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Editorial

THE ECONOMIC PLANNING COUNCIL

PLANNING Ghana's economy has always been a difficult task, and even though our spectacular failures in the past have led some to conclude that planning is futile as far as our economy is concerned, governments have never been in doubt about the need for planning and for that matter the need for effective institutions to draw up rational development programmes for this country. In February, 1971, for instance, the Busia administration separated the planning section from what had been the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning in a move that was designed to infuse dynamism into the planning of the economy. This move was reversed after January 1972, but in recent months, the NRC has again separated Economic Planning from Finance—the suggestion being that planning is now seen as an important national activity which needs for itself the administrative machinery of a whole ministry.

The latest in our efforts towards rational economic planning was the inauguration by the Head of State on March 21 this year of a National Economic Planning Council charged among other things with evolving a system that will guide government and spur the nation to economic wellbeing, and specifically with drawing up a five-year development plan. While admitting that the easiest way of assessing the Council would be to wait till it comes out with its plan, we do feel that there are a number of suggestions which if carefully considered could improve its potential efficiency and effectiveness.

The first of these relates to its composition. It has a membership of 33, six of whom are permanent experts, with the Head of State as Chairman and the Commissioner for Economic Planning as Vice-Chairman. The only other Commissioners included are those for Agriculture and Industries, and while this fact indicates the importance which government attaches to these two sectors, it still does create the impression that the Council is not sufficiently representative. For instance, Health, Education and Manpower, which is after all an important premise in the philosophy of self-reliance, have no spokesmen on the Council. In this connection it is worth noting that all of the six permanent members of the Council are economists and the greater majority of the other representatives are either economists or finance personnel. Admittedly a few other professional personnel are represented, but the weighting is too heavily on the side of the economists. It is our view that the absence of representation on the Council of such a vital area as Health, for instance, is a serious shortcoming which needs rectification.

Again, there are certain practical problems. Many of the Ministries have no planning units which can feed the Council with the kind of accurate information needed for its work, and this is certainly going to be a serious drawback, as it has indeed been in the past. It is especially in this connection that we would urge that the Council should be granted, by a decree, statutory powers to enable it summon such persons as it deems necessary to give information to it, and to enable it to have unimpeded access to such books and information as it may wish to consult in the discharge of its duties. For it would be ridiculous if the Committee's work were to be hampered by lack of access to the needed data.

Also, the channels of communication between the Council and government should not be blocked by our notorious bureaucratic processes. We would wish to caution against the situation in which recommendations from the six permanent experts would reach government belatedly in the form of a distorted memorandum. It is advantageous in this respect that the Head of State is himself Chairman of the Council even though it can be argued that as Finance Commissioner, his presence does erode some of the effectiveness of separating planning from finance, for Finance Ministers, or Commissioners for that matter, tend to restrict the enthusiasm of planners.

Finally, and especially in this all important area of Economic Planning, government needs to resist the temptation of countermanding the proposals of the Council. Once again, the presence of the Head of State as well as of the Commissioners for Economic Planning, Agriculture and Industries provides some insulation against this danger, but the insulation is not total and it is important that the six permanent members especially, who are after all the nucleus of the Council, be spared that kind of frustration.

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Social Problems

THE PRESS, THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE

By

S. T. K. Boafo

The press in Ghana has often been accused of being sycophantic, hypocritical, and lacking in courage. It is also often accused of suppressing or at best distorting views that are critical of governmental policies and conduct, of being docile apologists of all that the government does, of hero-worshipping and dancing to the tune of its master. However, it is not absolutely certain whether it is government or just the press which is the more guilty for this unfortunate situation. Is the Ghana press not the offspring of prevailing conditions in the country? A critical look at events in Ghana since 1957 unveils the ugly fact that the operation of the press has been clearly circumscribed by conditions in the country; and that until the difficulties facing the press diminish the Ghanaian pressman will always be advised, to little avail, to be objective, constructively critical, inform the government of adverse public opinion of its policies, etc.

Press Censorship

It is pertinent to give an idea of the manner in which the Ghana press has been constrained to operate since independence. From the early 1960's there were gradual attempts by the C.P.P. Government to weaken and restrict press freedom as well as muzzle adverse public opinion. In 1960, for instance, press censorship was introduced and the privately-owned **Ashanti Pioneer,** established in 1939, was required by an order to submit its contents to the Minister of Information before publication. Under the laws which established the corporations to run the mass media, the government had the power to appoint the boards of directors, the director-general, the managing directors or general managers of the corporations as well as the editors of the state-owned newspapers. In other words, top officials of the mass media, those in the decision-making positions were, as they still are, appointees of the government of the day. And since the days of Kwame Nkrumah, every successive government has used this factor in the mass media organisation to ensure that it is the chief superintendent of the operation of the media. In the Nkrumah era, the managers, directors and editors of the

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mass media were mostly party activists and propagandists who lauded Nkrumah on each step he took and who used their mighty pens to cast aspersions on the opponents of the government and "smoke out" so-called enemies of the state.

It is relevant to note what the late President Nkrumah himself thought of the Press. At the Second Conference of African Journalists in Accra in November, 1963, Kwame Nkrumah declared that "the truly African revolutionary press does not exist merely for the purpose of enriching its proprietors or entertaining its readers. It is an integral part of our society with which much of its purposes are in consonance . . the purpose of the Press in revolutionary Africa . . . is to establish a progressive political and economic system in our continent." There are two important points in these quoted comments of Nkrumah which need to be stressed. He said that the press was "an integral part of our society" and that it was to "establish a progressive political and economic system". The impression one gets from reading the whole speech and from observing how the Press operated in Ghana from that time up to the first coup in 1966 is that to ensure that the Press, and for that matter the whole of the mass media, contributed effectively to the establishment of "a progressive political and economic system" the government had to subject them to effective control.

