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Relations between the Non-Aligned Countries of Africa and the Second World (1960—1980s): The Case of Sierra Leone

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Abstract. The research covers Sierra Leone's relations with the Second World through the prism of Sierra Leone's foreign policy. Two periods of Sierra Leone's foreign policy are considered: during the Westminster bipartisan model from 1961 to 1970, and when the authoritarian regime led by President Siaka Stevens was established from 1971 to 1985. The central issue of the research is analysis of Sierra Leone's cooperation with the Soviet Union. The aim of the research is to identify the factors that guided the non-aligned countries within the bipolar confrontation of the second half of the 20th century in building their relations with the socialist bloc. The relevance of the topic is related to the fact that the logic and principles of building relations of small non-aligned countries with both limited power resources and little political and economic ambitions with key world powers are less reflected in studies. The research is based upon comparative and historical-genetic methods as well as case studies. The author makes use of materials from the Sierra Leone Public Archives. The author concludes that Sierra Leone's relations with the Second World were based on economic pragmatism rather than ideological or political proximity. For Sierra Leone, relations with socialist countries served as a tool for diversifying its foreign policy. This set Sierra Leone apart from its neighboring West African states, which either maintained an orientation towards first-world countries, namely France and the US, or reoriented themselves towards the Soviet Union.

Key words: Cold War, Second World, Third World, West Africa, Sierra Leone

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Взаимоотношения неприсоединившихся стран Африки и «второго мира» (1960—1980-е гг.) на примере Сьерра-Леоне

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Аннотация. Раскрывается проблематика отношений африканских стран с государствами «второго мира» через призму внешнеполитической деятельности Сьерра-Леоне. Рассматриваются два периода внешней политики Сьерра-Леоне — в годы существования Вестминстерской двухпартийной модели в 1961—1970 гг.

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и в 1971—1985 гг., когда в стране установился авторитарный режим во главе с президентом Сиакой Стивенсом. Центральное место занимает анализ сотрудничества Сьерра-Леоне и Советского Союза. Цель — определить, чем руководствовались страны, избравшие путь неприсоединения в рамках биполярного противостояния второй половины XX в., выстраивании своих отношений с социалистическим блоком. Актуальность темы связана с тем, что логика и принципы выстраивания отношения с ключевыми мировыми державами малых неприсоединившихся стран, обладающих как небольшими силовыми ресурсными возможностями, так и ограниченными политическими и экономическими амбициями, в меньшей степени отражены в научных работах. Исследование опирается на компаративистский и историко-генетический методы, а также на метод кейс-стади. Также используются материалы Государственного архива Сьерра-Леоне. Автор приходит к выводу, что отношения Сьерра-Леоне и стран «второго мира» основывались скорее на экономическом прагматизме, нежели чем на основе идеологической или политической близости. Для Сьерра-Леоне отношения с социалистическими странами выступали инструментом диверсификации внешнеполитической деятельности. Это выделяло Сьерра-Леоне на фоне соседних государств Западной Африки, которые либо сохраняли ориентацию на страны «первого мира», а именно Францию и США, либо же переориентировались на Советский Союз.

Ключевые слова: холодная война, второй мир, третий мир, Западная Африка, Сьерра-Леоне

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Introduction

The decolonization of African countries, which began in the second half of the 1950s, led to the emergence of a large number of new independent states with significant resources and borders, infrastructure, organization of social and political structure inherited from colonial empires. The entry of these states into the Cold War international relations' system was accompanied by struggle over their favors by the Western and socialist blocs. The stratification of states based on their belonging to one of the “three worlds” became widespread in the middle of the 20th century to reflect the parties of the Cold War. The “first” and “second” worlds included, respectively, the United States and its allies, on the one hand, and the countries of the socialist bloc, on the other. The concept of the Third World' was introduced for the remaining developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America by French researcher Alfred Sauvy in the short article “Trois mondes, une planète.”¹

¹ Sauvy A. Trois mondes, une planète // L'Observateur. 1952 (Août 14). N°118. P. 14. URL: <http://www.homme-moderne.org/societe/demo/sauvy/3mondes.html> (accessed:

These international conditions have become a major influence shaping the foreign policy of the newly independent African states, their strategy of expanding independence, development and the opportunity to gain their own agency in politically significant global processes.

The Basics of African States Engagement with the Parties to the Cold War

The interaction of African states with the two blocs was determined to a large extent by the raw material exports orientation of their economies, the lack of material resources and personnel, the need to strengthen and set up key public and state institutions and overcome the remaining forms of dependence on former colonizers. Soviet historiography contains fundamental studies of the key features and problems of the liberated countries when choosing a further path of development. The experience of countries with “non-capitalist

21.09.2022). See also: (Pletsch, 1981, pp. 565—578; Solarz, 2021, pp. 54—57).

development path” was studied especially carefully (see, for example: (Gura & Nesuk, 1981; Kiva, 1978)).

