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**NATIONALIST IDEOLOGY IN THE GOLD COAST**

Some influences on its evolution from the beginnings of the preto-modern nationalist movement to 1950, as revealed in the indigenous newspaper press of the period.

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I certify that this thesis is my own original work. Where reference has been made to other peoples' views and analyses, full acknowledgements are given. This thesis has not been presented in whole or in part to another educational institution for any degree.

  
Signed.....  
Candidate

  
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## CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
PREFACE	i-iv
INTRODUCTION	1
<u>Chapter</u>	
1. PROTO-MODERN NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS	14
+ 2. EDUCATION, CHRISTIANITY AND NATIONALISM	39
+ 3. GOVERNOR, CHIEF AND INTELLECTUAL	48
+ 4. AN OVERVIEW OF THE NINETEEN THIRTIES	69
+ 5. THE YOUTH MOVEMENTS	89
6. SOCIAL UPHEAVAL IN POST-SECOND WORLD WAR GOLD COAST SOCIETY	109
7. A FERMENT OF IDEAS	141
8. CONCLUSIONS	180
BIBLIOGRAPHY	197

## PREFACE

African nationalist activity within the colonial context was conducted on two fronts. On the one it could be regarded as a common struggle by all the nationalists against alien rule; on the other, it took the form of a "jockeying for political power" among the nationalists themselves. With few exceptions, writers on pre-war African nationalism have stressed the former almost to the complete exclusion of the latter. This, plus the heavy reliance on official colonial records displayed by such writers, have combined to produce a two-fold effect. First, the story of (African) nationalism that has been told has often been from a colonial viewpoint; secondly, no doubt as a result of this, the view has gained currency that the African's quest for self-determination was in the nature of a protest (against the colonial establishment) and therefore it was negative and more anti-colonial than nationalist.<sup>1</sup> But a protest should not be described as negative merely because it is a protest, for whether it is negative or not depends on its content, i.e. the nature of its demands; and as for its being less nationalist (and more anti-colonial), that decision rests on the definition that one gives to the phenomenon called nationalism, and, in this case, in a colonial context too. An attempt is made to offer such a definition in the introduction.

This thesis focuses primarily on the ideological aspects of the struggle and competition between the Gold Coast nationalists for the

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1. See, e.g. John Hatch, A History of Post-War Africa, Andre Deutsch, 1965, Preface; or J.D.B. Miller, The Politics of the Third World, Oxford University Press, 1966, p.16 .

(political) leadership of their people, as seen through the eyes of the native press. But why the press? Christopher Fyfe has succinctly stated the case for the suitability of the press as source material for writing the story of events in colonial Africa thus:

The historian of a Colony has to draw much of his information from dispatches or reports written for the Government at home. They often tell a one-sided story. A Governor may spare the Secretary of State unpleasant details that might lead to unwelcome enquiry; the authors of official reports often tend to have an eye fixed on objects beyond their immediate terms of reference. A country may be on the verge of revolution, yet not a hint of it appears officially. But the Press, if not deliberately silenced, speaks with no such united voice; the undercurrents officials conceal, bubble openly in the newspapers.<sup>1</sup>

The native press of the Gold Coast was one of the oldest in former colonial Africa and dated back to the 1850s, and it was the only imported institution monopolised by the African. Consequently, especially vis-a-vis the colonial government, it had its own biases and prejudices, which derived from two main circumstances (1) it was a native establishment, at once a protest and a campaign organ operating in an era of alien monopoly of power and authority, but also of awakening enlightenment in the African; and (2) increasingly, it came to be controlled by those members of the educated class who were thoroughly disaffected with colonial society and were therefore impatient for change and reform. But then such biases and prejudices formed an important part of the corpus of complex factors that aided the development of nationalism.

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1. C.H. Fyfe, "The Sierra Leone Press in the Nineteenth Century", Sierra Leone Studies, December, 1959.

National consciousness (i.e., awareness of the disabilities of one's nation in a world-wide context, plus the ability to suggest tentative remedies for them) as something over and above, although not opposed to, simple nationalism (i.e., a feeling of attachment to the country) has been the virtual monopoly of the Western-educated African. It is thus important to attempt to map out, even in an exploratory way, the makings of his mind; the more so since the patterns produced by his mode of agitation continue to influence the style of politics in ex-colonial Africa. And there seems to be no better medium for this exercise than his press, through which he constantly exposed his ideas, thoughts, beliefs, likes, hates, suspicions, etc. It is these ideas, thoughts and beliefs, held by the nationalist concerning nationalist politics, that we term as 'nationalist ideology' here. That ideology must be seen to be in a process of evolution (a process not completed as yet) and, therefore, to be largely devoid of any finesse of statement of principles and any deep philosophical basis. But even so it constituted a guide to agitative action (rather than policy) as well as some sort of rationalization of that action.