N.L.C. and the Press

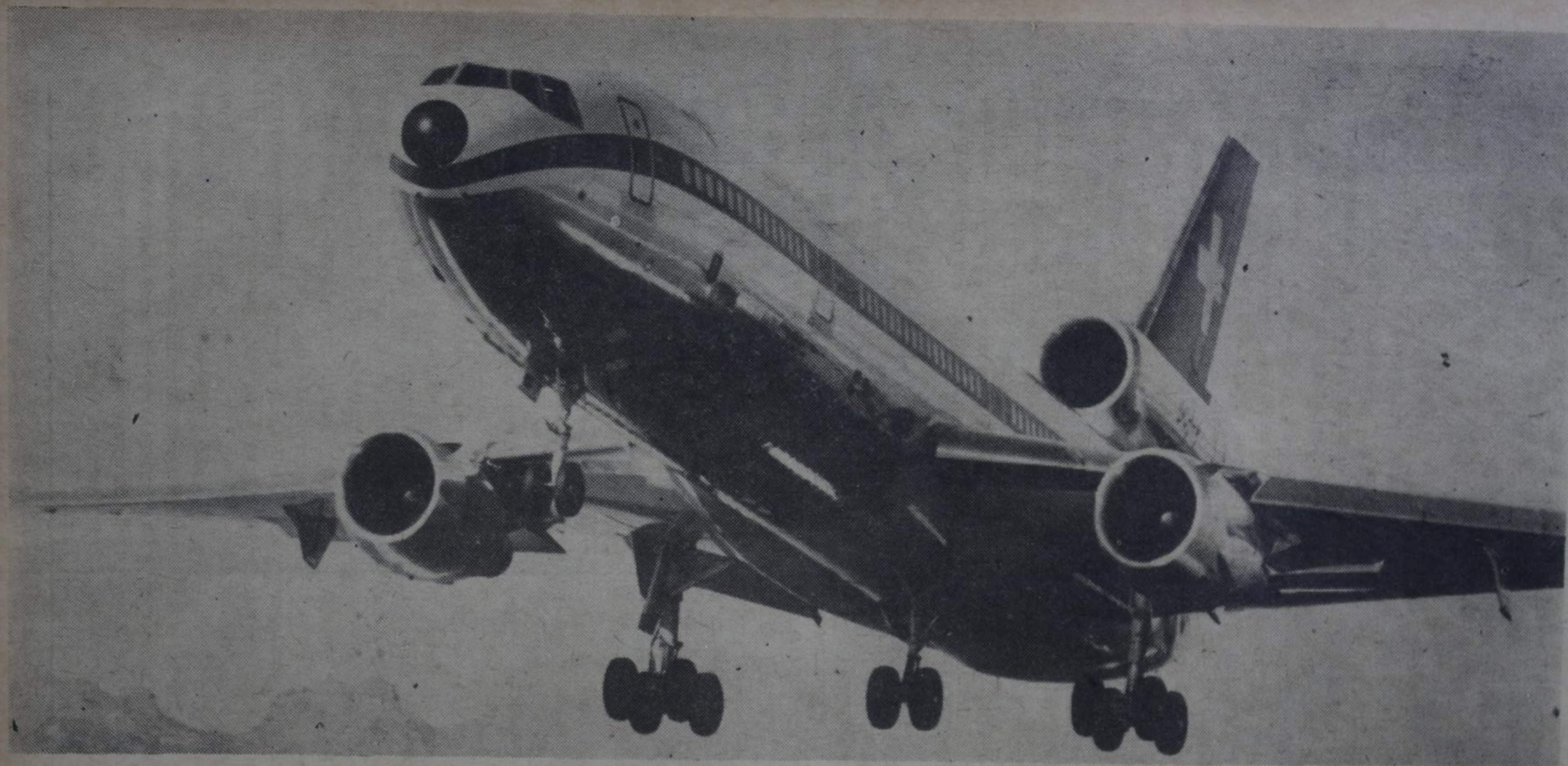
With the overthrow of the Nkrumah regime in February 1966, one hoped that real press freedom would come to Ghana. However, the National Liberation Council did not find it convenient to break away completely from the precedent, set by the previous government, of ensuring that those at the top of the mass media echelon were favourably disposed towards it. Thus one of the very first things the N.L.C. did was to dismiss the editors of the state-owned papers who had been 'gaping' sycophants of the overthrown regime. It appointed new editors and reshuffled the board of directors of the mass media. The new appointees felt themselves hemmed in by circumstances of the time and their task was clearly written on the walls for them by the very nature of their appointment — they were to project the image of the government, help it in its programmes and to support its moves. The major event during the N.L.C. rule which exposed the character of the Press system in Ghana was the rumpus over the Abbot case. When editors of the state-owned newspapers criticised the government for its handling of the Abbot pact the government did not hesitate to dismiss them — an action which led to the resignation of the then Commissioner for Information. As Mr. Kwame Afreh aptly pointed out in the **Legon Observer** Vol. VIII/8, "a vigorous independent press cannot flourish in an atmosphere of constant reprisals, harrassment, detentions and suppression of dissident and independent views". It is in this atmosphere that the Ghanaian pressman perennially has found himself.

During the short-lived Busia regime, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Information, Mr. A. A. Abedi, stated that "under the Progress Party Government, the press is guaranteed to enjoy freedom of expression". This view was endorsed by Dr. K. A. Busia, the Prime Minister himself, in a radio and television broadcast to the nation on Monday, February 24, 1970. Nevertheless an important incident affecting press freedom in the time of Dr. Busia needs to be recalled. When the then editor of the **Daily Graphic,** took a dissident editorial view on the government's policy of dialogue with the Voster regime, he was asked to proceed on leave, prior to his disappearance from the editorial chair.

The Press under the N.R.C.

The present government's policy on press freedom seems to be clear-cut: "To the government, press freedom calls for reciprocation by way of responsible press communication. It is therefore desirable that the mass media approach their task with a high degree of responsibility, propriety and scrupulous observance of their professional ethics". This is contained in a speech by Col. I. K. Acheampong, Chairman of the N.R.C., when he inaugurated the boards of directors of the corporations under the Information Services Secretariat. Also in an interview with a correspondent of **Africa** (No 10, June, 1972) Col. Acheampong said that "a government is fulfilling a basic democratic function if it is responsive to the needs and wishes of the people. If the government is fulfilling this function and, moreover, is able to sustain a climate of freedom, with a free press . . . and an informed and articulate public opinion, there is no reason to think it is undemocratic".

These statements of the Head of State as well as recent remarks of the present Commissioner for Information seem to imply that there is tolerance for free expression of oneself even under a military regime and also that the press has a free hand to gather and disseminate information, to reveal the truth to the people and to articulate or crystallize public opinion. However, a major obstacle lies in the way of the press in the implemen-



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tation of these duties and, more especially in the way of any section of the public which will like to have a mass circulating journal of a strong, vocal, independent opinion. This obstacle is the Newspaper Licensing Decree, issued by the government in March, 1973. The content of the Decree (N.R.C.D. 161) has been analysed by many writers on the press in Ghana. (See **L.O. Vol.** VIII/8). Suffice it to say that a decree which, among other things, places discretionary powers in the hands of the Commissioner for Information in the issuing of licence to print, publish, and circulate any newspaper; empowers him to impose any **conditions** on a licence or revoke a licence if the grantee fails to comply with any conditions imposed, or for **any other reason,** contains an inherent danger. As Mr. Kwame Afreh says in the issue of the **Legon Observer** referred to, the decree can be used as "an instrument of repression and for thought-control". The decree coming almost a decade after Nkrumah's Newspaper Licensing Act of 1963 has a static, if not a retrogressive effect, on the emergence of real press freedom in Ghana.

In a nutshell then, the Press in Ghana has been functioning under considerable difficulties, and its sphere of action has generally been conspicuously delineated by the four governments the nation has seen in the past 17 years. Editors of the state-owned newspapers have been compelled, in as much they needed to keep their post, earn their daily bread, and enjoy their personal freedom, to sing the praises of the governments. For fear of being victimised or ordered to fold up or having conditions imposed on them which would make it rather difficult for their papers to exist, pressmen of most of the privately-owned newspapers, magazines or journals have tended to be over-cautious in their work. The continued functioning of the press has come more and more to depend on its "co-operation" with the government. The Press has gradually been made to cower into a position of subservience, fulsome adulation of government and overzealous sycophancy. On many occasions, therefore, the press has in the words of the Commissioner for Information not only "betrayed the people" but also it has deceived the government.

In this connection, an instance which readily comes to mind is the dissolution of the first Logistics Committee. On this particular occasion, most, if not all, members of the public felt the malpractices or mismanagement which led to the dissolution must be unearthed and the public made to know "what went wrong" and what punishment was to be meted out to the offenders. This the government did not do, perhaps because it was uninformed of what the people "felt and said" about that action. One would have thought that the Press or the mass media as a whole, "being close to the people", would insist on the right of the people "to know". But then, it is an open secret that apart from one journal, the press handled the whole issue so gingerly that it might as well have kept completely silent over it. Thus it is that today the malfunction of that Committee and what punitive measures were taken against the culprits remain shrouded in mystery and obscurity.

Public Opinion and Press

While it may be premature to advocate absolute independence of all the mass media in a developing country like Ghana, it is certainly not premature to demand that the press be given absolute freedom, limited only by the relevant laws, to disagree with governmental policies when it feels these policies are not in the interest of the people or to alert the government when it is putting out the wrong foot, or forgetting its promises. If a government is to keep its finger on the pulse of vital public opinion, it is imperative that there is a free press and that this press is bold enough to express the true feelings and thoughts of the people. It is only then that the government will be aware of the true needs and wishes of the nation and tune its policies and programmes to these needs. This is how the press can make and unmake governments. It is also incumbent or even mandatory on the government to aid the press in its duties by easing the difficulties in the way of the press and making its freedom really

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The Executive Committee of the Academic Board has cancelled the result of the B.Sc. (Administration) examination taken by Mr. Asuama Yeboah Abebrese in June 1973, and revoked the degree awarded him.