In non-Russian historiography the problems of postcolonial development faced by the liberated countries are particularly reflected in the works of authors with neo-Marxist and postcolonial attitudes (see, for example: (Amin, 1967; Taylor, 2020, p. 50); for more information see: (Shipilov, 2019, pp. 207—208)). Nevertheless, in today’s context of global transformation and the growing importance of the Third World countries, the problem arises of how relevant these processes are to the most vulnerable countries, especially small African states. Hence the features of their inclusion in the system of international economic and political relations are to be carefully examined. In this regard, the historical experience of Sierra Leone, one of the poorest African states, is indicative in exploring the cooperation of such a state with countries of various economic and political orientations during the Cold War (especially considering Sierra Leone’s policy of non-alignment compared to divergent foreign political stances of its regional neighbors).

In the wake of independence African countries faced a fundamental choice of the model of interaction with the outside world in an environment of confrontation between two Cold War blocs. One of the available options was to maintain preferential interaction with the former colonizers and integrate into the world economy and the system of international relations on the terms that were largely determined by France, Great Britain and smaller European powers. An alternative to this could have been priority cooperation with the United States, which offered assistance to the African states in their development and the establishment of independent institutions, but on condition of maintaining political loyalty and a model of economic relations most beneficial for American business (Rothermund, 2014, p. 23).

In these cases, the potential for political and other interaction between those African countries that chose such models with the socialist bloc states (just beginning to establish their presence in this region) was sharply limited.²

At the same time, African countries that sought to get rid of the remaining forms of neocolonial influence of their former colonial overlords as quickly as possible were interested in enhanced cooperation with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. For these countries, it represented an alternative source of aid to that of the former colonizers, which would allow them to overcome the former forms of dependence in a short period of time. The declared commitment of these African countries to the principles of a “non-capitalist path of development” is often explained by contemporary scholars mainly for pragmatic reasons, and their access to support from the socialist bloc is perceived as a material source for de facto decolonization (see, for example: (Mazov, 2020, p. 71)).

Nevertheless, not all developing nations have chosen the path of unambiguous foreign policy alignment with one of the Cold War blocs within the framework of their ideological confrontation. Multiple countries of Asia and Africa, which had already gained independence (or were preparing for it) distanced themselves from the poles of the Cold War in the framework of the 1955 Bandung Conference, which laid the foundations of the Non-Aligned Movement. An appropriate foreign policy stance, which did not bind these countries by rigid political commitments to the great powers, allowed them to cooperate with both blocs, to receive assistance from both sides (although not necessarily in such capacities as those of the

² In addition, the so-called countries of migrant capitalism with a significant white minority controlling power in the country, mainly in Southern Africa, refrained from contacts with the USSR and other socialist countries (Filatova & Davidson, 2012, p. 47), however, this category of countries is outside the scope of our analysis.

decolonized countries that decided on strong alignment with one of the blocs) and at the same time to maintain a greater degree of independence and flexibility (Rothermund, 2014, p. 23). For all their political heterogeneity, representatives of non-aligned countries mostly adhered to this attitude (Lüthi, 2014, p. 97).

Despite the nominal equidistance of this movement from the two blocs as a whole, in the wake of Bandung Conference the United States and other Western countries were rather cautious about it, while socialist countries have predominantly approved of it. This was explained within the framework of broad support by socialist countries for the decolonization movements, even for non-communist forces predominant in the anti-colonial movements of the liberated countries. Supporting the national liberation movements of Asia and Africa, as well as organizing their coordination, was part of the Comintern's policy since the late 1920s,³ therefore, these countries were seen by the USSR rather as potential allies in achieving at least part of the Soviet international agenda.

Realizing the possibility of such a convergence of the interests of the Second and Third world, the Eisenhower administration in the 1950s treated this movement with distrust. Nevertheless, the United States maintained a more open position on decolonization issues than the European countries, namely the former colonial powers. Unlike the latter, the American administration did not seek to preserve colonial privileges and formal inequality in the relations of the First and Third world. Instead, the U.S. was ready to cooperate with the new leaders of independent countries in order to prevent their exposure to the Soviet influence as well as to substitute the of former colonial powers' economic presence and provide advantages to American firms. Even under the Eisenhower

administration, in 1956, this position was expressed in diplomatic support for Egypt during the Suez crisis, and the election John F. Kennedy as the U.S. President in 1960 shifted American policy towards promotion of economic development in decolonized Asia and Africa in a direction acceptable to the United States (Rothermund, 2014, pp. 23, 26).

