

Report on Ghana

Ghana Socialists Fight Back

Dennis Ogden

LESS THAN A MONTH after the military-police coup, a duplicated leaflet signed by a newly-created Committee for the Defence of the Revolution was circulated in Accra. It called upon sincere socialists and 'lowly but staunch' activists to oppose the counter-revolution headed by Gen. Ankrah, Col. (now Maj.-General) Kotoka and Police Commissioner Harley.

The first overt sign of organized resistance to the new regime, the leaflet brands the February 24th coup as 'directed by British and American secret services and helped by West German intelligence', the result of the exploitation of Ga and Ewe tribalism and personal rivalries, aided by the foreign religious missions and business firms, as well as by treacherous elements in the government and the leadership of the Convention People's Party.

The leaflet spotlights the ways in which the new regime is aiding imperialism. It cites:

- the free hand being given to foreign investors;
- the mortgaging of Ghana's economy to the World Bank, which is dominated by U.S. and British interests;
- the shutting down of some state corporations and the handing over of others to private interests;
- cuts in government spending;
- the gradual elimination of foreign exchange control and import licenses;
- the expulsion of socialist technicians and the invitation of more from the western capitalist countries.

'The result of all this,' it warns, 'will be increased unemployment; increased dependence of Ghana's economy on Britain and America; a falling standard of living for the majority of the people side by side with a more than comfortable living standard for a small class of business men, top civil servants, top army and police officers and privileged intellectuals.'

The self-styled 'National Liberation Council' (made up entirely of army and police officers and during the first days with its offices in Police Headquarters) has betrayed the four million Africans of Rhodesia by re-establishing diplomatic relations with Britain, the leaflet goes on. It has expelled freedom fighters from Accra and refused aid to liberation movements. As a result, 'Ghana is already losing the pride of

place in Africa won for her by the dynamic anti-imperialist policy of Nkrumah.'

To cover up its betrayal, the Ankrah regime is resorting to manoeuvres to confuse the people, charges the Committee for the Defence of the Revolution. Among such manoeuvres it lists the campaign of vilification directed against Nkrumah, the promises of price cuts (though prices have in fact risen since the coup), the promises of salary increases for civil servants—though one in ten will lose their jobs as a result of the new regime's cuts in spending, and the widely-publicized probes into the bank accounts of a few—though not into those of the new regime's backers.

'These tricks are bound to fail because soon everybody will see that the N.L.C. men are there to serve the interests of their capitalist and foreign business friends.' The first moves of the new regime, the Committee notes, included the abolition of the tax on rents, the reduction of the tax on cars, the dropping of the proposed increase in the tax on incomes above £1,600 and measures to ease the transfer of money abroad.

The establishment of the Committee for the Defence of the Revolution, flinging down its bold challenge to the military-police dictatorship—'the revolution, *our* revolution, will fight back'—testifies to the fact that the seeds sown during the struggle to transform the Convention People's Party into a vanguard party leading and organizing the masses on the basis of scientific socialism are bearing fruit despite the bitter set-back of February 24th.

It has emerged despite the wave of mass arrests (some put the figure as high as 2,000) in the days following the coup, when those taken into a Nazi-style 'protective custody' included every M.P., every Minister, local party officials and activists, trade union leaders, journalists and progressive intellectuals.

Although the new regime has cunningly exploited the difficulties confronting Ghana, it cannot solve them. They are the legacy of Ghana's colonial past and the consequences of imperialist policy. They can be solved only by resolute action to overcome this legacy and to defeat this policy—action the new regime will not take.

The Accra coup is the latest, most ominous development in imperialism's counter-offensive in Africa. Coming on the heels of the reactionary military take-overs in Burundi, the Congo, the Central African Republic and Dahomey, the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah is the biggest success yet scored by this counter-offensive.

For, as even his critics acknowledge, Kwame Nkrumah

has had a profound effect on the continent, an effect which in some ways may be permanent. Without the impetus which he brought to the demand for independence, it might have been long delayed . . . no independent African state has been unaffected by the cause to which he dedicated Ghana, African Unity (*West Africa*, 19.3.66).