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meaningful. The fear of instant dismissals, interrogation and 'disciplining' which hangs over the Ghanaian pressman like the proverbial Damocles' sword must be removed. As Ghana enters her seventeenth year of independence, it is hoped that she will have real press freedom subject only to the laws of libel, sedition, obscenity and treason. Then only can the Press be "the informer of the leaders and inspirer of the masses".

Observer Notebook

The O.A.U., Ekangaki and Lonrho

The recent controversy about the appointment of Lonrho as consultants on oil supplies to O.A.U. member countries has ended with the withdrawal of Lonrho from the deal, following criticisms from certain members of the O.A.U. It will however be useful to examine the circumstances leading to the controversy in the hope that some lessons can be drawn from the episode.

In the wake of the oil crisis the O.A.U. Ministerial Council appointed a Committee of Seven to study the effects of the oil squeeze on member states. The Committee of Seven, comprising Botswana, Cameroon, Ghana, Mali, Sudan, Tanzania and Zaire, held its first meeting on December 29th, 1973 and elected Dr. Mansour Khaled, Sudan's Foreign Minister, as Chairman. At that meeting it was decided that members of the Committee should meet Arab Finance and Petroleum Ministers in Cairo, after a preliminary meeting by the Committee alone. The Committee of Seven, at its meeting of December 29th, also authorised the General Secretariat of the O.A.U. to appoint a consultant or consultants to deal with the technical aspects of keeping members supplied with oil, as reported by **West Africa.**

The Committee of Seven held its second meeting on January 20th 1974, at which meeting the Secretary-General reported on the action he had taken so far on the matter of consultants: he announced that he had signed a consultancy agreement with Lonrho on the 9th of January, that is, eleven days after he had been empowered to appoint a consultant or consultants. In a letter to the Chief Executive of Lonrho, the Cairo meeting between the Committee of Seven and Arab Ministers had been scheduled for January 22nd.

When the agreement with Lonrho was announced, several African countries including Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda protested at the choice of Lonrho. The Secretary-General of the O.A.U. explained the choice of Lonrho by saying that in addition to technical competence, the company was "politically well introduced both in Africa and in the Arab world" and that its "intensive activities and good audience both in Africa and in the Arab world" were well known to O.A.U. member countries. The Secretary-General could therefore not understand the violent objections raised by governments some of whom had considerable business connections with Lonrho. In this regard, it is also worth noting, as Mr. Alan Ball, Deputy Chairman of Lonrho has asserted, that the agreement was negotiated in the presence of Mr. Ekangaki and representatives of a number of O.A.U. member states, and that the actual signing of the agreement on January 9th was done in the presence of members of the Committee of Seven on oil matters (**West Africa,** February 25th, 1974 p. 15). By Mr. Ekangaki's particular yardstick of Lonrho's political acceptability in African and Arab countries, therefore, his choice of Lonrho sounds quite reasonable.

However, Mr. Ekangaki's further claim that he conducted "an exhaustive enquiry into the activities of Lonrho in southern Africa and the relationship of the firm with the racist minority regimes of that region" and that he gave it a clean bill of health before entering into the agreement seems to be open to doubt. For one thing, Mr. Ekangaki left himself only eleven days (between December 29th and January 9th) for all his exhaustive enquiries, the paper work involved in the drafting of the agreement, and its signing. Secondly, why was the meeting of the Committee of Seven and the Arab Ministers fixed for January 22nd, only two days after the second meeting of the O.A.U. Committee? The haste with which this business was being despatched raises genuine doubts, to say the least.

On the Secretary-General's claim about investigations into Lonrho's southern Africa's connections, if Mr. Ekangaki had allowed himself more time he would have come upon information which could perhaps have led him to another conclusion. During the Lonrho boardroom rumpus last year, evidence produced in a London court as reported by the **Times** of May 15th revealed that "Lonrho advanced over £3 million to finance the development of a mining subsidiary in Rhodesia of a company called HCC Investments. By September of last year (1972) Lonrho had advanced this sum, HCC was in effect owned as to 50 per cent by Mr. Rowland and family trusts of two fellow directors". Furthermore, it was subsequently revealed by the **Observer** (London) that a Lonrho subsidiary, acting as a front for British firms,

was breaking sanctions against Rhodesia. The June 10th, 1973 issue of the **Observer** contained an article giving details of how Lonrho contrived to get its copper out of Rhodesia onto world markets and to get the dollars back into Rhodesia. The companies involved in the busting of sanctions were Lonrho subsidiaries in Rhodesia and South Africa, a South American owned but Johannesburg-based firm called Hochmetals, and a Mozambique copper mine called Edmundian. The newspaper's informant worked for Hochmetals in Johannesburg from early 1969 to October that year and was also a director of Edmundian. The informant also revealed how in collusion with the South African Chamber of Commerce, Rhodesia copper was exported on South African documents and how the dollars paid on it passed through the Netherlands Bank of South Africa and got into Rhodesia. After sanctions had been tightened in the summer of 1968, a new plan was devised by which Hochmetals bought the Edmundian mine in Mozambique **which was unworked.** Rhodesia copper was then sold on Mozambique documents issued in South Africa stating that the copper came from the Edmundian mine. The informant once signed for the shipment of so-called "Edmundian copper" worth 500,000 dollars. Detailed information on these operations was passed on to the British government which in turn passed it on to the United Nations Committee on Sanctions, without itself investigating the allegations.

What all this means is that if the Secretary-General had taken more trouble with his enquiry, he may have come out with a different set of facts that would have led him not to give Lonrho a clean bill of health, at least on the grounds that the company was encouraging the minority settler regimes of Southern Africa. There is no doubt that there is much more information available on Lonrho's southern African connections than Mr. Ekangaki seems to be aware of, or cared to find out.

The whole embarrassing situation has been resolved by Lonrho's decision to withdraw from the contract, but a few questions still persist. There was an outburst of hysteria last year in many African countries when attempts were being made by Lonrho's board to oust Mr. Roland Rowland. It looked as if the economic future of Africa was tied to Mr. Rowland's fortunes, and all indications are that Lonrho maintains extremely cordial relations with a number of African countries. On what basis has Lonrho been found internally acceptable in individual African countries? Does the company offer better terms than one can get elsewhere? If this is the case, then one might argue that is makes sound business sense to deal with that firm, and might even justify some of the hysterical noises made last year during the Lonrho boardroom rumpus. Did it not occur to anybody that if a company can be accommodated internally, this could spill over into international relations? If people do not find it embarrassing to deal with Lonrho on a national level, why should they shy away from dealing with it in a wider context?

Perhaps the best lesson we can learn from this episode is that those who are forced to, or choose to, play ball with the devil should either keep quiet, or cast out the devil before raising their hands in horror. We have all been saved from embarrassment by Lonrho's backing out. Even so, the whole episode should have demonstrated some of the difficulties of operating in the world of international business and high finance while trying to keep hold on one's basic principles.

Letters

The Ekangaki — Lonrho Connection

SIR — We have all learnt with great relief the decision of Lonrho to abrogate the contract entered into between that company and the O.A.U. Secretary-General for the supply of oil to African countries. Some of us are not convinced that Mr. Ekangaki did enough homework about Lonrho's support of the racist regimes of southern Africa, and I find it particularly perverse for the Secretary-General to assert that his investigations revealed that on the southern African question the views of Lonrho and the O.A.U. "entirely coincide". Mr. Ekangaki also claims that he chose Lonrho because many African countries have business connections with that company.