Thus, the competition of the USSR, the USA and their allied blocs in providing economic and other assistance to non-aligned African countries has become an important element of global confrontation. For the liberated countries, access to the resources of the great powers made it possible to partially solve the socio-economic, institutional and infrastructural problems that they had faced since the 1960s. At the same time, the policy of both socialist and Western countries pursued in relation to the decolonized countries of Africa since 1960s through 1980s was not always consistent and fluctuated depending on external and internal circumstances. For instance, the African policy of Jimmy Carter was more focused on promoting human rights, with no exceptions for politically aligned countries, while the Reagan administration's top priority was the support for declaratively loyal regimes ready to resist the penetration of Soviet influence into Africa.⁴

Soviet policy on the African continent was characterized by a competition of ideological and pragmatic attitudes. The first approach required more active assistance to countries that had chosen the “non-capitalist path of development,” as well as containment of Western influence in the region, which also implied some support for conditionally non-aligned countries. The pragmatic approach to the realization of Soviet interests in Africa consisted in conducting profitable trade and economic activities in the region (with access to its mineral resource base, fish and agricultural

³ For example, in the framework of the Brussels anti-Imperialist Conference organized by representatives of the Comintern in 1927 (Mišković, 2014, p. 2).

⁴ Bright N. O. Interview with Jimmy Carter // PBS Global Connections. 1997. URL: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/globalconnections/liberia/film/jimmycarter.html> (accessed: 21.09.2022).

resources), even allowing cooperation with ideologically distant forces, as well as providing them with assistance based on the limited capabilities of the USSR and other socialist countries (Mazov, 2020, pp. 66—72).

As a result, in many cases Western states had more funds available for aid to African countries. However, this could have been compensated for by the qualitative features of aid from the socialist bloc, its concentration in the most important sectors for African counterparts (for example, education, medicine and the development of the agricultural sector), as well as lower accountability requirements for allocated funds (Filatova & Davidson, 2012, pp. 281—282).

Thus, even African countries that did not declare adherence to a socialist orientation were generally interested in maintaining a degree of contacts with the Soviet Union and the rest of the countries of the socialist bloc. The Cold War context, despite the increased regional risks associated with peripheral conflicts, has given the newly independent African countries opportunity to use the resources of the opposing blocs to solve the most pressing problems of state-building, as well as to manoeuvres between the great powers in order to defend their own interests and increase their independence and weight in the international arena. At the same time, the literature on the policies of the ‘non-aligned’ states during the Cold War mostly focuses on the interests and motivations of the largest or most influential countries aspiring for dominance in their own region (see, for example: (Mišković, Fischer-Tiné & Boskowska, 2014)).

The logic and principles of interaction with the outside world for small non-aligned countries with less resources and regional political or economic ambitions are reflected to a lesser extent, which can be somewhat made up for by the given analysis of respective features in case of the West Africa and particularly Sierra Leone. This paper attempts to assess the priorities that small non-aligned African

countries (using Sierra Leone as an example) pursued within the framework of cooperation with the USSR and its allies, and the way they used ideological (distance from the West) and pragmatic (access to their own natural resources) motives to obtain aid from socialist countries.

West African Strategies for Adapting to the Cold War

Sierra Leone is located in a sub-region that has witnessed an array of foreign policy models regarding both former colonizers and the Cold War blocs.

Thus, most of the Francophone countries of West Africa, primarily the Ivory Coast,⁵ gained independence from France in 1960 on the condition of maintaining its military presence to ensure the security of new political regimes, regulating the economic and monetary policy of the region via the CFA franc tied to the French franc, and maintaining close political ties with France (Richter, 2011, p. 235). Privileged relations with Paris became the basis of rapid economic growth in the 1960s and 1970s for the Ivory Coast due to the development of cocoa bean production with French assistance and investment, as well as the justification for claims to political leadership in West Africa during the reign of Felix Houphouët-Boigny (Chauveau & Dozon, 1985, pp. 68, 71; Fauré & Médard, 1982, pp. 96—97).

Such a foreign policy course also determined the restrained attitude of the Ivorian leadership to diplomatic relations with the USSR and other socialist countries, which were established only seven years after the country gained independence and with the approval of France, which pursued a more independent policy towards the socialist bloc than the other Western countries. Moreover, Soviet-Ivorian relations were severed already in 1969 due to the dissatisfaction of the Ivorian government with the policy of selecting students to study in

⁵ Ivory Coast — the official name of Republic of Côte d'Ivoire from 1960 to 1986.

the USSR and their possible ideological indoctrination. Diplomatic relations were not restored until 1986. At the same time the leadership of the Ivory Coast maintained close economic and political ties with the United States, West Germany and other nations of the Western bloc, which is generally characteristic of those African countries that have chosen a foreign policy orientation towards the former colonizer.

Liberia has become an example of a West African country that has chosen the path of political orientation towards the United States and the establishment of a different, 'decolonized' type of relations with the West. Nominally independent since 1847, the country began to establish active relations with the outside world only after the end of the World War II and in the conditions of the extensive decolonization of Africa. The reliance on the United States was caused by the dominance since 1926 of the American firm Firestone in Liberia's foreign trade and revenue sources, which displaced Great Britain as the country's key trading partner, and the economic assistance that Liberia began to receive from the United States under the presidency of William Tubman (the importance of the country as a military transshipment base on the Atlantic increased dramatically during the World War II).⁶ At the same time in the 1950s attempts were made by the USSR and Liberia to reestablish bilateral relations (that previously had existed with the Russian Empire from 1899 to 1917), culminating with success in 1956.⁷

⁶ The Chargé in Liberia (Wharton) to the Secretary of State Monrovia // Office of the Historian, Foreign Service Institute US Department of State. February 24, 1926. No. 336. URL: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1926v02/d339> (accessed: 21.09.2022). See also: (Dalton, 1965, p. 580).

