

In August, 1955, an "Eastern Labour Congress" was set up at Port Harcourt after a two-day conference of trade union representatives.

A.N.T.U.F. has as yet no international affiliation. Neither is it aligned with any of the Nigerian political parties; indeed, within its leadership there is strong opposition to any Executive members associating themselves with the national parties which are regarded as thoroughly bourgeois in character.

The A.N.T.U.F. leadership have declared that they have lost confidence in the N.C.N.C. towards which many of them were once favourably disposed. Indeed, a number are former members of the N.C.N.C. They are said to be considering the formation of a Workers' Party sponsored by A.N.T.U.F.

It is apparent that many changes require to be made in the Nigerian Constitution at the London Conference. However, such are the divisions existing between the parties that a unitary constitution seems out of the question. Nevertheless, there will have to be some arrangement establishing a division of powers on a satisfactory basis between the centre and the Regions: one that must be clearly a vast improvement on that of 1953.

Above all, the vast majority of Nigerians want to see something more than the shadow of independence emerging from the Conference. The delegates will hardly dare return home without the substance.

## POLICIES AND POLITICS IN THE GOLD COAST

JOHN HATCH

In 1956 the Gold Coast is the most important nation on the African continent. It is likely to retain that significant position for some years. Why is this? Where lies this tremendous significance? The answer is surely that what happens during the next few months in this small colony of five million people will be held to prove whether or not the African Negro is capable of emerging from colonial rule to control and administer an independent, democratic state. The test is certainly not conclusive. The success or failure of the Gold Coast Africans will prove nothing of the

capabilities of Africans in Nigeria, Kenya, the Congo, South Africa, or anywhere else. But in the great racial debate of Africa it will be taken as proof, until further incontestable evidence is forced upon the argument. The influence of the Gold Coast experiment, therefore, as distinct from its value as genuine evidence, will be profound throughout the continent.

Theoretically, British colonial policy has been based upon the principle of trusteeship for nearly a hundred years, but only since the second World War have British Governments been faced with the necessity of putting theory into practice. The ultimate duty of a trustee is to hand over authority to the ward, once the age of discretion is reached. Partly through pressure within the British political world; partly from the weakened international position of Britain; partly through an upsurge of nationalist emotion and increased power within the colonial territories; successive British Governments during the past ten years have faced the inevitability of transferring sovereignty from London to colonial capitals. This happened in the case of India, Pakistan, Burma, and Ceylon; it is now happening in Malaya, Singapore, the West Indies, and Cyprus; it will be faced this year in the Gold Coast, and, in a few more years, in Nigeria and Uganda.

The Gold Coast will not be the first colonial nation to become independent. Others have just been mentioned. It will not be the first non-European state in Africa. Already Liberia, Ethiopia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, have that status, and Morocco and Tunisia might claim it. But it is widely recognised that the Gold Coast is the stage for the first full attempt to create a modern state out of tribal Africa, and to transfer power over that state from an imperial government to the African peoples themselves, through the medium of westernised democratic processes. It is certainly the first such experiment south of the Sahara, and that is where the heart of the African problem lies. The experiment is therefore being watched minutely by all the peoples of the continent, and, indeed, hardly less closely by the peoples of the entire colonial world. This year of 1956 marks the watershed of the argument in the colonial world over the capabilities of the African Negro in modern life, and it is in the Gold Coast that the climax will be reached.

It has been speciously believed in some quarters that as soon as nationalist fervour had mounted to the pinnacle of success, Britain had agreed to transfer power, and an elected Gold Coast Government had taken control of the new state, tensions would disappear and a new era of development and social progress could be pro-

claimed. It would have been a unique historical phenomenon if this had proved to be the case. There was no Gold Coast before British colonisation; the last war there was fought as lately as 1911; the people of the country have no common history or tradition; they speak different languages, come from different tribes, belong to various religions. Indeed, one of the few things which they have had in common and which has alone perhaps held them together, has been British imperialist rule. It has been their united determination to get rid of this which has brought them closer together than ever in their previous history. What effect will the relaxation of British rule have upon their unity?

It is surely blind sentimentalism to anticipate that the transference of sovereignty from London to Accra would automatically solve the major problems which face the makers of this new state. The withdrawal of imperial rule does not effect the transformation of a set of tribal societies into a strong modern state; nor cure the poverty of a people brought up on a subsistence economy; nor produce the psychological revolution of transferring allegiance from traditional to secular rulers; nor establish the values of a democratic state, founded upon a monetary economy.