It is bad enough that individual African countries should be doing business with Lonrho with all its southern African connections while appealing to other foreign companies to desist from morally and financially boosting those despicable regimes. But it is unpardonable that it should even occur to an African patriot occupying Mr. Ekangaki's exalted position to treat with Lonrho on behalf of the O.A.U. The Secretary-General has protested his good faith, and I cannot dispute this, but he has displayed such a plentiful lack of political maturity and astuteness that he has lost a lot of goodwill and esteem among Africans. Can anybody now guess what other blunder this politically innocent and naive Secretary-General may yet commit to the further embarrassment of the O.A.U?

At one point in the controversy, Mr. Ekangaki threatened to resign if there was a real crisis of confidence or if his good faith was impugned. We may concede that he acted in good faith, but there is still a question on the soundness of his political sense. Even though the withdrawal of Lonrho seems to have solved the problem, I think the whole question of Mr. Ekangaki's suitability for his position should be critically examined,

and if I may venture an opinion I would suggest that he should not even be allowed to resigned, if such is his wish, but he should be sacked on the grounds of political innocence, credulity and psychological ineptitude.

Kwesi Enu

A69 Prabiw Street
Saltpond

Restore The Subsidy on Examination Fees

SIR — In five months' time, to be precise, in August, the Middle Form 4 pupils will write their final examination for the Middle School Leaving Certificate. These candidates will be required to pay examination fees before they are allowed to take the examination.

Until quite recently, the fee paid by a candidate for the examination was only fifty pesewas (50p). This moderate fee of fifty pesewas could be afforded by parents in the urban and rural areas alike, even though some parents in the rural areas often encountered some financial difficulties. Occasionally, some public spirited teachers had to pay for pupils whose parents found it difficult to pay, getting back their money when these parents were in the position to refund it. There are instances when some of these poor parents especially those with many children deferred payment until the cocoa season before matters were settled with the teachers who helped them.

It is against this background that I am appealing to the Ministry of Education and, for that matter, the government to rescind its decision to withdraw the subsidy of two cedis fifty pesewas which for years now has been enjoyed by the pupils in Middle Form 4. Now the candidates are required to pay three cedis, instead of the usual fifty pesewas. The increase, to say the least, is too much and is going to create a number of difficuties for many people. First, we are all witnesses to how some irresponsible teachers and their heads alike have been handling textbook and school fees. Isn't it likely that the new "heavy" examination fees will be similarly mishandled? Second, a good many of these parents, who only manage to live at subsistence level will be unable to afford the three cedis, with the result that some pupils will not take part in the examination. Third, as has been the practice in the rural areas, parents who do not wish their children to waste nine and half years in school are going to borrow at high interest rates from the rural "bourgeois" to pay for their children.

Considering the important role being played by the elementary school pupils, especially those in the rural areas, in the current revolution it is only fair that the government should restore the subsidy without further delay. For here is a most pressing need for social justice. After all, the Loan Scheme for university students has been abolished, car maintenance allowance for civil servants has been restored, national development levy to be paid by workers has been cancelled, last but not the least, the few amenities which were taken away have been restored. Why then should the government whittle away the only "amenity" being 'enjoyed' by the young and underprivileged ones?

Y. Gyasehene-Yeboah

Legon Hall
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A Second Medical School?

SIR — I recently chanced upon some Ghanaian newspapers here in which there was talk of the possibility of setting up a second medical school in Kumasi. The reason given is that we need more doctors in Ghana. This is self-evident, but what is not so obvious is whether the setting up of another medical school is the only way in which we can have more doctors. It must be remembered that unnecessary duplication invariably results in under-utilisation of resources both human and material. I have come across many medical schools in Europe where classes are twice or even thrice as large as we have at Korle Bu.

Would it not be cheaper to increase the intake at Korle Bu so that the lecturers can teach larger classes? I am presuming that it takes as much preparation and energy to lecture a class of thirty students as it does to teach seventy. If we were to expand facilities at Korle Bu by recruiting more lecturers and increasing laboratory space and equipment, I am sure it would work out to be far cheaper than building a full scale medical school 170 miles away with a full complement of teaching and administrative staff and laboratory facilities which may be underused? I believe that we can achieve the same result of producing more medical doctors while reducing our overhead and constructional costs if we stretch Korle Bu absolutely to the limit before thinking of building a second medical school.

It will certainly make us Ghanaians abroad feel proud that our country has two medical faculties, but we shall certainly feel prouder if we proceed modestly and commonsensically. Even an essential project like a medical school can be classified as a prestige project and a white elephant, or at least a cream or grey one,

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University Admission Requirements

SIR — A recent advertisement in the local papers informs the public that the degree awarded to a certain gentleman by the University of Ghana had been withdrawn on the grounds that the said gentleman entered the university under pretences. Upon investigation, I learnt that the gentleman entered the university with the 'A' Level Certificate of his deceased brother. I further learnt that he passed out with a degree in B.Sc. (Admin) Second Class Lower Division in June, 1973.

Now, the question which this episode raises is: if somebody can enter the university without genuinely having the required entry qualifications and can follow the courses, pass the First University Examination and finally pass out with a Second Class Lower degree, may that not simply mean that the entry requirements may be too high? I ask this question because I have been told that the School of Administration is so well sought after that its selection of students is very competitive and that the average 'A' Level grade of students there is generally higher than the university average, except perhaps for the Faculty of Law.

Accidents, it has been said, have sometimes led to great inventions. Perharps this incident may lead the university authorities in Legon and elsewhere in the country to check whether their entry requirements are not too high.

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Justice And Peace

SIR — On Sunday, March 24, a pastoral letter on "Justice and Peace" issued by the Catholic Bishops of Ghana and previously published in some dailies was read in all the Catholic Churches in Ghana. The message of this document was that Ghanaians should try and avoid all the current evils such as conjugal infidelity, neglect of children and neglect of other marital duties, bribery and corruption, favouritism and nepotism, extortion and intimidation, lying and intrigue, discrimination on grounds of religion, colour, origin, sex, academic attainment, etc. which militate against Justice and Peace in our society. The Bishops called on employers to "give wages that will enable their employees to live lives worthy of their dignity. Workers, for their part, should justify their equitable wages by conscientious work". They urged Ghanaians to treat their wards and hired servants as they would their own children and relatives, while these wards and servants, in turn, must render faithful service and regard their masters as their guardians.

It is refreshing for our church dignitaries to draw attention, from time to time, to the elimination of those things which set back our social and spiritual advancement. In fact it should be the duty of the Churches to set the pace for moral and spiritual rectitude. But in this the Churches have not done better than other people. For example, the Churches, as employers of labour, have never paid their employees wages commensurate with their productivity. People in the service of the churches are made to believe that the sacrifices they are called upon to give are a guarantee for a better life hereafter. I am convinced that in Ghana today, and in Africa for that matter, the masses are keenly interested in their economic betterment, political expression and personal dignity, and that they will give devotion to that religion which honestly concerns itself more with the needs and demands of today's life rather than that of the hereafter.

P. B. Arthiabah

Public Services Worker's Union
P.O. Box 701
Hall of Trade Unions
Accra

National Service And Salary Increases

SIR — The recent salary increases in the country and the complete neglect of servicemen in this exercise, has brought into sharp focus some of the paradoxes and contradictions in the Ghanaian society.

One may argue that since servicemen are supposed to be on allowances the increases in respect of salary workers should not apply to them. A counter argument may be raised that since the allowance of ¢100.00 was fixed without due consideration for the future upward trend in the cost of living which has been acknowledged by the government, it logically follows that if other workers have had increases in salary, the servicemen should not be left out.

After all, do they not pay the same prices for commodities as the other categories of workers? Apart from paying half the transport charges in respect of State Transport buses and free medical treatment in government hospitals, they and the other groups of workers have to suffer the same high prices of goods. But even then how many of the servicemen get access to state

hopes of the South African blacks were doomed by the treaty of Vereeniging which ended the Anglo-Boer war. For it was this treaty which laid the foundations for transport buses and government hospitals? Is it not the few of them who are stationed in the towns?