⁷ Reference "On the Course of Negotiations of the Soviet Government Delegation with the Government of Liberia on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the USSR and Liberia". January 24, 1956 // *The History of Africa in Documents, 1870—1960*. Vol. 2: 1919—1960 / ed. by A.B. Davidson. P. 596. Moscow :

Nevertheless, Liberia's unambiguous foreign policy alignment with the United States in this era hindered the development of these relations and particularly led to the avoidance of full-fledged contacts with the Soviets by the head of Liberia. The very establishment of diplomatic relations on the Liberian side was motivated by the desire to obtain Soviet support at the UN.⁸ Only when William Tolbert came to power in Liberia in 1971 did the situation change somewhat: there was a parity opening of embassies in 1972, as well as the development of economic relations with Cuba and Libya (Obi, 2009, pp. 122—123). Liberia adhered to a more neutral position on the key issues of the Cold War during his rule, and security cooperation with the United States was seriously limited (Kieh, 2012, p. 176). This lasted until 1979, when the embassies of the

Nauka publ., 2007 [Справка «О ходе переговоров Советской правительственной делегации с правительством Либерии по вопросу установления дипломатических отношений между СССР и Либерией». 24 января 1956 г. // *История Африки в документах, 1870—1960*. Т. 2: 1919—1960 / отв. ред. А. Б. Давидсон. Москва : Наука, 2007. С. 596]. (In Russian).

⁸ See: J. Roberts to N. S. Khrushchev. Request for Financial Assistance in the Construction of a Clinic and School in the Settlement of Virginia. May 20, 1961 // *Russia and Africa — Documents and Materials of 1961 — Early 1970s* / ed. by S. V. Mazov, A. B. Davidson. P. 405. Moscow : *Politicheskaya entsiklopediya* publ., 2021 [Дж. Робертс — Н. С. Хрущеву. Просьба о финансовой помощи в строительстве клиники и школы в поселении Виргиния. 20 мая 1961 г. // *Россия и Африка. Документы и материалы. 1961 — начало 1970-х* / отв. ред. С. В. Мазов, А. Б. Давидсон. Москва : *Политическая энциклопедия*, 2021. С. 405]. (In Russian); Reference of the II African Department of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Trade Relations between the USSR and Liberia. July 23, 1962 // *Russia and Africa — Documents and Materials of 1961 — Early 1970s* / ed. by S. V. Mazov, A. B. Davidson. P. 409—410. Moscow : *Politicheskaya entsiklopediya* publ., 2021 [Справка II Африканского отдела МИД СССР о торговых отношениях СССР с Либерией. 23 июля 1962 г. Россия и Африка — документы и материалы 1961 — начала 1970-х гг. // *Россия и Африка. Документы и материалы. 1961 — начало 1970-х* / отв. ред. С. В. Мазов, А. Б. Давидсон. Москва : *Политическая энциклопедия*, 2021. С. 409—410]. (In Russian).

USSR and Romania were suspected of instigating anti-government protests, the so-called 'rice riots,' which led to a reduction in the size of diplomatic missions.

Samuel Doe, having overthrown William Tolbert in April 1980, sought to strengthen his personal power and relieve the pressure of increased Liberian debts, so he chose the strategy of resumed unambiguous foreign policy orientation towards the United States and close ties with the Reagan administration, offering himself as the chief West African ally in the fight against the communist threat on the continent.⁹ This led to the complete severance of diplomatic relations with the USSR in 1982. Later, in 1987, they were restored due to the difficulties in obtaining new volumes of American economic aid by Liberia, as well as in connection with the beginning of perestroika in the USSR, but on the whole the pro-American course of Liberia remained intact until the end of the Cold War and the beginning of its own civil conflict in 1989 (Kieh, 2012, p. 180).

Guinea has become the most characteristic example of a West African state that has chosen the path of socialist orientation and priority cooperation with the countries of the socialist bloc. It stood out sharply among most of the Francophone countries of the region and former French colonies by the fact that in 1958 it was the only one of them to choose independence from France in a referendum instead of expanded autonomy with the preservation of the sovereignty of Paris. This choice led to a sharp break with the former colonizer and a search for other sources of financial and economic support, the development of new institutions and infrastructure (Adamolekun, 1976, p. 56). This greatly contributed to the choice made by the Guinean regime of Ahmed Sekou-Toure in favor of rapprochement with the USSR,

⁹ Remarks of the President and Head of State Samuel K. Doe of Liberia Following Their Meetings // Reagan Presidential Library. August 17, 1982. URL: <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/81782d> (accessed: 21.09.2022).

receiving various types of assistance from the countries of the Second World.