The major accusation against British rule may well be that it was dilatory in recognising the proximity of the transference of power and so did not help the Africans to prepare for responsibility by starting to cross these bridges long ago. Now they have had to face these awe-inspiring tasks within a period of only six years. In the circumstances they have accomplished an amazing feat. But we should be tragically blind if we believed that they have yet succeeded in building those foundations of national unity on which alone a modern democratic state can be built.

The first genuine development towards modern statehood came, not with the institution of elections in the 1940's, but rather with the organisation of the first mass political party. Once Nkrumah broke away from the older type of nationalist, who had remained dominated by the traditional authorities, the attack was fixed upon tribalism as well as imperialism. His Convention Peoples Party gave rein to those without privilege or status; for the first time the masses found hope, not only of liberation from the British, but of purpose and place for themselves as individuals.

At first, of course, the traditional authority of the chiefs was partially retained, through the means of indirect elections. Even so, the organisation of the C.P.P. and the martyrdom of its leaders in British gaols had created a new power. It was Nkrumah and his

“young men”, not the chiefs, who formed the first government.

The very character of this first mass party inevitably transformed that of the nationalist movement. The traditionalists had aimed at place and influence. The new nationalists sought power. Moreover, British rule had brought a new kind of economic life, with new needs and desires. These could not be satisfied by the traditionalists, with their rigid and static economic conceptions. The members of the mass party thus linked economic emancipation to their demand for “Freedom”.

The effect of bringing the masses into the political scene, therefore, was to transform what had been pressure by an elite into a mass revolt. But Nkrumah and his closest associates had been deeply influenced by their years in Britain and America. Although in their party organisation they tended to adopt the hierarchical structure of left-wing revolutionaries, they had recognised and accepted the virtues of political democracy. Their revolution was to be carried through by parliamentary means, provided that the British were not too obstructive. The personal magnetism of Nkrumah, his “charisma”, as it has been called, the unchallenged adulation in which he was held by almost everyone in the Gold Coast, ensured that if he was wedded to the parliamentary form, it would be accepted by the vast majority of the population.

The acceptance of parliamentary democracy fitted the new British colonial mood, in which power could be handed over to colonies provided that it was to responsible and representative government. It was quite unacceptable to the traditional rulers, who saw in it the final doom of their authority. Chiefs could not stand for elections. They would necessarily risk defeat, thus making their authority subject to the popular will. So they had to withdraw “above politics”, leaving the initiative, at least for the time being, to the “young upstarts” and their mass following.

This situation developed up to 1954. In that year a second election was held, the first on full adult suffrage for a completely elected Assembly. Two things are significant about this election. First, it was held just after the Braimah corruption case, in which leading Cabinet ministers were accused of using their offices for corruption and nepotism. This led to some unrest in the C.P.P., which was aggravated by the method of selecting candidates. Yet, in spite of all this unrest, the hold of Nkrumah over the peoples' minds was so great that his party secured a sweeping majority, almost entirely through the use of his name. But secondly, to the keen observer, signs of opposition could be discerned. In the

Northern Territories the Northern Peoples Party won a majority of seats. In Ashanti, although the C.P.P. won nearly all the seats, the majorities were frequently so small that a small swing would have widespread results. And it was in the North and in Ashanti that tradition was strongest. The Colony had known European contact for several centuries. This westernising influence was strongly suspect in the interior, at least by the chiefs and their supporters. No organised opposition had yet appeared, for the N.P.P. was no mass party. But the warning signs were there.

It seemed to the C.P.P. and to most outside observers, however, that Nkrumah had won a great victory, and that the way was now clear for the establishment of an independent Ghana state just as soon as the state apparatus was prepared. But the warning sounded in the election soon became a reality. In September 1954, only three months after the election, a new movement appeared in Ashanti. It has since taken the name of the National Liberation Movement, and is now associated with all the anti-C.P.P. elements throughout the country. It can claim, indeed, to be with its allies a genuine alternative government.