Surely, servicemen must live decent lives and it will be unkind on the government's part to neglect them in any salary increases aimed at offsetting the high cost of living.

New Drobo Secondary School **Badu-Yeboah**
Post Office Box 31
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Prices of Petrol And Kerosene

SIR — On 12th March **The Daily Graphic** and **The Ghanaian Times** published the new prices of petroleum products. In addition, they published prices of these commodities in neighbouring countries, intending to prove with those figures that we in Ghana are fortunate to have such low selling prices.

The papers would however, have done a good job if they had published salary structures of certain categories of workers in these countries side by side with the price of petrol. The two figures together would have shown us whether Ghanaians are more fortunate or not.

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Comment

POLITICS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION: FOURTEEN YEARS AFTER SHARPEVILLE

By
S. K. B. Asante

FOURTEEN years ago, on 21 March 1960, the world was profoundly shocked by the tragic news of the brutal massacre at Sharpeville, South Africa, in which 69 peaceful African demonstrators against the humiliating "pass laws" of the inhuman and aggressive policy of **apartheid** were shot to death by the South African police and 180 others were wounded. This massacre, which was a culmination of a series of assaults, cruelties, reckless brutalities and atrocities which have become an essential feature in the implementation of the **apartheid** system, provoked an outburst of international interest, sympathy, and in some instances, vehement protest. People all over the world — particularly the African world — read accounts of the shooting and were in outstraged. The Sharpeville incident has gone down in African contemporary history as a day of "infamy". To commemorate the occasion, the United Nations has each year since 1966 observed the Sharpeville massacre as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. For the Sharpeville shooting is a painful reminder to the international community of its responsibility to put an end to this crime and to forestall further bloodshed and graver dangers to international peace and security.

Roots of Opposition

However, the Sharpeville incident is universally accepted as the greatest threat ever to face the racist regime in South Africa since the advent of black political organisations. It is a significant turning-point in the confrontation between the oppressed majority and the minority rule in South Africa. The period since then has been characterized by a constant escalation of resistance and repression. On this fourteenth anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre, it seems appropriate that we focus attention on the significance of this incident for the South African politics of confrontation.

The opposition of Africans in Azania to white supremacy and oppression is not a product of recent manufacture. Its roots go farther than is usually appreciated, and is complex in character. For since its formation in 1912 as the Native National Congress, the African National Congress of South Africa (A.N.C.), had persistently appealed to the minority regime about the harshness and inhumanity of racial discrimination. Even before the birth of the Union of South Africa, such early coloured organisations as the Union of Africans (founded in 1886), Gandhi's Natal Indian Congress (formed in 1894), and the African People's Organisation (established in 1902), had severally protested, but their pleas went largely unheard in London, even though they generally confined their activities to petitioning their white rulers for some measure of social justice. The

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Details of salary scales, further particulars and forms of application should be obtained either from the Assistant Registrar, Universities of Ghana Office, 15 Gordon Square, London WC1H OAG or the Registrar, University of Ghana, P.O. Box 25, Legon, Accra, with whom applications (EIGHT COPIES) should be lodged not later than **20th April, 1974.**

March, 1974.

joint domination over the blacks. The Anglo-Boer partnership was sealed in the Act of Union of 1910.

The African resistance movement during the period before Sharpeville was essentially a dedication to a policy of peaceful reform and change in collaboration with — or at least not in antagonism toward — the whites. The A.N.C. always stood for a non-racial democracy, and shrank from any policy which might drive the races even further apart than they already were. It was essentially the failure to stir white consciences to the need to redress previous wrongs that gave rise to a militant and violent confrontation with the racist regime. For increasingly, Africans came to realize that fifty years of non-violence had brought them nothing but more and more repressive legislation, and fewer rights. The determined attitude of whites called for a re-evalution of the nationalist struggle. It became quite evident that a peaceful transition to African rule was not only a luxury but a fruitless tactic which could only result in maintenance of the white power structure. Violence was therefore accepted as a method of political action: the use of force had become inevitable.

By 1959, the leadership and rank and file of the A.N.C. had split. The political momentum and initiative was shifted to a new organisation, the radical Pan-Africanist Congress (P.A.C.) under the leadership of Robert Sobukwe. The first significant activity of PAC was to launch an anti-pass campaign, and March 21, 1960 was fixed as the date for the opening of this campaign. That day's event marked a new era in South African history.

The Sharpeville massacre on that day sounded the death knell of non-violent action — the gradualist strategy and tactics hitherto pursued by the nationalist movements. After Sharpeville the African political organisations turned away from the fifty years of devoted belief in Gandhi's policies of non-violent resistance in favour of more direct and violent methods. As the acting president of PAC, Potlako Leballo, declared at last year's UN-OAU Conference in Oslo, 'We buried the dialogue at Sharpeville, it is now armed struggle'.

That the South African Government clearly understood the language of armed struggle was evident. For, for the first time in the history of the white minority regime, the obnoxious "pass laws" were suspended. Europeans became more frightened than they had been since their conquest of this African land of Azania. One Government Minister, Paul Sauer, even expressed misgivings about **apartheid.** By the end of 1962 preparation of violent uprising had begun. It seemed at long last that the South African powder keg was exploding.

Echoes of Sharpeville sounded from the cities of the African world. For the events at Sharpeville were viewed as an effective challenge to Pan-Africanism and

the movement towards African unity. Sharpeville made it evident that African unity remained illusory while there were surviving pockets of colonialism, **apartheid**, and racial discrimination. It also confirmed the belief of African leaders that collective struggle against colonialism and racism represented an essential ingredient of African unity and their individual national security. Thus even when the African states split into rival Casablanca and Monrovia groups, they remained united in their opposition to colonialism and racism. It was this realisation which inspired the creation at the inaugural meeting of the OAU of a Committee of Liberation as the directing centre of operations aimed at the overthrow of the white minority regimes in Africa as well as the total liberation of the African continent from the remnants of colonialism.

On the international diplomatic front, the Sharpeville massacre marked the beginning of a change in the Afro-Asian mood at the UN towards **apartheid.** Before 1960, neither the Security Council's appeal nor the efforts of the Secretary-General had effected any changes in **apartheid**. The Sharpeville killings compelled the United Nations to take a fresh look at the **apartheid** policies of the Government of South Africa. Following that Sharpeville incident, 29 African and Asian states successfully mustered support for a Security Council resolution that (a) called upon the South African Government to initiate measures abandoning its policies of **apartheid,** and (b) recognised for the first time that the situation in South Africa had led to international friction and, if continued, might endanger international peace and **security.**

Coercive Measures

As a result of this resolution, **apartheid** was no longer considered only a violation of human rights — a criterion which had previously generated controversy over the competence of the UN to deal with the issue- —but also a threat to international peace and security, the maintenance of which was one of the main purposes of the UN. The Council's action was a moderate triumph for the Third World. Although they had hoped for stern action, they were at least satisfied with the recognition of the possible threat to peace and security.

One immediate result was that many now changed their position even if slightly. Britain and the United States, for example, which for many years regarded **apartheid** in South Africa as the domestic concern of the country and not a legitimate matter for UN debate or action, reversed their respective positions, and admirably responded to the Sharpeville killings by voting in favour of putting the item on the agenda.

Furthermore, inspired by Sharpeville, African delegations at the UN began to discuss the possibility of coercive measures. They urged stronger action, such as political and economic sanctions, or even the expulsion of South Africa from the UN. Although efforts in this direction failed to meet with general approval, the Afro-Asian Commonwealth countries succeeded in 1961 in forcing South Africa out of the Commonwealth club. The campaign towards the diplomatic isolation of South Africa had begun.