London and Washington did not conceal their jubilation; Smith and Verwoerd breathed more easily; neo-colonialist puppets like Houphouët-Boigny of the Ivory Coast were quick to hail the coup, while to those opposing the advance of neo-colonialism in Kenya and elsewhere the news came as a blow.

Condemnation of the coup came from Guinea, Mali, Tanzania, the United Arab Republic—the countries which have been in the forefront of the struggle for Africa's unity and complete emancipation.

A BLOW TO PEACE

The overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah likewise represents a serious blow to peace and national liberation beyond Africa's shores. His policy of positive non-alignment, his support for an end to the U.S. bombing in Vietnam and for peace through negotiations, and for measures to secure genuine disarmament and a reduction of world tension constituted a genuine contribution to the cause of world peace.

Sensitive to African opinion, the new regime was quick to claim that it will continue the policy of support for the total liberation of Africa and for the Organization of African Unity—but one of its first moves was to shut down camps where freedom fighters from Rhodesia, South Africa and the Portuguese and Spanish colonies had been trained—trained, be it noted, in implementation of O.A.U. decisions. Gen. Ankrah's decision to close these camps is in flat contradiction to his pledge of continued support for the O.A.U., and evidence only of his desire to curry favour with Africa's oppressors.

Gen. Ankrah likewise proclaimed a policy of what he termed 'genuine' neutrality. In practice, this meant a vicious campaign of anti-Soviet smears, with the expulsion, and in some cases the manhandling, of socialist technicians and diplomats. Meanwhile the grossly inflated U.S. Embassy staff, bigger by far than those of the Soviet and Chinese embassies combined, the Peace Corps and the other Americans remain, together with the British and the increasingly influential West Germans.

In its first policy statement broadcast at 1 p.m. on the day of the take-over, the Ankrah regime asserted that 'the economic situation of the country is in such a chaotic condition that, unless something is done about it now, the whole economic system will collapse . . . the country is on the verge of national bankruptcy.'

Echoing an argument which had long been part of the stock-in-trade of Ghana's imperialist enemies, it painted a glib picture of a Ghana which had inherited a rich patrimony from its former colonial rulers, only to have it frittered away by 'gross economic mismanagement' and 'prestige spending'.

The 'rich patrimony' was in fact a distorted economy largely geared to the production of a single crop—cocoa—upon which Ghana had to depend for some two-thirds of her foreign currency earnings. It is from this fact that the economic difficulties stem which the new regime has been able so skilfully to exploit in the main.

With the achievement of political independence in 1957, the main task became the winning of economic independence through the eradication of the legacy of colonial rule and the creation of a balanced, diversified economy.

IMPERIALISM WITHOUT THE FLAG

Kwame Nkrumah saw that the non-capitalist road was the only way forward. Socialism, he declared, is the only alternative. He saw that for a developing country to follow the capitalist path could only mean that its national economy would remain in the hands of foreign capital. The inevitable consequence would be a neo-colonialist regime—'imperialism without the flag' as he so expressively termed it.

He saw, too, that even Ghana's relatively well-developed national bourgeoisie lacked the capital needed to transform the country's economy, and that in any case to give this class free rein would mean that the fruits of development would flow into the pockets of the few and not be used for the benefit of the country as a whole.

So, while he envisaged that Ghana would for a long time remain a country with a mixed economy, his aim was clear: 'We are determined that the economic independence of Ghana shall be achieved and maintained so as to avoid the social antagonisms resulting from the unequal distribution of economic power,' he said.

'We are equally determined to ensure that the operation of a mixed economy leads to the socialist transformation we envisage, and not to the defeat of our socialist aims.'

The maximum encouragement was to be given to the public and co-operative sectors, with investment regulated to ensure its most effective use. Foreign investment was to be similarly controlled to ensure that Ghana's interests were safeguarded.

'We welcome foreign investors in a spirit of partnership,' he said. 'They can earn their profits here provided they leave us an agreed portion for promoting the welfare and happiness of our people as a whole as against the greedy ambitions of the few. . . . Our government

has always insisted that the operations of all economic enterprises in Ghana should conform to the national economic objectives and be subject to the rules and regulations which are made in pursuance of our socialist policies.'

