya, 'I need not stress the implications on political education that could subtly be given in such schools'.⁷² Thinking now beyond scholarships abroad, Murumbi formulated ideas about the politically transformative potential of education in contexts of colonial

68 See extensive examples from 1963 in KNA MAC/KEN/78/1.

69 Eric Burton, 'Decolonization, the Cold War, and Africans' Routes to Higher Education Overseas, 1957–65', *Journal of Global History*, 15, 1 (2020), 169–91.

70 KNA MAC/KEN/78/1 Murumbi to Mboya, 13 June 1957. On the problems of returning students in independent Kenya, see Daniel Branch, 'Political Traffic: Kenyan Students in Eastern and Central Europe, 1958–69', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 53, 4 (2018), 811–31.

71 KNA MAC/KEN/78/1 Murumbi to Aage Rosendal Nielsen (The Scandinavian Seminar), 22 April 1957.

72 KNA MAC/KEN/78/1 Murumbi to Mboya, 13 June 1957.

oppression, in ways that foreshadow the theories of pedagogical thinkers like Paulo Freire.⁷³

Murumbi's intensifying practical efforts in education planning were also a response to the seeming inaction of the committee-creating and speech-making of European anticolonial work. At the 'Conference on Africa' at New College, Oxford, in 1960, Murumbi insisted on the need to be 'more practical', given that 'the task of liberating the continent of Africa cannot be done merely by passing resolutions'.⁷⁴ He pointed in particular to the lack of trained staff to run cooperatives, the same problem considered earlier when he voiced ideas about training 'trainers' in Denmark. This emphasis on practical steps forward resurfaced in the aftermath of a meeting on 'Europe in the World' organised by the World Assembly of Youth (WAY) in Brussels in February 1961. Writing to WAY Secretary General, David Wirmark, Murumbi noted 'a great deal of interest among youth in Europe on the problems of Africa but they are at a loss as to how to be of practical assistance'. Murumbi suggested that, rather than making more speeches, a practical committee be set up to circulate information and organise cooperative training in agriculture, manufacturing and retail, financed by firms with business interests in Africa. In this way, the 'great fund of latent goodwill' among the European youth could be 'canalize[d] towards some constructive effort'.⁷⁵ The details about where funds would come from and the broadening scope of cooperative courses confirms Murumbi's increasing concern with integrating a socialist 'third way' into the realities of a (post)colonial African economy. He wrote that Africa's 'social revolution' must follow not the 'violent' route of Soviet collective farms but the 'democratic' route visible in Scandinavia.⁷⁶

Murumbi was well aware that, as an educated and charismatic East African, he was also a source of 'inspiration' for his Scandinavian contacts.⁷⁷ Returning to Scandinavia in October 1961, he became involved in a project to build an 'Inter-African High School' along Folk School lines, to be call the Hammarskjöld Memorial School.⁷⁸ The death of Dag Hammarskjöld, Swedish UN Secretary General, in a plane crash in Zambia en route to the Congo in September 1961, raised mutual awareness of Scandinavia and East-Central Africa across a wider public in both regions, providing impetus for fundraising.⁷⁹ Scandinavian funders envisaged the school in the context of a decolonising world order. Norwegian

73 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York NY 1970). Similar ideas appear in Frantz Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* (Paris 1961).

74 KNA MAC/KEN/80/1 Programme and speeches for 'Conference on Africa', New College, Oxford, 2–3 July 1960.

75 KNA MAC/KEN/79/1 Murumbi to David Wirmark, 18 April 1961.

76 KNA MAC/KEN/81/6 Handwritten notes from Murumbi's Scandinavia trip, October 1961.

77 On inspiration and the Third World idea in Europe, see Robert Gildea, James Mark, and Niek Pas, 'European Radicals and the "Third World"', *Cultural and Social History*, 8, 4 (2011), 449–71; Christoph Kalter, 'From Global to Local and Back: The "Third World" Concept and the New Radical Left in France', *Journal of Global History*, 12, 1 (2017), 115–36.