Inside South Africa itself, the militant spirit of Sharpeville has since 1960 continued to rock the foundation of **apartheid**. This is reflected not only by signs of conflict between various elements of the ruling classes over problems of how best to safeguard the racialist-colonialist structure, but even more significantly by expressions of renewed military activity amongst all sections of the oppressed and exploited Africans. In May 1972, for instance, South Africa was swept by a storm of student protests which thoroughly shook the **apartheid** regime. Spurred on by their victories, the South African Students Organisation (including Africans, English and Afrikaners) played a significant role in the creation in July 1972 of a new militant organisation known as the Black People's Convention — the first political party to be formed by Africans since the PAC and ANC were outlawed after the Sharpeville encounter. The students crisis served, among other things, the important purpose of weakening one significant pillar of **apartheid** in South Africa — the solidarity between the English and Afrikaners in oppressing black Africans.

Even more impressive is the scale of industrial action by workers since the last quarter of 1972. In early 1973 the **apartheid** government of South Africa faced its most serious crisis since the Sharpeville massacre, when over 100,000 black workers went on strike. The latest waves of strikes wiped away completely the illusion that South African was peaceful under **apartheid**. Typical of the voice of the many panicking white settlers in the country, **The Star,** South Africa's largest selling newspaper, told its white authorities on January 20, 1973 to come to 'terms with the aspirations of the millions of Africans who make up three quarters of South Africa's population'. This was reinforced by the very significant outburst of the Mayor of Durban, Ron Williams, who told the Voster government that the biggest mistake 'we in authority can make now is to sit back and say everything is normal. We all know what the cause of labour unrest is. We must see to it that we remove this root cause as soon as we possibly **can'.**

World-Wide Solidarity

The angry mood of resistance now permeating the black ghettos and country-wide has forced Bantustan chiefs and other collaborators to become rebellious, after their own fashion. Matanzima of the Transkei, for years the most willing lackey of **apartheid,** loudly complains of the whiteman's bad faith and appeals for unity among the blacks.

Externally, the Voster regime's campaign for 'dialogue' and its attempts to overcome its isolation from black Africa have been sharply rebuked, as witness the UN General Assembly demonstration in October last year when every African state (with the exception of Malawi) walked out on the speech of Muller, the South African Foreign Minister. Even the Leabua Jonathan government of Lesotho is impelled to take up a belated but welcome stand for independence from domination by Pretoria.

Outside Africa, too, the world-wide solidarity movement is scoring advances in its effort to mobilize world opinion and action against the racist regime. The regime has failed to make any significant breaches in the wall of isolation which surrounds it in the world of sport. Of special significance is the recent Geneva International Trade Union Conference representing 186 million workers. The decisions of this conference held on 16th June 1973 provide an impressive basis for world-wide workers' action against **apartheid.** It united for the first time in many years all the main detachments

of the trade union movement, unanimously denounced **apartheid** and race discrimination as a crime against humanity and called for a whole series of practical measures to be taken by governments, trade unions and employers to boycott racist South Africa and render financial, moral and material support to the workers and people of South Africa 'through their authentic trade unions and political organisations'.

Another major diplomatic victory scored in recent years is the recognition of the liberation movements by the UN agencies. In particular, UNESCO and FAO have not only recognised the African Liberation movements but even gone to the extent of offering their services. Added to this, is the seating of representatives of African liberation movements in the General Assembly's Fourth Committee on Decolonisation during the 1972 session. All this has proved a major diplomatic offensive against the South African racists and Portuguese colonialism. It is worth noting, also, that the election victories scored by the Labour Parties in Australia and New Zealand and their early pronouncements on colonialism and **apartheid** augur well for African diplomatic offensive. The initial step they have taken in opposing racially segregated South African teams visiting their countries has been widely hailed.

Not least in this series of African diplomatic victories is the conference on Southern Africa held in Olso in April 1973. The Oslo Conference represented a new approach, both in the composition of the participants and in the form of deliberation, in the world community's search for solutions to the problems of Southern Africa. Government experts, individual experts and representatives of the liberation movements exchanged thoughts and ideas in the form of "thinking aloud". Not all the ideas which emerged from the conference may be politically viable, but the Oslo Conference in itself represents an important step towards freedom and independence for the peoples of Southern Africa.

It is, however, important to recognize the fact that these diplomatic acts in themselves have led to no fundamental changes inside South Africa. Nonetheless, they have played an important part in focusing international attention to this part of the world. They have also created diplomatic problems for the racists and colonialists for they deprived them of certain international forums which they have hitherto utilized to disseminate their pernicious propaganda.

This brief review of some of the major trends in South African racial politics since Sharpeville would seem to reveal that the situation in that country contains within it the seeds of an even more fundamenal sharpening of the confrontation between Africans and the white supremacy. The crisis of **apartheid** is growing and, more than at any time in the last decade, conditions are ripening which hold out possibilities of major advance. The fact that wider and wider sections of the people in South Africa and of the international world are now beginning to show a greater readiness to speak out and to act is a welcome sign that the policy of **apartheid** is being gradually dented. Sharpeville has indeed helped to inspire the spirit of growing resistance. It has helped to show that the world is no more a white man's world with an imperial white civilisation lording it over colonial non-white people. Civilisation can be vital and can be permanent only in its different national colours, since we cannot do away with the colours and keep the spectrum. We Africans cannot allow ourselves always to be told that virtue is based most of all on respecting the other man, for every man is a small world of his own. The deliberate attempt to deny the humanity of non-white peoples, which is what **apartheid** means, is an affront to every person in Africa. And because humanity is in fact one and indivisible, it is also an affront to every free man, regardless of colour.

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Matters Arising

REPLY TO KWABENA MANU'S REJOINDER TO "CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT TO THE SPOILS SYSTEM AGAIN?"

By
G. Adali-Mortty

SINGLING out of the many anomalies in political conduct which I had cited in my article on the subject heading 'Change of Government to the Spoils System Again?', Kwabena Manu objected to the allegation that the whole regions were discriminated against for not voting the "right" way. Mr. Manu's reason for objecting was that I had not substantiated my allegation. (See **L.O.** IX/5). One expected that Kwabena would prove by objective evidence that political discrimination during the Busia Government did not take place, this being the particular malfunctioning of political administration which had a curious appeal to him.

It was clear in my article that I was concerned with the general question of political chicanery and mishandling of public affairs. The article, in fact, was addressed to the need for debate on future systems likely to be an improvement on the past systems. It was not a treatise on discrimination as such. Nor did it limit its complaint against past politicians to their failure of develop the Volta Region, which Kwabena managed to drag in as his particular region of reference.

Insufficient Evidence

However, he soon realised that "information (was) notoriously lacking", but resolutely proceeded to present data on the standing of the regions in the matter of electricity, water, hospitals and education, which are in his words, "the four major indicators of economic development", as at 1970. The figures, being the cumulative infrastructural works of Governments from the time of Sir Gordon Guggisberg to the middle of Busia's administration, did not show breakdowns by which to evaluate the contribution to development of the Busia or any regime.

So much for his bid to produce objective evidence or data to prove that discrimination did not take place against any region through political preferences.

What is even more surprising still is that, Kwabena, who had taken me to task for making subjective statements, went on to assert as follows:

> "In fact I have it on good authority that during the PP Administration, the Volta Region as a matter of fact benefited more from regional development funds than any other region on comparative basis."

There was no evidence adduced to establish the authenticity of this grandiose claim. This would not have mattered much, if Kwabena were not in the very article in question taking issue with me for lack of proof.

Now, having selected potentially favourable variables or indicators of regional development, Kwabena failed to utilize them to prove political non-bias in allocation of funds and implementation of development projects. The onus of proving that there was no bias clearly lies with him, by reason of his self-assigned task of providing a disclaimer.

