

GHANA TODAY

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'Ghana's younger generation will expect more dynamic and exciting policies before long, and failing them might be tempted by a new form of Nkrumahism.'

The Times editorial, April 11, 1969.

'Constituent Assembly . . . is devising a Ghanaian constitution to prevent a new form of Nkrumahism in national politics.'

The Times Accra correspondent, April 15, 1969.

THE above words have appeared recently in *The Times* following the forced resignation of General Ankrah, head of Ghana's 'National Liberation Council' (NLC), the junta which illegally seized power on February 24, 1966, as a result of a secret conspiracy of not more than seven army and police officers.

For three years the junta has been screaming about corruption under the legal Government and now, this April, the head of the junta has resigned after admitting receipt of £3,000 for political purposes from a foreign source. Allegations put the figure at nearer £15,000, a figure accepted by the BBC's *Focus on Africa* programme of April 5. The replacement of General Ankrah by Brigadier A. A. Afrifa, and the announcement of elections, make it timely to survey just what has happened over the past three years and what are the prospects now.

From the time of independence in 1957 Ghana gave a lead in the struggle for African unity. Internally, where before the Colonial Office had never allowed a Marxist book into the country, Kwame Nkrumah by the spring of 1965 publicly defined his doctrine, which he labelled 'Nkrumahism', as 'the application of scientific socialism to the African social milieu'; in effect, a non-capitalist path to socialism. In practice this meant the development within a mixed economy of a public (state and co-operative) sector more rapidly than the private sector, the beginning of industrialisation and state farming, and pressing ahead with education and health services on a scale that was the envy of independent Africa. A seven year development plan was in progress when the coup of 1966 occurred.

These developments were hampered by many obstacles: the working class was still small and mainly illiterate; literacy was a monopoly of a secondary school élite brought up in an African transplant of the public school tradition; tribal and extended family loyalties were strong despite Nkrumah's constant opposition to tribalism; material poverty was widespread, agriculture primitive (except for a few cocoa farms), transport facilities and adequate piped water lacking. In addition, cocoa was the country's predominant export.

Moreover, the political party of national liberation, the Convention Peoples Party (CPP), was a *national* party, not a proletarian party, though it stood for 'socialism'. Unfortunately, the evolution towards proclaimed support for scientific socialism was not accompanied by up-grading the working class influence within it.

As in every underdeveloped country (and as in Britain itself till well on in the industrial revolution), corruption was widespread and—by the refined standards of British corruption today—blatant. At the same time nepotism resulted from the survival of extended family and tribal tradition, though here in Britain nobody with a memory of the Macmillan Cabinet need go to Africa to seek the extended family at work!

While, on the one hand, the CPP and the Government aimed at socialism, in the private sector a 'get-rich-quick' class was developing from the same social elite that officered the army and police.

At the time of independence Ghana had large reserves earned from cocoa sales abroad when prices were high. After independence, cocoa prices fell far below expectations. When foreign currency was most needed for development, Ghana's main export slumped in price.

Allegations of extravagance have been made, as is normal with regard to all developing countries. But who is to judge? Ghana was building for the future.

By 1966 the fall in cocoa prices and the demand for resources for construction were forcing a rise in the cost of living. But such obvious achievements as the Volta dam and power station, a number of new enterprises, state farms, a high level of employment, free education, expanding health services, and improved roads and water supply were all indications of a positive road of development. There was a dynamic and orderly atmosphere in the country.

In this situation a handful of officers seized power while the President was on a peace mission to Vietnam. They replaced 'preventive detention' by 'protective custody' in the name of freedom. They then carried out a large number of arrests. Editors were arrested and replaced; a Rumours Decree was introduced after eight months to control their successors more effectively and then these successors were replaced and General Ankrah himself threatened the press.

The seven year development plan was abandoned, as well as many state enterprises; chronic unemployment, a rising cost of living, an unprecedented crime wave, prostitution, and economic stagnation followed. Corruption was rampant. Evidence for all these statements may be found in Ghana's most official newspaper, the *Ghanian Times*. Space alone prevents quotation here.