78 KNA MAC/KEN/81/4 Cato Aall to Frene Ginwala, 24 October 1961.

79 Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation*, 52.

contact for the project, Cato Aall, described this to Frene Ginwala, South African exile in Dar es Salaam: first, potential donors would want clear evidence that the school was ‘wanted by Africans themselves [...] not what someone else thinks is best for them’; second, it had to be built in Tanganyika (where full independence was timetabled for December of that year) because ‘one is not willing to invest the money in a country under British sovereignty’ such as Kenya; third, UNESCO should not be involved in providing funds, because it would mean the project would have less ‘political appeal’ among East Africans. This script for what solidarity projects should look like was based on visions that Murumbi helped to foster – another case of ‘reverse tutelage’. Aall concluded that ‘in this country [Norway] everyone is so well off that time does not mean very much, because very little of importance can happen here’.⁸⁰

At the same time as harnessing the enthusiasm of fundraisers, Murumbi increasingly reflected on how applicable foreign models of education were to Kenyan contexts. He had always made clear in public speeches that the answer was not ‘to borrow an ideology, or to copy an ideology from Europe’.⁸¹ He grappled with the implications of this in the notes taken during his 1961 Scandinavia trip, during which he met political party representatives (including Swedish Prime Minister Tage Erlander) and non-governmental organisations like the Scandinavian Seminar. Murumbi jotted down an ‘outline for a village development plan for Kenya’, which was to accompany scholarships abroad and the expansion of the Nairobi Royal Technical College, created in 1955. In this plan, ‘model villages’ could be used not only to teach people how to use land and livestock, but also to teach farmers ‘the rudiments of politics’ to enable them to understand their ‘impact on their community’, specifically in a ‘pan-African’ and ‘world’ context.⁸² This also constituted an implicit rejection of colonial ‘new village’ programmes in Kenya, just as Julius Nyerere’s village development schemes would in independent Tanzania.⁸³

African contexts had of course long defined Murumbi’s worldview. Writing to his Israeli contact Menahem Bargil in 1957, he concluded that ‘it is only as Socialists that African politicians will be able to develop a broader vision – that of internationalism both within the continent of Africa and of Africa in the context of the world today’. He lamented that few African leaders were really socialists, precisely because of the ‘heady influence of nationalism’.⁸⁴ With his trip to Scandinavia, however, Murumbi thought in increasing detail about the practical aspects for community development planning at home. For example, he noted that

80 KNA MAC/KEN/81/4 Cato Aall to Frene Ginwala, 24 October 1961.

81 KNA MAC/KEN/80/1 Programme and speeches for ‘Conference on Africa’, New College, Oxford, 2–3 July 1960.

82 KNA MAC/KEN/81/6 Handwritten notes from Murumbi’s Scandinavia trip, October 1961.

83 Moritz Feichtinger, ‘“A Great Reformatory”: Social Planning and Strategic Resettlement in Late Colonial Kenya and Algeria’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 1952–63, 52, 1 (2017), 45–72; Priya Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania: Between the Village and the World* (Cambridge 2015).

84 KNA MAC/KEN/82/7 Murumbi to Bargil, 27 May 1957.

while he saw parallels in the rural development patterns of Denmark and Kenya, education had to be tailored to a specific environment. He wrote down the name of Jørgen Carl la Cour, the nineteenth-century Danish agronomist who pressed for an agricultural focus in Folk Schools, but then noted that low literacy rates in rural Kenya were an obstacle to transplanting Danish models. As such, Murumbi emphasised the need for not just rural libraries, but also radios and clubs for listening or for reading newspapers aloud.⁸⁵

In dialogue with contacts in Scandinavia and Israel during the years prior to his return to Kenya in 1962, Murumbi came to espouse practical action above all. The claim that he had left Nairobi for India in 1952 to study community development might not have been the full story, but was never a mere mask. It assumed increasing importance in his anticolonial philosophy over the decade. Certainly, his misgivings about resolution-passing and speech-making were not without their own contradictions and limitations. But, in that, he was part of a moment of decolonisation in which anticolonial thinkers, conscious of the untranslatability of development models in other parts of the world and all too aware of the constraints of manpower and finance they faced, were determined not to let their own projects become subsumed by Cold War frictions between European sympathisers. Even if Scandinavia's 'third way' had its fair share of inconsistencies, Murumbi proactively forged links which allowed him to locate education and community development as the cornerstone of socialist internationalism for Kenya.