Ghana was the most influential West African country claiming regional leadership and actively participating in African and global decolonization and non-alignment agenda. It was the first in Africa to free itself from colonial rule, declaring independence in 1957. Its leader, Kwame Nkrumah, was one of the key ideologues of pan-Africanism and in 1955, while still representing it as the British Gold Coast, he attended the Bandung Conference. By 1963, he became one of the main initiators of pan-African integration projects, which culminated in the creation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) (Kassaye Nigusie & Ivkina, 2020, pp. 32, 34).

Nevertheless, despite formally active participation in the Non-Aligned Movement, Ghana under Kwame Nkrumah was politically very close to the USSR, which was reflected not only in the Soviet economic assistance it received, but also in the presence of political advisers (for example, Vladimir Aboltin, who contributed to the creation of the country's economic development program as well as that of the OAU) (Mazov, 2020, pp. 66—72). In general, prior to the ousting of K. Nkrumah government in 1966, Ghana was one of the key political and economic partners of the USSR in Africa and also claimed regional leadership, given the active role of the country in continental integration processes. On the contrary, Sierra Leone can be classified as a small non-aligned country, devoid of large-scale ambitions for regional expansion and interested primarily in solving key issues of its own existence and development, building more even relations with both the USSR and the United States compared to the policies pursued by K. Nkrumah in Ghana.

Thus, a variety of approaches to the shaping of foreign policy in the context of the Cold War were practiced among Sierra Leone's neighboring countries, which also influenced relations with socialist bloc. However, the given

West African state has developed its own independent approach to this problem.

Building Sierra Leone's Relations with the Second World in the First Postcolonial Decade

The formation of Sierra Leone's foreign policy was influenced by its colonial legacy and the peculiarities of the further internal political structuring. Sierra Leone was established under the control of the British Crown (Zotova, Smirnov & Frenkel, 1994, p. 27). The gradual transfer of power into the hands of local elites and the decolonization, painless for London, was accompanied by the establishment in 1953 of a government led by Milton Margai, leader of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), who retained his post after the country's independence in 1961. The SLPP remained in power until 1967 (in 1964 Albert Margai, the half-brother of his predecessor, became the new prime minister) (Winter et al., 2016, p. 37). The opposing All People's Congress (APC) won the 1967 elections, and its leader Siaka Stevens became prime minister. The establishment of a new regime contributed to the removal of the previous generation of pro-British elites and marked the creation of an authoritarian one-party state that sharply distanced itself from the former metropolis. In this context, Sierra Leone's relations with the socialist bloc during the Cold War can be categorized by periods of the SLPP and the APC in power, each with its own specifics.

The economic model inherited from British colonial rule, based on the export of mineral and agricultural resources, also influenced the international stance of Sierra Leone, one of the poorest countries in the region (Zotova, Smirnov & Frenkel, 1994, p. 221; Keen, 2005, p. 36). By the late 1970s, the vulnerability of the country was partially compensated by the emergence of mutual military and political support mechanisms with neighboring Liberia and Guinea, which were oriented towards

different blocs of the Cold War, but were interested in the stability of their own regimes.¹⁰ In fact, Sierra Leone was of rather limited interest to the major world powers, mainly due to the country's resource capabilities, and this largely influenced the shaping of national foreign policy in the 1960s—1980s, and, in particular, relations with the socialist countries.

It is generally agreed today that the foreign policy of postcolonial Sierra Leone was based on relations with the former metropolis. Britain, having granted Sierra Leone independence, retained great political influence on the country, including in the military-political sphere, and the development of the most critical infrastructure of the young state depended on British assistance (for example, the construction of the capital's Lungi airport). Significant trade, economic and infrastructure assistance linked Sierra Leone with other advanced economies, primarily the United States, West Germany, Canada, France and Japan, which was also facilitated by the experience of the country's first leaders in cooperation with the outgoing colonial administration. Nevertheless, the internal political tensions between the SLPP and the APC, determined by ethnic and regional competition, did not lead to the polarization of the foreign policy courses proposed by the two opposing groups. This applied, among other things, to the socialist countries. Unlike the Ivory Coast closely connected with France and the US-oriented Liberian President Tubman, Sierra Leone leadership, even the governments of Milton and Albert Margai in the 1960s, did not limit ties with the Second World and established diplomatic relations with the USSR and other socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe immediately after independence in 1961.

¹⁰ A/SP3/5/81 Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance of Defence // Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). June 1981. Vol. 3. P. 9—13. URL: <https://www3.nd.edu/~ggoertz/rei/rei260/rei260.10tt1.pdf> (accessed: 21.09.2022).