Throughout the history of the native press, physical, psychological and legal factors impinged on its efficiency and on its freedom; and yet it would appear from the bold and forthright statements made therein about governor and all (such as are completely unknown in the popular press of independent Africa), that it operated in an atmosphere of considerable freedom. Or perhaps the reason is rather that the journalists of yesterday - although amateurs they might have been - were more experienced people and intellectually much more competent than their

counterparts of today.

For the greater part of the period covered in this work , nationalist activity was limited to the southern (coastal) strip of modern Ghana, and even here to the big towns of Accra, Cape Coast and Sekondi.

Many people took interest in my work and helped me in various ways. Of these my special thanks go to Professor K.A.B. Jones-Quartey, my supervisor, who brought to bear on my work his wide knowledge of the press and politics of West Africa; and to Professor A.A. Castagno, Visiting Fulbright Professor and Head of the Political Science Department (1968-69 academic year), who showed a concern for my work uncommon for a person who was not a supervisor. I should also like to express my deep gratitude to the following people who read the manuscript at various stages in its preparation and offered valuable criticisms and suggestions: Mr. Richard Greenfield, Mr. Jeff Holden and Mr. Kofi Asare Opoku, of the Institute of African Studies; Dr. K.Y. Daaku of the History Department; Mr. Yaw Twumasi of the Political Science Department; and Mr. K.B. Asante, Bursar of Akuafu Hall. Finally, my thanks go to the staffs of the Institute of African Studies Library, Legon, and the Research Library on African Affairs, Accra, for their co-operation; to Mr. G.T. Adjabeng and Mr. B.K. Freeman, who typed the final manuscript; and to Miss Eugenia Nikoi Kotey and Miss Sarah Lynn Nunoo, for helping in correcting typographical mistakes.

I bear full responsibility for any errors that this work may contain.

## INTRODUCTION

### THE THREE TYPES OF NATIONALISM IN AFRICA

Although it is in daily usage the term nationalism has no precise meaning. It has even been suggested that it is inappropriate to the African situation and that one should speak rather of 'Africanism' or 'African consciousness' or 'tribalism' or 'racialism' or 'racism', and so on.<sup>1</sup> All such suggestions, however, miss the essential point. The fact is that, first, different single factors or combinations of factors may succour, hinder, be neutral or irrelevant to the development of nationalism in different places at different times. Secondly, colonial experience has bequeathed to the African a heritage which makes awareness of his Africanness - by which is meant not a mere awareness of his being an African or black, but awareness of his true situation in world society - an indispensable feature of his nationalism. This was what Casely Hayford meant when he said that "the future of West Africa demands that her sons should have a due appreciation of her place within the British Empire"<sup>2</sup>. And perhaps this was the reason why the

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1. For a discussion of such suggested terms see George A. Shepperson, 'External Factors in the Development of African Nationalism with Special Reference to British Central Africa', and Dr. T.O. Ranger, 'Some Attitudes to African Nationalism', both to be found in Historians in Tropical Africa. Proceedings of the Leverhulme Inter-Collegiate History Conference, held at the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in September, 1960.
  2. J. Casely Hayford, The Truth about the West African Land Question, Second Edition, C.M. Phillips (London), 1913, p.103.

Gold Coast Leader of January 7, 1922, stated the essence of African nationalism as follows, "Please God we mean to live, and that is about the sum total of race consciousness, of African nationalism". Obviously, today, especially with the attainment of independence by many African nations, this definition has become too narrow; but it fitted well nationalist aspiration in the early colonial context.

The lack of uniformity in the factors which succour or hinder nationalism needs to be emphasized if we are to avoid a forced comparison between the African situation and situations elsewhere<sup>1</sup>. For example, while Switzerland has achieved a high degree of national consciousness without one common national language, the multiplicity of mutually unintelligible local tongues is a factor which has hampered the development of national consciousness in many an African country. Because of this the languages of the former colonial powers have come to occupy positions of privilege over indigenous tongues with respect to nation-building in Africa.<sup>2</sup>

Partly in view of this special importance of the language of the coloniser, and partly because of the myth, now exploded, that Africa's history begins with the white man's adventures to this

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1. Even within Africa itself the factors may differ from place to place.
  2. See Ali A. Mazrui, "The English Language and Political Consciousness in British Colonial Africa", The Journal of Modern African Studies Vol.4, No.3, 1966, pp.295-311.

continent, some writers have viewed African nationalism solely in terms of a reaction to, or as a product of, colonial rule. For example, Ivor Jennings in his book Democracy in Africa begins the second chapter entitled "African Nationalism" by stating bluntly that "Nationalism is one of the ideas exported by Europe"<sup>1</sup>. F.L. Bartels, himself an African, would seem to support this view. According to him, the phenomenon which we call nationalism "rolled across Asia and Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, [and] it was the self assertion of millions of Asians and Africans against white ascendancy"<sup>2</sup>. Again, Walter Wallbank tells us that "the two decades separating World War I from World War II were the formative years of African nationalism"<sup>3</sup>. For such people African nationalism then comes to mean, in its entirety, the happy blending of disparate social, tribal (ethnic), and political elements into one more or less inter-dependent unit, before independence in opposition to the colonial government, and after independence for national reconstruction. It would be seen that while this may be acceptable as a definition of modern African nationalism, it is unacceptable as a definition of nationalism in Africa to the extent that it gives the impression that Africa knew no nationalism before the white man came. For we know that