Murumbi's internationalist and community development convictions persisted on this return to East Africa as Kenya won independence in 1963. He attended the February 1963 Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation conference in Moshi, Tanganyika, a meeting whose analysis then and now is dominated by the question of Sino-Soviet competition over the Third World and the resultant demise of Afro-Asian coordination.⁸⁶ During the conference, Murumbi took more interest in the new, local Kilimanjaro Native Cooperative Union than in Cold War grandstanding or the Sino-Indian conflict on which his old friend Chaman Lall, the head of the Indian delegation and host of Murumbi's 1953 trip to India, passionately agitated.⁸⁷ At Moshi, Murumbi affirmed above all the need in Kenya for 'the extensive reorganisation of the economy along socialist lines' and pan-African cooperation to resist the 'neocolonial menace' of western capitalism.⁸⁸ These developmental priorities continued in his work as a Kenyan minister. In December 1963, Murumbi sat on Kenya's first delegation to the United Nations, a trip where more time was spent securing development opportunities in the historically

85 KNA MAC/KEN/81/6 Handwritten notes from Murumbi's Scandinavia trip, October 1961.

86 Permanent Secretariat of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization, *The Third Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Conference: Moshi, Tanganyika, February, 4–11, 1963* (Cairo 1963); Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World* (Chapel Hill, NC 2015), 97–9.

87 KNA MAC/CON/195/4 Kilimanjaro Publicity Committee Invitation to Moshi Town Council (undated); TNA FCO/168/977 Controlled News Agency coverage of A.A.P.S.O, 4 February 1963, 2–3.

88 J. Murumbi, 'Kenya's Economic Problems: Need for Establishing New Contacts', *Afro-Asian Bulletin* 5, 5–8 (1963), 5–9.

black colleges of Georgia and industrial plants of Michigan than in the diplomatic corridors of Washington.⁸⁹ As vice-president in 1966, Murumbi lauded the 'living monument' of Israel's commitment to Kenya's education, the Machakos School of Social Workers, during an official reception for Prime Minister Levi Eshkol.⁹⁰ The weight of his internationalist experience in the 1950s generated reams of carefully preserved correspondence with old friends in his role as a Kenyan diplomat and into retirement.

This article is about journeys. First, it outlines in rare detail the physical journeys of a mobile African activist across Afro-Asian, European socialist and pan-African worlds of the 1950s. Murumbi's mobility provided breathing room to network and amass resources, but also 'to imagine freedom at an abstract level and, in the same thought, plan the Africanist specificities of its content'.⁹¹ Second, in this regard, it charts the specific intellectual journey of Murumbi himself on the relationship between community development, internationalism and decolonisation arising from his travels among the 'expatriate patriots' of the Indian Ocean, left-leaning Brits, fellow mobile African and Asian activists, and towards the socialist experiments of Israel and Scandinavia, the latter almost entirely absent in assessments of Africa's 1950s. Third, as coda, it hints at the grander political journey of Kenya itself across the decolonising 1950s and 1960s.

Disillusioned with the authoritarian direction of the Kenyattan regime and grieving the assassination in 1965 of his friend Pio Pinto, 'Murumbi resigned the vice-presidency and turned away from public life in late 1966' to become an executive for Rothman's cigarette company. It is easy to romanticise the nature of the break. As a senior Kenyan statesman since 1963, Murumbi had tolerated the darker aspects of the KANU machine without public protest. As foreign minister he officially supported the capitalist direction of Kenyatta's state, for instance reassuring New York investors that Kenya was open for business and profit on his 1963 US visit.⁹² In private, he confessed his frustrations to the British Labour MP Leslie Hale, who he hosted in Nairobi in 1952 and with whom he worked in London, lamenting that 'we have thrown overboard all our socialist principles and we will have to pay dearly for this in the long run'.⁹³ Murumbi's was the 'path not taken', in the words of his biographers, as he retired to the prodigious collection of African material culture for which he is best remembered today.