Bilateral relations with the USSR intensified in 1965, when a mission to establish trade and good neighborly relations was initiated. The government of Sierra Leone approved the signing of a trade agreement with the USSR, a protocol on the supply of machinery and equipment, and an agreement on technical and cultural assistance. In February 1965, a proposal was initiated to send a Sierra Leone trade mission to the USSR.¹¹ As part of it, the government decided to explore the possibility of opening an embassy of Sierra Leone in the USSR. Whereas the USSR Embassy in Freetown had already been opened by that time. During the mission, potential Soviet aid for the development of agriculture and natural resources, as well as for the modernization of railways was negotiated. Representatives of Sierra Leone also visited Germany and Czechoslovakia where they agreed on the terms of trade and the provision of technical and other assistance, regardless of the ideological attitudes of the counterparties.¹² As part of this mission, Sierra Leone sought to expand the network of diplomatic missions abroad (while saving resources at the expense of the host country), obtain support for its own agriculture, and interest its partners in investing in the country. Thus, the trade agreement with Czechoslovakia provided for the supply of equipment for the construction of enterprises for the production of agricultural fertilizers, tools and irrigation equipment.

The negotiations for a trade agreement with the USSR in April 1965 were complicated by the instructions received by the delegation from Freetown, including those mediated by the British Embassy in Moscow, that trade

preferences of British Commonwealth countries should be taken into account. The head of the delegation, the Minister of Trade and Industry of Sierra Leone, suspected that the contents of such instructions had become known to the Soviet side, which adversely affected the course of negotiations and led to the unwillingness of representatives of the USSR to discuss the substance of the agreement. Instead, the delegation's program was filled with cultural activities and inspection of Soviet industrial facilities. The members of the delegation managed to normalize the situation by obtaining permission from the country's leadership not to mention preferences for the Commonwealth countries in the trade agreement with the USSR, which made it possible to resume constructive negotiations with the Soviets. As a result, the Soviet Union agreed to supply various equipment to Sierra Leone based on credit line in the amount of 10 million pounds with the possibility of expanding supplies to 20 million pounds at a rate of 3—3.5% for a period of 7 years, including a moratorium on interest for the first two years. These deliveries were carried out with a 10% deposit in the form of both financial transfers to Soviet accounts, and products exported from Sierra Leone.¹³ The Soviet counterparts also expressed their readiness to supply oil to Sierra Leone at the request of the African partners.

Initially, the USSR focused on economic assistance in training African specialists (and increasing the annual quota for students from Sierra Leone from 30 to 40 people), as well as on sending Soviet technical specialists to the country, primarily doctors, with the payment of standard domestic salaries on the spot and covering all other expenses at the expense of the Soviet Union.¹⁴ At the same time, the delegation of Sierra Leone sought to receive Soviet assistance in the areas of hydroelectric power development, railway network construction, geological exploration and the extraction of

¹¹ Sierra Leone Public Archives Office. Box 655. RG 4/IA1162. Proposed Sierra Leone Trade Mission to the U.S.S.R. Extract from Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet Held on 31st Dec., 1964.

¹² Sierra Leone Public Archives Office. Box 655. RG 4/IA1162. Report by the Minister of Trade and Industry on the Trade and Goodwill Mission to Western Germany, Czechoslovakia and U.S.S.R. Cabinet Conclusions CP (65) 284 on 27th May, 1965. P. 8—19.

¹³ Ibid. P. 11.

¹⁴ Ibid.

mining of mineral resources, road construction, agriculture, sports infrastructure and the development of ore reserves of the Tonkolli deposit.¹⁵ Within the framework of the protocol on the supply of equipment, deliveries of aircraft and helicopters, cars, tractors and agricultural machinery, road construction machinery, metalworking equipment, rail laying, etc. were agreed upon.¹⁶ In addition, a delegation of Soviet specialists was agreed to come to Sierra Leone in September 1965 to assess the needs of the West African state for Soviet assistance in agriculture, education and construction.

The Commission, which was in the country for a little more than a month, came to the conclusion that the most promising sectors of the economy of Sierra Leone are the extraction of mineral raw materials and some types of agriculture. The Soviets proposed further exploration surveys, but it turned out that some of the promising exploration sites were allocated to companies from France and West Germany. But the host country was ready to provide other sites for Soviet specialists to explore.¹⁷

First of all, both sides were interested in the exploration of reserves of iron ore, platinum, alluvial diamonds and kimberlitic diamond tubes. In addition, the Soviet representatives expressed their readiness to provide geological exploration equipment on the condition that local specialists would be trained. At the same

¹⁵ Sierra Leone Public Archives Office. Box 655. RG 4/IA1162. Report by the Minister of Trade and Industry on the Trade and Goodwill Mission to Western Germany, Czechoslovakia and U.S.S.R. Cabinet Conclusions CP (65) 284 on 27th May, 1965. P. 10.