This Ashanti movement has taken the form of a counter-revolution. It marks the beginning of the disenchantment with Nkrumah. It combined the activities of a variety of sections who were disillusioned with Nkrumah and the C.P.P., yet it has never become a mass party on C.P.P. lines. Its leaders fight for the allegiance of the masses, rather than organise them along party lines. The effect of the movement, therefore, is to weaken the progress of a democratic system based on party organisation. It has appealed to the traditional tribal emotions, to the ancient loyalties towards the chiefs. It has inevitably attacked the new democracy, insisting that qualitative authority should replace the counting of heads.

Tribalism is the deepest root of this movement, but it is not the only one. The Ashanti war drums are beaten at election meetings; tribal dances and songs accompany them; the Asantehene and his Council have lent their support and strong traditional influence. Yet there are other symbols at these meetings; baskets and hoes and branches are carried, representing the dissatisfaction of the cocoa farmers with the C.P.P. Government. Some of the leading members of the N.L.M. too, formerly held office with the C.P.P. or were closely associated with Kwame Nkrumah. No doubt opportunism and political disappointment play a part in the movement.

These diverse elements had little in common in 1954, other than

dislike of the C.P.P. They had no political policy. Their opposition at first took the form of dynamite throwing and petrol assaults. There are, of course, always gangs of ruffians ready to be bought by either side to perform these tasks of violence.

The weakness of Nkrumah and his Government in face of this sudden threat was to underestimate its importance. Nkrumah himself has been consistently badly advised on the Ashanti situation and appears to have been acting under the influence of a cabal which has neither judgment nor integrity. The analysis and advice of honest party members and sympathisers have been ignored.

The result has been that the opposition movement has spread and deepened, more from the mistakes of the Government than from its own force of argument. It is true that the Government has met every one of the opposition's criticisms, but always too late and in the wrong way. Thus the cocoa price, which had been fixed at 72s. a load after the election, causing widespread anger amongst the farmers, was later raised to 80s. If this had been done originally, one section of the opposition would never have been associated with the N.L.M. Then, after strong accusations of corruption in the Cocoa Marketing Board and the Cocoa Purchasing Company, the chairman was replaced—but again too late, after the damage had been done.

Perhaps the worst case of bad tactics was on the constitutional issue. Added to its charges of public corruption, the N.L.M. and its allies had by now devised a basis of policy. This consisted of a demand for a federal constitution in place of the unitary structure, and the calling of a Constituent Assembly to determine the constitution before independence. After months of propaganda Nkrumah finally agreed to invite Sir Frederick Bourne to make a constitutional inquiry and report to the Government. Yet immediately Bourne arrived in the Gold Coast, the opposition was given the opportunity of contracting out of giving evidence before him. The Government chose this time to pass the States Council Ordinance, limiting the powers of the chiefs. The N.L.M. thereupon declared that they would not appear before Bourne until this measure was withdrawn. It was the Government which had given them the chance of escaping from the embarrassment of defining their policy.

Finally, again after long, heavy pressure, the Government set up an inquiry into the affairs of the Cocoa Purchasing Company. The Cabinet must have known that there had been irregularities in the conduct of the Company's affairs, for several of them were in-

volved in it. Yet, instead of taking drastic action on their own initiative and really cleaning out the corruption, they put themselves in the position of appearing to have to bow reluctantly to the demands of the opposition—and set up the inquiry on the eve of the General Election. The evidence given to it, and the report which it makes, can hardly be other than damaging to the prospects of the C.P.P.

In the Spring of 1956, therefore, the opposition, by its own tactics and through the failure of the C.P.P. and their Government to act decisively and realistically, was able to show such a division in Gold Coast society as to convince the British Government that another election had to be held before independence. This was in spite of the fact that the Assembly had another two years to run and had been elected on a mandate for independence. The election is the first major test between the forces of the modern mass political party and the traditionalists.

In spite of all this stress, however, it should be realised that the C.P.P. Government has made immense strides in educational, social, and economic development. These could hardly fail to impress the electorate, if it were not for the struggle for power. Moreover, the machinery has been prepared for statehood. A currency has been arranged; African diplomats have been trained overseas; the military forces are now under the control of the Governor, ready to be handed over to the new Government; the plebiscite has been held in the Trusteeship territory of Togoland, and has shown a majority for integration with the Gold Coast.