It was not my intention nor inclination to make a case for any one region. But, since Kwabena Manu asked specially for it, reference to a few withheld projects might interest him. Take for example, the Srogbe-Dabala Road, originally designed and started by the NLC in 1968/9 as a second-class road, based on economic and nationally co-ordinated considerations. Although the contracting agency had actually moved equipment to the site and had started work, the PP government relegated the road to feeder status and slowed down the actual execution of the project.

Again, by 1969, the Avu-Keta Project had left the drawing board, and had been approved for execution by the NLC. Up came the PP government which promptly shelved it, until it was revived by when the NRC came on the scene.

Now, specialists in Kwabena Manu's discipline and other quantitative experts are better able to evaluate his attempt at the use of objective data to prove a point. My guess is that some at least of his colleagues will hardly be impressed with the use of favourable "indicies", or variables which span the life time of many governments and which even non-economist would not be tempted to credit to a single government.

Sadly enough, Kwabena let the cat out of the bag in the words: "By the fact that he (Adali-Mortty) is unable to produce facts to substantiate his allegation, one is unwillingly led to the conclusion that Mr. Adali-Mortty is deliberately promoting tribalism".

People who know my marital and family connections and my social relations will bear testimony to my ethno-cosmopolitan orientation. Being "unable to substantiate" a claim would seem to be a capricious criterion for establishing tribalism! Why don't people attend to the bee in their own bonnet?

Miscellaneous

KONTOPIAATKROM REVISITED — III

by
Kwadwo Kontopiaat

THE discussions or rather the shouting in the Palm-wine Bar did indeed get louder and hotter as time rolled on and more **V.C. 10** rolled inside. Another interesting thing is that we were joined by a host of other people. The most important of them were Safohen Vodka, Mallam Fifty Pesewas, the indomitable President of the Historical Society of Kontopiaatkrom and of course the great Kontopiaatkrom Economist whom we have nick-named Kwabena Pepee (Kwabena the miser). Safohen Vodka, is the only ex-serviceman that has ever been produced by our great village. He has now, I was told, become our great expert on the catching of rats and grasscutters and on snails. He has already forecast a bumper snail harvest this year. How he came by this is still a mystery to us.

Mallam Fifty Pesewas, I was told, had replaced Mallam Sidi as the **Kramoman** of the local champion football club for reasons which seemed obvious to everybody present but myself. Indeed his entry was greeted with a very loud applause by all those present.

The Economist and the President of course need no introduction.

It was the latter two who rushed to where I was sitting, gave me each a really powerful handshake which nearly severed my right arm from the rest of my body and loudly demanded what brought me there. My reply that I came to replenish my stock of cutlasses, salt, kako etc. sent everybody roaring with laughter to my utter amazement. "What did you say, cutlassess and kako?" demanded the Economist, Safohen Vodka and Mallam Fifty Pesewas simultaneously. "We have not set eyes on any of those commodities for the last six months in this village." "Do you mean cutlassess too, whose supply has never ever dried up in the economic history of Kontopiaatkrom?" I demanded, "How then do you grow your maize, cassava, yam etc.?" "We don't!" was the automatic answer from almost everybody present, "through at the end of each season, we are told by our Radio-Active Committee that we have not only done well but that we have even exceeded our targets for those commodities, and of course we assemble here, celebrate this victory in the usual way and pat each other on the back." The great Economist confirmed all this, and added that since those in authority believe more in radioactivity than in any other power and therefore in combine harvesters and tractors, they have forgotten about hoes and cutlasses." As for "kako," Mallam Fifty Pesewas added, "we were told that it was an essential commodity, then its status was changed to that of foreign food and now we do not know what it is. But whatever the tag that has been pinned on it now, whether foreign food, essential commodity or what-have-you, we have not seen any for months. Indeed, Kwadwo, we could not but recall the good old days and of course the Kako Budget about which you wrote some time ago. But I better stop these dangerous reminiscences or I may be accused of having been incited by V.C. 10 to criticise the powers that be."

Gambling

"Actually instead of farming," confessed Safohen Vodka, "we spend our time more profitably and more entertaining these days **chachaing** (mind you not **chachacha-ing** which is a form of dancing) and we do this with the active encouragement and total blessing of the Radio-Active Committee. You may recall that before your disappearance, he told me, we did have the National Weekly Chacha and the Silver Chance Gamble. But since this Committee came in, they have introduced drawing of lots for houses and rolling of dice for paper money. Besides, as you have noticed, the V.C. 10 and Palm-Wine bars not only in our village but in the other towns are now filled with money-spitting machines known as one-armed oracles which can be consulted by all and sundry on the payment of relatively small fees. By way of promoting this particular game the Radio-Active Committee abandoned their earlier idea of banning it altogether in favour of merely taxing the promoters though not the participants in the game. The operation of the National Weekly Chacha has also been brought to its peak of efficiency since it is now being managed by a brave officer. "The result of all this is", concluded Safohen Vodka with a touch of sadness if not resignation in his throat, "that while ... three-quarters of the educated people employed in the Ahemfie, the ministries and even in the schools, colleges and universities spend their working hours filling Chacha coupons, the unemployed and those who could have been used on the farms spend their time consulting these money-spitting machines."

This conclusion was given a boozed ovation, and you can imagine how hilarious it was. We all then agreed to send a delegation to the National Radio--Active Committee to express our deep and sincere gratitude to them for converting us from a nation of workers and farmers into a Chacha (the Akan word for gambling) Nation. "But I swear Demo that this is not the only excellent thing that has been done by the Radio-Active Committee" cut in Kwame Kontopiaat. "Another thing by which they will be known is the change-over from driving on the left to driving on the right. Don't you see the children dancing around the single rediffusion box every morning and evening to the tune **Nifa Nifa naa nyen! Nifa Nifa naa nyen**. (Right is right, that is right). I must say that this question of the shift to the right touched off a really interesting discussion.

The French Revolution

The first contributor to the debate on the change-over was, naturally, the President of the Historical Society, and as one would expect he gave the necessary historical background to the whole business of which side of the road one should drive. He pointed out that like most inventions and break-throughs, the whole business of driving on the left began in England. And the English decided to drive on the left because before the invention of motor-vehicles, horse-riding was the most popular and most aristocratic mode of travelling, and in leading a horse one normally held the rein by the left hand and used the right to draw the sword in defence of himself or his partner in those days when the people living on that island were not as law-abiding and as civilised as we in Kontopiaatkrom were. People were therefore used to keeping to the left, and when motor-vehicles made their appearance first as usual on that island (at least this is what the President said) they naturally continued with the old practice of keeping **to the left.**

From this island as has also always been the case, this practice of keeping to the left spread throughout the world and everybody was happy about until some hungry and drunken Frenchmen decided to revolt and throw out their King. Having successfully accomplished this and turned themselves into republicans rather than monarchists, they decided to make a clean break with the past and one of the things they did was of course to change from riding on the left to riding on the right. The Americans who had by then also thrown out the English from their continent and were therefore anxious to do everything different from that of their former masters — hence, for instance, they adopted a written constitution — followed the French example and shifted right. It was from these two places that this rebellious act spread steadily throughout the world. This process, we were assured by our President, gathered great momentum during the Napoleonic era by the end of which most countries in Europe except Denmark were riding on the right. Indeed Sweden and Denmark remained faithful to Britain until only a few

years ago when they also bowed to the inevitable and shifted.