Ghana's advance was charted in the Seven-Year Development Plan. Introducing it in March 1964, Kwame Nkrumah defined its main aims as the acceleration of national economic rates of growth, the preparing of the way for the socialist transformation of the economy through the rapid development of the state and co-operative sectors, and the complete eradication of the economic vestiges of colonialism.

Under its terms, new factories ranging from a steel mill to a chocolate factory were built, some state-owned, some joint state and private, some private.

THE VOLTA PROJECT

Ghana's progress was symbolized by the three-phase Volta River Project, one of the most ambitious development schemes in Africa—or, indeed, in the whole world.

Phase One was the building of a new port at Tema, some fifteen miles from Accra. At a cost of some £35 million drawn entirely from its own resources, the government of the Convention People's Party built one of the finest man-made harbours in Africa.

Phase Two was the building of the Akosombo Dam on the Volta River sixty miles north of Tema. Commissioned a year ahead of schedule and at a cost substantially less than the original estimate, it is already supplying power. Ghana herself paid half the bill; the other half was split three ways with loans at normal commercial rates from the International Bank, the United States and Britain. *Not a penny was given.*

Phase Three is the building, just started, of a £50 million aluminium smelter at Tema by V.A.L.C.O., a Ghana-registered consortium of two U.S. companies which, under the terms of the agreement negotiated by the government, were to contribute a portion of their profits to a special fund to finance educational and social projects in Ghana.

As envisaged by Kwame Nkrumah, the Volta Project was to change the face of Ghana, providing abundant power for new industries and for domestic consumers, creating new possibilities for north-south water transport, fishing and irrigation through the creation of the largest man-made lake in the world.

It is the embodiment of the new Ghana that Kwame Nkrumah and the best elements in the C.P.P. were striving to build. It is an answer to those who claim that Ghana's patrimony has been wasted.

Another is the progress made in the modernization and diversifica-

tion of agriculture through the development of state and co-operative farms and by varied forms of encouragement for the individual farmer. Great efforts were made to introduce new crops, such as rice and rubber, to end excessive dependence on cocoa, help supply the new industries and cut imports.

Yet another answer is the immense and purposeful social progress made since independence: great strides were made towards free and compulsory elementary and secondary education; universities and higher educational establishments like those at Cape Coast and Kumasi were built, while university education became free; progress was made toward a free health service, and the first steps taken toward the introduction of a social insurance scheme, including unemployment benefits and pensions.

These are some of the facts which the new regime with its talk of 'gross economic mismanagement' and 'prestige spending' would like to obscure as a prelude to whittling away the benefits which the people of Ghana have reaped as a result of C.P.P. administration.

It was on these projects—projects designed to make Ghana economically independent and strong, and to give her people a richer, fuller life—that Ghana's reserves had to be spent.

THE PRICE OF COCOA

For this immense programme of economic and social advance—unparalleled anywhere else in Africa—meant increased spending abroad to buy the machinery for the new factories and the equipment for the new schools, universities and hospitals.

Ghana had to rely on the sale of cocoa to earn the money, and the Seven-Year Plan was drafted on the assumption that an increased output (production more than doubled between 1956 and 1964) would be sold at a minimum of £190-£200 a ton, ensuring an average annual foreign currency income from this source of £86 million.

The cocoa monopolies, with the tacit agreement of western governments, had in the post-war years repeatedly urged Ghana to increase output and repeatedly pledged that, no matter how much output was increased, they would guarantee a fair and stable price of at least £200-£250 a ton.

But after Ghana had spent considerable sums on measures to expand production, and production had more than doubled, all the promises were forgotten. Thanks to market manipulation by the monopolies, the price last summer fell to an all-time low of £85 a ton (compared with £467 a ton in the early pre-independence '50s) and Ghana's foreign currency earnings slumped to below pre-1957 levels—despite the fact that she had produced and sold more cocoa than ever before.

Meanwhile the price of the industrial goods which she had to buy for her development programme soared.

Ghana's losses as a result of cocoa market manipulation and the imperialist policy of buying cheap and selling dear are estimated at more than £500 million, and it was this, and not 'gross economic mismanagement' or 'prestige spending' which was the primary cause of the drain on Ghana's reserves and the economic difficulties she faced.