¹⁶ See: Sierra Leone Public Archives Office. Box 655. RG 4/IA1162. Protocol on Deliveries of Machinery and Equipment from the USSR to Sierra Leone Dated on 26th April, 1965. P. 20—22; Sierra Leone Public Archives Office. Box 655. RG 4/IA1162. List of Machinery and Equipment for Delivery from the USSR to Sierra Leone. Annex to the Protocol Dated on May, 1965. P. 23.

¹⁷ Sierra Leone Public Archives Office. Box 655. RG 4/IA1162. Notes of Discussions with the Leader of the Soviet Team of Experts. 5th Oct., 1965. P. 44—48.

time, the archival materials show that not all the infrastructure proposals of the representatives of Sierra Leone caused the USSR's willingness to cooperate immediately.¹⁸ Nevertheless, reciprocal visits and negotiations resulted in the beginning in 1966 of deliveries of equipment according to the previously agreed scheme.¹⁹ Cooperation between the two countries in education and the training of African students both at home and abroad was the subject of a visit to the USSR by the Minister of Education of Sierra Leone in October 1964.²⁰

Overall, the archival materials confirm the pragmatic nature of the negotiations and agreements reached between Sierra Leone and the Soviet Union during the period when the SLPP was in power. The volume of economic cooperation was rather modest in comparison with similar cooperation with Western countries. In addition, British influence and the priority of cooperation with the West could create obstacles to the development of the country's relations with the socialist bloc, as shown by the course of negotiations in Moscow in April 1965. Nevertheless, these obstacles

¹⁸ See: Sierra Leone Public Archives Office. Box 655. RG 4/IA1162. Notes of Discussions with the Leader of the Soviet Team of Experts. 5th Oct., 1965. P. 44—48; Sierra Leone Public Archives Office. Box 655. RG 4/IA1162. Russian Aid Delegation to Sierra Leone. From Chief Inspector of Mines to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Development. M.D. 21/40. 16th Sept., 1965; Sierra Leone Public Archives Office. Box 655. RG 4/IA1162. Visit of Soviet Experts to Sierra Leone. From the Secretary, Training and Recruitment to the Development Office. 65/337. 24th Nov., 1965; Sierra Leone Public Archives Office. Box 653. RG 4/IA. Secret. Aide Memoire Prepared by the Sierra Leone Government on the Occasion of the Visit of the Sierra Leone Trade and Goodwill Mission to the U.S.S.R in April, 1965.

¹⁹ Sierra Leone Public Archives Office. Box 655. RG 4/IA1162. Sierra Leone — U.S.S.R. Trade & Cultural Agreement. Plant & Equipment. Russian Aid Delegation to Sierra Leone. From The Ministry of Works to the Permanent Secretary, Development Office. MW. 28/7. 7th Jan., 1966.

²⁰ Sierra Leone Public Archives Office. Box 655. RG 4/IA1162. Visit of the Minister of Education to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Cabinet Conclusions CP (64) on 13th April, 1964.

were not insurmountable, and, being interested primarily in technical cooperation with the Soviet Union, Sierra Leoneans could easily bypass these restrictions.

The USSR also followed a pragmatic course in establishing economic relations with the given West African state and did not seek to assume excessive commercial obligations. The motives for cooperation with Sierra Leone were, above all, the interests of cooperation in the supply of equipment and mineral extraction and exploration. Thus, even during the first decade of Sierra Leone's independence, under the conditions of the SLPP rule closely associated with Great Britain, rather friendly ties were established with the USSR, based not so much on ideological motives (compared to the relations of the Soviet Union with Guinea or Ghana) as on the pragmatic interests of both sides. There were no serious ideological and political problems in establishing these relations, which makes it possible to classify Sierra Leone's foreign policy in this period as 'non-aligned.'

Expansion of Sierra Leone's Cooperation with Socialist Countries during the Stevens Administration

Political turbulence at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s led to the dismantling of the Westminster bipartisan model involving the SLPP and the APC, making way for the establishment of the one-party authoritarian regime of the APC leader Siaka Stevens, who ruled until 1985 and declared a more balanced foreign policy towards the First and Second worlds. Under these conditions Sierra Leone's rather constructive relations with the USSR were further enhanced and supplemented by increased cooperation with the socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. During this period, the Soviet Union was more actively sending doctors, technicians, geologists and other scientists and researchers to Sierra Leone. Aeroflot airlines

launched direct flights between Moscow and Freetown, educational institutions were established in Sierra Leone to study the Russian language, and scholarships for students from Sierra Leone in Soviet universities continued to be actively allocated. There was cooperation at the level of parties and public organizations. For example, Soviet specialists in 1981 contributed to the establishment of the party press of the APC. In addition, representatives of Sierra Leone were invited to cultural events in the USSR (in particular, film festivals hosting artwork from Asia, Africa and Latin America), as well as religious events (for example, the conference of Muslims in the USSR in 1980).²¹