In Africa and the rest of the world, of course, each country kept left or right depending simply on whether they were colonized by the French or by the British Hence in West Africa, until we decided also to throw out our bosses, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria which were the British enclaves kept to the left while Guinea, Ivory Coast and Togo kept to the right. After Independence, this "absurdeous" (with apologies to Ofantsenyi Kwamina) position in West Africa could of course not be allowed to continue especially since we began to visit each other more, to trade with each other more, to copy from each other more not exclud ing the staging of coups and even to smuggle things across each other's borders more. Indeed, the last business of smuggling made the adoption of a uniform system a matter of real urgency. It is rather significant, added the President, that it was Sierra Leone, the country where the trafficking in diamonds is the principal national occupation, that was the first to shift. The question of shifting then was not the problem; the real issue was whether we shall all go British or all French. Unfortunately for the ex-British group, with the shift of even Sweden and Denmark to the right not to mention the Communist and Socialist countries, it was obvious that the British had lost the contest and that they themselves would shift sooner or later. (He reminded us in passing that the British have already adopted the metric system from the French for their currency). Naturally therefore we in West Africa decided to follow the majority and that is why first Sierra Leone, then Nigeria, and now Ghana!

This brilliant historical exposition was received in rapt silence which was quite something considering the state of intoxication of the group — and the sitting ovation that it received can very well be imagined. I did remind the group about the opposition I expressed to this same idea under the previous regime. My contention was that if we retained the practice of keeping to the left, we would be the only state in Africa to be doing so and this could not but attract tourists from the other African countries not to mention the socialist and communist countries. Moreover, I shuddered to think of the casualty rate of this change not only of cars and their owners but more seriously still of pedestrians who would always be looking in the wrong direction before crosing the road. A few people present did side with me but the majority present were for the change. Moreover, Mallam Fifty Pesewas assured us that he would perform all the necessary 'juju' to ensure that the casualty rate would be reduced to the minimum. The group therefore decided in the end also to send another delegation to the Radio-Active Committee to pledge their unflinching support for the decision to move right.

As an interim measure, and to ensure a smooth change-over in the end, Kwame Kontopiaat came out with a suggestion that about three months before the zero hour, all drivers should be asked to drive in the middle of the road on the grounds that it would make the final move to the right relatively easier. Kwame pointed out that the practice of driving in the middle had in fact been going on in the area between the River Volta and the boarder with Togo and that was why Ghanaians could drive so easily in Togo. Since most of us had never seen that stretch of road before but

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since the middle-of the road theory was confirmed by the great Economist and the much-travelled Mallam Fifty Pesewas, it was unanimously adopted for onward transmission to the Radio-Active Committee by the delegation.

However, even more fascinating were the debates on the return to civilian rule and on funerals, and these we reserve for the next instalment!

For The Record

Thursday, March 21

Economic Planning Council Inaugurated

A 33-MEMBER National Economic Planning Council was inaugurated in Accra today by Col. I. K. Acheampong, Head of State and Chairman of the NRC. The council, headed by Col. Acheampong, will draw up a five-year development plan for the nation as well as issue interim economic guidelines. The council has six permanent members.

Friday, March 22

Ghana Bags ¢140m. from Timber Sales

GHANA realised ¢140 million in foreign exchange from the sale of timber in 1973, Col. W. Tay, Executive Chairman of the Ghana Timber Marketing Board, said at Takoradi today. Col. Tay, who addressed a meeting of Regional Commissioners, said this was twice the amount of money realised in 1972—i.e. ¢70 million. The timber industry is the second to cocoa in foreign exchange earning.

Monday, March 25

Combined Transport Agreements Confab Opens

A ONE-week meeting of West and Central Africa on combined transport agreements was opened in Accra today by Maj. Kwame Asante, Commissioner for Transport and Communications. In a speech he urged West and Central African countries to co-operate to form the nucleus of continental air and sea transportation. The development of effective air and sea transport systems, he said, will help minimize the transportation problems of Africa. The meeting, jointly organised by the OAU and ECA, is being attended by delegates from several African countries including Nigeria, Togo, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau and Zaire.

Monday, April 1

Government Issues Warning

THE Government today issued a statement which warned students that those who break the law of the land will be dismissed from their schools and will not be admitted in any school in the public system. The statement advised students to submit their grievances for redress to the appropriate authorities through the correct channels and not to resort to demonstrations and violence.

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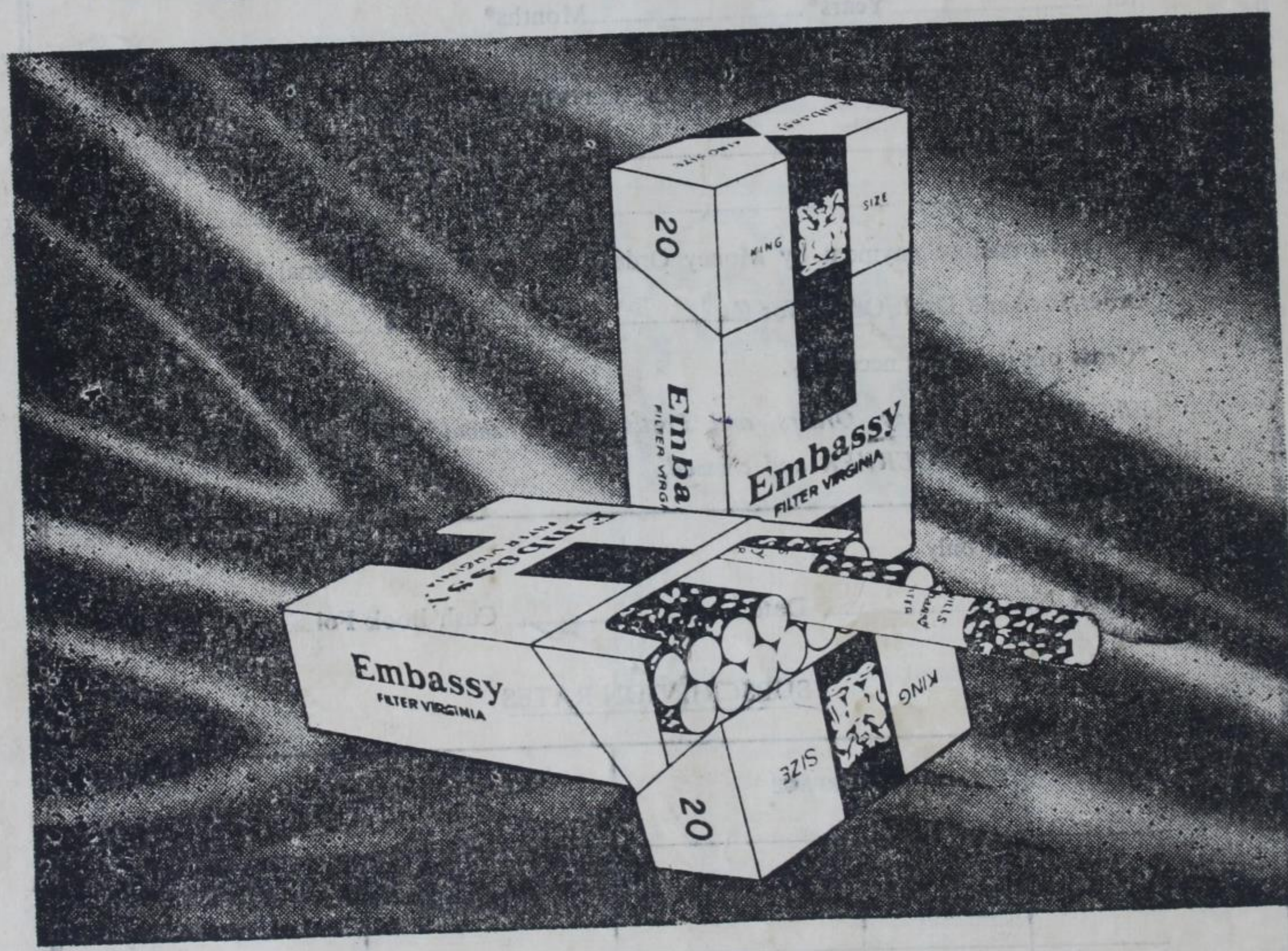
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