She was obliged to resort to credits to a much greater extent than would otherwise have been the case—and it must be emphasized that, in the words of *West Africa* (19.3.66) 'the bulk of the suppliers' credits which are a millstone around the country's neck come from the West.' Service charges on these credits last year swallowed up one quarter of Ghana's already diminished foreign earnings. Western big business not only robbed Ghana by manipulation of the cocoa market; it also exacted a usurer's tribute from the credits which its own manipulations had made necessary.

For over a year Ghana had been trying to re-negotiate the terms of these credits to win a breathing space to enable her new industries to reach their full potential. She herself took steps to check wasteful and non-productive spending in the state corporations and the Foreign Service.

But the capitalist countries were out to take advantage of Ghana's temporary difficulties to make her renounce her policy of development along non-capitalist lines by making assistance conditional on increased opportunities and improved terms for foreign investors and cut-backs in the public sector—demands which Kwame Nkrumah rejected, but which the new regime has already started to concede.

The socialist countries, on the other hand, agreed to a moratorium on interest and capital repayments on their credits in talks late last year during a tour of Eastern Europe undertaken by Finance Minister Amoaka-Atta.

SOCIALIST ASSISTANCE

Co-operation with these countries, particularly the Soviet Union, had been making an important contribution to Ghana's economic progress. Czechoslovak technicians were helping build a sugar refinery, Rumanian geologists had found the first traces of oil, while Soviet specialists were helping build Ghana's fishing fleet, working on the state farms, building a gold refinery and constructing an atomic research reactor, to mention but a few projects.

The majority of the science and mathematics teachers in Ghana's secondary school were also Soviet young people: one aspect of the

'rich patrimony' bequeathed by colonialism was an almost complete lack of Ghanaian graduates in these fields.

The expulsion of the socialist technicians will have serious consequences for Ghana's economic development—a fact which the new regime is apparently ready to ignore in its eagerness to curry favour with the west.

Trade with the socialist countries has increased substantially. This went some way towards easing the impact of the balance of payments problem—a problem which was essentially one of trade with the capitalist countries. The socialist countries had greatly increased their purchases of cocoa under long-term agreements at above world market prices. They were also anxious to buy other Ghanaian exports, such as minerals and timber, but these items were frequently under the control of British companies. Ghana's imports from the socialist countries were likewise growing.

This wide-ranging co-operation with the socialist countries aroused great concern in the west, particularly in Britain and the United States, and also among right-wing elements in Ghana itself.

In the months immediately prior to the coup, these elements had been preparing an offensive against this co-operation, led by the Minister of Trade (and former High Commissioner in London) Mr. Kwesi Armah. Mr. Armah had refused to accompany Finance Minister Mr. Amoaka-Atta on his tour of the socialist countries in order the better to attack its results.

In brief, these elements argued that the price of cocoa in the capitalist world market was increasing, therefore it would be better to sell to the west and not to the socialist countries. This, they argued, would enable Ghana to go on buying 'the goods to which the Ghanaian customer is traditionally accustomed'—in other words, the western goods that well-to-do Ghanaians so liked. They were also able to exploit shortcomings in the finish, packaging and marketing of goods from the socialist countries.

Their arguments ignored one important fact: that the price of cocoa in the capitalist world market had shown some slight increase because the socialist countries, notably the Soviet Union, had bought so much. They also forgot that prices in the capitalist market could come down again, unlike those paid by the socialist countries, which were governed by long-term agreements.

The new regime has claimed that it considers itself bound by the agreements entered into by the government of Kwame Nkrumah, and has specifically mentioned the cocoa agreements. But the chairman of its Economic Commission, Mr. E. N. Omaboe, has already hinted that he wants them considerably revised.

INEFFICIENCY AND CORRUPTION

Shortage of foreign currency made controls necessary. But controls are difficult to enforce when foreign trade is largely in the hands of large foreign firms, and when they have to be administered by officials who are at best inexperienced and at worst corrupt.

As a result of interruptions in deliveries, for example, some of the new factories were obliged to work below capacity, or to close down altogether because of lack of spares, while the whole of Accra's public transport was at one time off the road for the same reason.