Cooperation with other socialist countries was also actively developing. Almost all of them provided quotas for the training of students from Sierra Leone, as well as provided technical assistance following the example of the USSR, sent doctors to the country and maintained trade relations on agricultural and mineral products. The GDR offered Sierra Leone cooperation in the sports field. Yugoslavia was preparing a program for the construction of a hydroelectric power plant in Bumbuna for Sierra Leone. Poland and Czechoslovakia, in addition to the standard areas of cooperation, were interested in supplies of construction equipment and materials, food and chemical products to the country, as well as the export of diamonds, cocoa beans, coffee, iron ore, bauxite and other types of mineral raw materials and agricultural products from there. The Hungarian People's Republic, in addition to cooperating with Sierra Leone in the provision of scholarships and the development of cooperation in the scientific and technical field,

²¹ See: Sierra Leone Public Archives Office. Box 115. 14929/14/5/1. 344. 18/1/1982. Review of Relations with East European Countries for 1981; Sierra Leone Public Archives Office. Box 121. 15348/11. Letter from the Embassy of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Sierra Leone No. 69/80. May 29, 1980.

sent its specialists to modernize the national railway system.²²

Sierra Leone's relations with Bulgaria were predominantly focused on the educational sphere and were somewhat complicated by problems in financing students' stay in the Balkan country, as well as by incidents of violence against them by the local population.²³ On the whole, the documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sierra Leone indicate a declared readiness to assist the country's development, primarily in the most important technical areas and in personnel training. However, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe attributed the modest amount of this cooperation to the lack of an elaborate legal and contractual framework.

It seems that the real reason for such restrictions was the preservation of the pragmatic approach of the socialist bloc countries to the small West African country, which was not of significant ideological interest to them, but remained promising in some areas of trade and economic relations. According to the documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the interest in cooperation on the part of Sierra Leone (mainly in the educational sphere) lay in the prohibitively high cost of education in most Western countries and the opportunity to take advantage of the scholarships offered by socialist countries.²⁴ In addition, it was noted that the government of Sierra Leone should not avoid the small costs associated with maintaining relations with socialist countries, since in return the state receives much more in

the form of trained national personnel from among doctors, engineers, teachers and scholars.²⁵

Thus, pragmatism in the relations between Sierra Leone and the socialist bloc states was present on both sides. The development of these relations was not ideologized. However, during the period of Siaka Stevens' tenure, foreign policy distancing from Great Britain and a more consistent commitment to the principles of non-alignment in general contributed to the expansion of contacts in comparison with the initial period of relations under the governments of Milton and Albert Margai. The resignation of Siaka Stevens in 1985 and the subsequent internal political crisis that resulted in 1991 civil war outbreak, as well as the start of perestroika in the USSR and the revision of relations with African states led to the end of this format of cooperation. But these trends are quite typical for the relations of small non-aligned countries with the Second World in the relevant timeframe.

Conclusion

The relations between Sierra Leone and the socialist bloc countries during the Cold War, after the beginning of active decolonization in Africa, provide insight into the nature of relations between the Second World and small non-aligned countries that had no ambitions for regional leadership. Sierra Leone was moving towards independence in staged and gradual manner, maintaining ties with Great Britain and other Western powers, which, however, did not prevent the expansion of diplomatic contacts beyond this group of countries. This contributed to the formation of fairly friendly relations with the USSR, and then with the rest of the socialist bloc states not so much on the basis of ideological and political proximity, but rather in the interests of diversification and the use of opportunities for trade, economic, technical and educational cooperation. For both sides the

²² Sierra Leone Public Archives Office. Box 115. 14929/14/5/1. 344. 18/1/1982. Review of Relations with East European Countries for 1981.

²³ See: Sierra Leone Public Archives Office. Box 115. 14929/14/5/1. 344. 18/1/1982. Review of Relations with East European Countries for 1981; Sierra Leone Public Archives Office. Box 122. UN/118. Press Reports of Alleged Brutality of African Students in Bulgaria. The Permanent Mission of Sierra Leone to the United Nations. UN/POL/753/1/17. February 25, 1963.

²⁴ Sierra Leone Public Archives Office. Box 115. 14929/14/5/1. 344. 18/1/1982. Review of Relations with East European Countries for 1981.

²⁵ *Ibid.* P. 8.

principle of economic pragmatism was the highest priority in building their relations.

The initial political restrictions associated with continued British influence were not fundamental and were overcome by the early 1970s with the establishment of the one-party regime of Siaka Stevens, who distanced himself from the former colonial overlord. At the same time, the development of relations with Sierra Leone by particular socialist countries slightly varied, depending on their specialization and the distribution of niches. The relatively modest

amount of cooperation was also due to the pragmatism of the approach of both sides, which did not allow them to invest disproportionate funds in joint projects. Compared to its regional neighbors, Sierra Leone managed to form a fairly balanced policy towards the Second World, not mired by ideology, third-party external interference or its own regional political ambitions, which is an example of the typical strategy of small countries that pursued a non-alignment policy during the Cold War.

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