89 KNA MAC/KEN/88/13 Itineraries of Kenya's first delegation on the United Nations, December 1963.

90 KNA MAC/KEN/93/4 Speech by the Vice-President in honour of his Excellency, Levi Eshkol, June 1966.

91 McCann, 'Where was the *Afro?*', 120.

92 Daniel Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair, 1963–2011* (New Haven, CT 2011), 37–8.

93 KNA MAC/KEN/75/13 Murumbi to Leslie Hale, 31 January 1967.

Celebrating Murumbi's contribution to the Kenyan heritage sector is justified, but the museums that house his collection were only one part of the visions he espoused surrounding education and community development in the 1950s, with other projects, like a Pan-African Centre for African Studies, falling by the way-side.⁹⁴ Moreover, to focus on the paths not taken in the 1960s occludes the importance of the paths that *were* taken with such zest in the 1950s to help secure and define Kenya's freedom when its attainment was no sure thing.⁹⁵ Below the high-politics of KANU, Murumbi's legacies lived on into independence, for example through the lives of the many students educated at the Tel Aviv Afro-Asian Institute, Loughborough Cooperative College or Danish Folk Schools thanks to Murumbi's internationalism and belief in the transformative power of mass education. In postcolonial Kenya more widely, as Kara Moskowitz has shown, ideas about development were central to the negotiation of citizenship.⁹⁶ When thinking about the open-endedness of African decolonisation, Murumbi's case is thus instructive for moving beyond questions of territorial configurations towards a fuller understanding of anticolonial state-making as a quest to transform lives.

But this article is, as importantly, an intervention about how African citizens participated in, and defined, international society to their own ends in ways previously obscured by the statist and western weight of Cold War and development scholarship.⁹⁷ Murumbi's nuanced work was defined neither by Cold War rivalries nor Third Worldism, even as his endeavours were inextricable from both sets of dynamics. Murumbi's decisive turn to community development and educational programmes for Kenya – away from uncritical statements of conference solidarity – is best understood not as a response to foreign or universal theoretical frameworks, but as a dialogue with his journeys and conversations. Over the 1950s, he imbibed the experiments of socialist Asia, and observed first-hand the deficiencies and lethargy of British socialism as he saw new pastures in Scandinavia, Israel and the pan-African world.

Murumbi understood Kenyan development and international co-operation in concert, but with an increasingly pointed and pragmatic internal monologue about the translatability of international development models to Kenya's specific needs into the 1960s. This understanding, and his own skilled activism, enabled a certain 'reverse tutelage' elaborated by Gopal.⁹⁸ Murumbi knew his engagement with socialist institutions for African application affected the manner in which leftist

94 Thanks to Marian Nur Goni for drawing our attention to the Centre project.

95 The extent of continuity in calls for social reform and social justice between Mau Mau and Kenyan activism since is explored in Nicholas Githuku, *Mau Mau Crucible of War: Statehood, National Identity, and Politics in Postcolonial Kenya* (Lanham, MD 2016).

96 Kara Moskowitz, *Seeing Like a Citizen: Decolonization, Development, and the Making of Kenya, 1945–1980* (Athens, OH 2019).

97 On the historiographical genealogies, lexicographical debates and methodological challenges of 'international society' as a category, especially as pertains to contextualising understandings of the 'state', see Erez Manela, 'International Society as a Historical Subject', *Diplomatic History*, 44, 2 (2020), 184–209.

98 Gopal, *Insurgent Empire*, 8.

Scandinavians or Britons attempted to comprehend a rapidly changing decolonising order. To borrow Daniel Immerwahr's term on US development campaigns – another context of feedback from third world to first – the internationalist Murumbi excelled in 'thinking small' about Kenya's big questions in the 1950s.⁹⁹ To Murumbi's great disappointment, Kenyatta's government of the 1960s did not listen to his answers.

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99 Immerwahr, *Thinking Small*.

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