There were interruptions too in deliveries of imported basic foodstuffs such as rice. The situation was exacerbated by speculation and black-marketeering by traders—among them prominent members of the government and C.P.P. and their wives—who, taking advantage of the pass-book system, cornered supplies to boost prices still higher.

Investigation was blocked at every turn. Even the much-publicized Abraham Commission which last year conducted an enquiry into trade malpractices exposed only small fry—and Trade Minister Kwesi Armah used its findings as a pretext to deprive the state-owned Ghana National Trading Corporation of the limited exclusive import rights it enjoyed and to transfer them back to the big foreign companies.

Speculation and profiteering were likewise rife in the marketing of locally grown foodstuffs which forms the staple diet of ordinary Ghanaians. Prices of locally grown fruit were in many cases higher than the prices of similar produce in London.

Here again measures to check price increases were blocked by powerful vested interests: leading officers of the Ghana National Association of Women who should have been playing a leading part in the fight to bring prices down were themselves reaping huge profits as market 'Queens'.

Nkrumah repeatedly tried to take action against those responsible for speculation and profiteering, for bribery and corruption. He failed. The new regime will not even try.

The military-police regime is trying to smear Kwame Nkrumah by claiming that he himself amassed a large personal fortune. It brought Ayek-Kumi, a former economic adviser (and himself one of Ghana's richest capitalists) from 'protective custody' to produce the 'evidence'.

Ayek-Kumi's technique was to point to corporations which were either publicly owned or the property of the C.P.P. and of which the President was chairman. On this basis he claimed that they were the President's personal property. By the same token it could be said that Britain's coal mines are 'owned' by the chairman of the National Coal Board!

The deeper reasons for the failure to root out the speculation, profit-

eering, corruption and ostentatious living which sowed the seeds of disillusionment and eroded popular support for the C.P.P. are to be sought in the history of the C.P.P. itself.

THE GHANAIAN BOURGEOISIE

The fight for political independence had united all sections of the population. For the rank-and-file Ghanaian, it was the first step on the road to a richer fuller life for all, free from exploitation; for the Ghanaian national bourgeoisie it was a means of establishing its own rule, opening up new opportunities for enrichment.

Some of the Ghanaian national bourgeoisie had supported the C.P.P. in the fight for independence from the outset; others went through the motions of transferring their support to it when the parties which had openly voiced their aspirations passed into oblivion, having failed to win popular support. But few had any genuine sympathy for the aim, once independence had been won, of building a socialist Ghana and transforming the C.P.P. into a vanguard party on the basis of scientific socialism.

In the words of the Committee for the Defence of the Revolution, 'we have suffered this setback because the top men in our party, though paying lip service to Kwame Nkrumah, were disloyal to the party and to socialism. They amassed wealth. And to protect their wealth, they worked to destroy the party.'

Unlike many other African countries, Ghana has a relatively well-developed middle class of merchants, lawyers and civil servants, reared in the British tradition. It was through these that Kwame Nkrumah was obliged to work. Many of them served the cause of the new Ghana loyally; others resorted to obstructionism and, ultimately, betrayal.

By contrast, the working class, through growing, was relatively small and inadequately organized. The C.P.P. had been unable to build a genuine democratic political life at grass roots level; its local branches were either non-existent or functioned badly; party life was too often confined to resolutions passed at the top. The same problem confronted the trade unions and other mass organisations.

The fight for socialist ideas was too often replaced by personal adulation of Kwame Nkrumah—with the right wing elements the most zealous practitioners in their efforts to exploit the President's position for their own ends. Ideological education was too often abstract and remote from the problems confronting party activists in their day-to-day work. Those fighting for a socialist Ghana were too often unable to present a united front in the face of the mounting right-wing offensive which was a feature of Ghana's political life during the closing

months of 1965 and the first months of this year. In consequence, the ideas of capitalism and neo-colonialism remained a potent force, while those of socialism fought a battle against great odds.

But, as the emergence of the Committee for the Defence of the Revolution has dramatically demonstrated, the cause of socialism still lives and fights on in Ghana. Its ultimate victory is certain.

**'AGAINST THE
AFRICAN REVOLUTION'**

—Nkrumah

'The instigated rebellion by certain army and police officers was directed not only against Ghana but also against the African Revolution and the unity and independence of our continent'

—KWAME NKRUMAH