The abandonment of the seven year development plan meant jettisoning many state enterprises. Trawlers bought from the USSR lay idle for two whole years before being sold to private enterprise. A Chinese-built cotton factory was abandoned. A Hungarian-built pharmaceutical factory was sold to Americans to be worked on a more or less 50-50 basis, after an attempt to sell to Abbotts Pharmaceuticals had been thwarted by public protests. And only the other day we read that

the State Farms Corporation is to close down its nine tobacco farms . . . The closure . . . will bring to about 44 (*sic*) the total abandoned by the Corporation since 1966 (*Ghanaian Times*, February 28, 1969).

And another writer said that state farms had been

abandoned with unharvested crops (while) many are being sold to foreigners . . . We are signing off large tracts of land to foreigners . . . for many years . . . land which is the basic resource of the nation (*Ibid.*, April 1, 1969).

In industry one of the most significant cases of neo-colonialist penetration is the fact that the US Firestone Corporation has set up enterprises producing from rubber tyres and batteries to various agricultural crops. Of Firestone, Nkrumah had written that it had

taken \$160m. worth of rubber out of Liberia in the past quarter century. In return the Liberian Government had received a paltry £8m. (*Neo-colonialism*, p. 66).

Now Firestone is rampant in Ghana too.

Immediately after their coup the NLC appointed to be Secretary of the Ghana TUC the only Minister of the legal Government to have ratted. This man, B. A. Bentum, this year resigned from the NLC's 'Incomes Commission' in protest against pegging wage rises to five per cent while prices went uncontrolled. In view of his record, this means something.

In fact, industrial unrest has been permanent since the coup. In May 1968 the Commissioner for Labour, S. Y. Nettey, referred to the 'chaotic situation caused by irresponsible elements' (familiar phrase) and admitted that between 1961 and the coup (five years) there had been 51 strikes, while there had been 71 strikes, in less than two years, since the coup. Since then the police have shot three workers at the Obuasi goldmine.

Student unrest in Ghana has been marked since the coup—and secondary schools have been prominent. In addition, reports show that chiefs, farmers, the rural population of the north, and the Ghanaian small business people have all opposed the NLC on one or

more issues. Hence there have been several attempts at a counter-coup, in one of which the first head of the NLC, General Kotoka, was killed. At the moment, the chief of the armed forces, Air-Marshal Otu, is under arrest as a 'conspirator'.

Since the coup, neo-colonialist inroads have been encouraged, and even an 'African' youth seminar has taken place at the University of Legon at which the only European power represented was West Germany. This may indicate that Ankrah was a Germanophile but his successor, Afrifa, is certainly not that. Here are a few extracts from Afrifa's little book of 1966, *The Ghana Coup*:

I have been trained in the United Kingdom as a soldier and I am ever prepared to fight alongside my friends in the United Kingdom . . . (Sandhurst) is an institution that teaches that all men are equal . . . I personally knew that Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom was quite capable of dealing with the Rhodesian situation . . . Our chiefs are known to be our natural rulers . . . African unity is a glorious ideal, but I know that this is impossible to achieve within our lifetime (pp. 111, 51, 104, 115, 111).

In the jockeying for power when 'civil rule' (with police licensing every meeting) is restored, a number of figures appear to be in the running as potential party leaders. Dr. Busia, defeated by Nkrumah, is said to be about to head a 'Progress Party' (he is also thought to be closest to Afrifa). His main rival is regarded as being K. Gbdemah, a former CPP organiser who became an oppositionist. Dr. J. Bilson of the University is said to be working for a 'Third Force', and Mr. Bentum, on behalf of the TUC, says that it will make up its mind at the beginning of June about a 'Labour Party'. One former Minister of the legal Government, I. Egala, Minister of Industry, who since the coup has done his stint in 'protective custody', is also said to be forming a political grouping (*West Africa*, April 26, 1969).

Light on the character of the 'lifting of the ban on political parties' since May 1, and the 'elections' announced to be held, is thrown by the new regulations now issued (*Financial Times*, April 29, 1969). According to these new regulations everyone who held any responsibility under the legal Government, either nationally or in the regions, is banned from standing as a candidate. Such is the NLC's trust in Ghana's democratic choice—if it were allowed one!

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