Once Nkrumah and his Government recognised that they would have to face an election before independence, they acted with complete propriety. The Bourne Report had suggested that additional powers might be given to the regions, whilst maintaining the basic unitary structure, with final authority at the centre. This was obviously sensible, and gave the C.P.P. their main point, whilst still offering concessions to the opposition. The Government thereupon tabled their own White Paper, based on the Bourne proposals, had it debated and approved by the Assembly, and asked for a dissolution. This gave them the opportunity of appealing to the country for approval of this new constitution, with the assurance of the British Government that if they secured a reasonable majority the date of independence would be announced.

Superficially, therefore, the election was held on what form of constitution the new Ghana state should be founded. Actually, this is only a facade. The real decision is what forces in the country

should have power over the new state. The C.P.P. policy is based upon the power of the organised politicians, drawing strength from convincing the masses. The N.L.M. and its allies represent the last ditch defence of the traditionalists. The corruption allegation has been used as an election issue, but does not represent the heart of the matter. The party government of the C.P.P. has undoubtedly used its patronage, often unwisely, assisted by the fact that the government is the main source of capital and agency for social development. Chiefs do the same, as would an N.L.M. government; as do the vast majority of governments throughout the world. The real issue is the control of political power.

Writing before the election,<sup>1</sup> it seems probable that the opposition will win most of the seats in the North and in Ashanti, whilst the C.P.P. will hold the Colony. This will give the C.P.P. an overall majority, but leave the country divided. The opposition is most unlikely to accept such a result as decisive, and will continue to demand a Constituent Assembly before independence. This situation will demand tremendous patience, tolerance, and statesmanship. Beneath the political surface lurks the shadow of economic danger, for the catastrophic fall in cocoa prices—from over £400 a ton to just over £200 within the year—has not only rendered any idea of a federal system obsolete, but endangers all economic and social development.

It is the C.P.P. which is particularly challenged to measure up to the call for greatness. Mass disenchantment with Kwame Nkrumah as a deified figure has begun—in the country and in the party. This can be a strength, if genuine democratic participation and decision is the aim. The growth of real democratic practice depends largely on the reduction of Nkrumah's personal charisma. Yet this is the most difficult and dangerous of transformations. It requires the stature of a Nehru to achieve it—and he has not yet succeeded. Will Nkrumah measure up to the ordeal? Will he

<sup>1</sup>ELECTION RESULTS. Since the writing of the above article, the results of the 1956 Gold Coast Election have come to hand. They are here tabled next to the results of the 1954 general election.

	1954 seats	1956 seats
Convention Peoples' Party — — —	71	71
Northern Peoples' Party — — —	12	15
National Liberation Movement — — —	—	12
Independent Party — — —	16	—
Other opposition parties — — —	5	6
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discard those who bask in the aura of his sun and maintain the myth of his infallibility? We shall soon know. If he does so; if he sets himself to purge the party and the administration of corruption and nepotism; if the party members can adjust themselves to the new post-revolutionary situation and develop genuine democratic authority and accountability; then this historic transformation of a tribal colony to an independent, democratic, modern state can be achieved, and all Africa will salute the courage and wisdom of those who have won the battle.

## NICE TIME

HARRY BLOOM

“Whoa! Whoa! Whoa!”

He swung the bike around sharply in the road, dragging his foot in the sand to keep balance, and came to a skidding stop alongside the girl walking on the opposite pavement. As he did so, he made a series of rapid, short, chopped off whistling noises. Wasn't she the cherry who used to work for Wing Kee Cash Bazaar? The one he danced with all night at that victory party for Harry Dhlomo at the welfare centre?

But when he looked more closely, he saw that it was the wrong girl. She stared hard at him, thinking he was somebody *she* knew. He missed the moment to say something bright and shrewd, and the girl became embarrassed and suddenly turned round and walked off. He sat with both feet on the ground and his arms folded across the handle-bars—the bike was too small for him—and watched the red satin blouse, the green skirt, and the black patent leather shoes make a swinging, bouncing, angry retreat along the pavement.

“Hullo Sugarcake” he shouted after her; She paid no attention, so he whistled and said “Come here, I want to talk to you.”

“What is it?” she said, turning, and eyeing him suspiciously.

“What you doing today? tonight?”

“Go to hell.”

She walked on and he studied the show of trumped-up injury in her gait, without any hurt feelings at the rebuff. He watched until she disappeared around a corner; then he shrugged his shoulders, pulled the bike round and continued his ride to the location.

He rode slowly for a few moments, thinking what he ought