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1. W. Ivor Jennings, Democracy in Africa, Cambridge University Press, 1963, p.25.
  2. F.L. Bartels, The Roots of Ghana Methodism, Cambridge University Press, 1965, p.148.
  3. T. Walter Wallbank, Contemporary Africa: Continent in Transition, Van Nostrand, Revised edition, 1965, p.51.

before the colonial period in Africa kingdoms like Asante, Benin, Dahomey and Oyo - to take examples from West Africa alone - were full-blown nations. And nationalism is an essential element which goes into the building and maintenance of such nations. Or how would one describe that sense of identity and inclusiveness which marked out, say, the Asantes<sup>1</sup>, from other peoples, made them into a cohesive and effective military power, and brought them southwards in raids over the coastal peoples?

It is the view of the present writer that there are three distinguishable strands which come under the term 'African nationalism'. First, there are the old nationalisms of the small states. We may call these 'traditional nationalisms'<sup>2</sup>. This kind of nationalism may also be termed 'tribal nationalism', but it is tribal only when viewed retrospectively from the standpoint of the present. Until Ashanti became part of a larger collectivity (the Gold Coast) consisting of many different tribes, she was a nation, pure and simple, and Asante nationalism was not tribal nationalism. This brand of nationalism of course predates the colonial period.

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1. Throughout this narrative, I shall use Ashanti to refer to the territory inhabited by the Asantes - singular 'an Asante' - a sub-group of the Akan peoples of Ghana. I use Asante as an adjective e.g. as in 'Asante invasion' or 'Asante nationalism'.
  2. I use the term differently from James Coleman's usage of it in his book: Nigeria, Background to Nationalism, University of California Press, 1958. There, he uses the term to imply resistance against foreign domination.

Colonial rule brought different peoples, and therefore different traditional nationalisms, under one roof. By a natural process this juxtaposition and contact might eventually have produced some degree of diffusion, even fusion. But the clue to the beginnings of modern African nationalism lies in the nature of colonial rule. By largely treating all the different peoples equally as subjects, with the attendant administrative and judicial implications for all and sundry, the different peoples came to have one focal point of identification, even if for protest purposes only. It must be stressed, however, that the new geographical frameworks created by the colonial countries were not nations; so that there has arisen ever since their creation the need consciously to form nations out of them in order to make them politically viable entities. (Thus, secondly, we have modern African nationalism, that nationalism which unites for example the Asante, Dagomba, Ewe, Fanti and Ga peoples of Ghana.) This nationalism, which thus embraces a heterogeneity of ethnic groups brought together by the colonial powers, is obviously, in origin, a response to the colonial presence.

This feature appears to give modern African nationalism a considerable degree of similarity everywhere on the continent. Its basic problem everywhere is that of national integration, which in the main means making a people think of themselves as one that formerly considered themselves as separate, distinct and different. The transition from the traditional nationalisms to the new, integrative and all-embracing nationalism has, however, been gradual, and is not wholly completed as yet.

The third type of nationalism is proto-modern nationalism, which takes up the early transition period. Proto-modern nationalist movements burst the bounds of small-statism, both in sentiment and activity; but, at any one time, they lacked a following of the whole people in the particular territory under colonial jurisdiction. In the Gold Coast this is partly explainable in terms of the piecemeal nature of British acquisition of territory.<sup>1</sup>

Much confusion, over-statement or understatement will be avoided by making this threefold distinction into traditional, proto-modern, and modern nationalism.

Proto-modern nationalism was, of course, the forerunner of modern nationalism. Their general characteristic is integrative. In fact, modern African nationalism is by definition a means of national integration. It is this kind of nationalism which Lonsdale has in mind when he says that a nationalist movement should have the following characteristics:

Firstly, it must aim at the exercise of sharing power at the political centre of the colony or future state: Secondly, its leadership must be conscious of the common people's aspirations and willing to articulate<sup>2</sup> them; and finally, it must have an active popular following<sup>3</sup>.

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1. Although Ashanti and the Northern Territories came under the British in 1901, administratively, Ghana as we know it today is a post Second World War creation. The Colony and Ashanti were united by the 1946 constitution, and the Northern Territories and British Togoland were brought into the union in the 1950's.
  2. John Lonsdale, 'The Emergence of African Nations: A Historiographical Analysis', African Affairs, Vol.67, No.266, January, 1968.

We may now say a few words about the effects of tribalism (or to use an unemotive word, ethnicity) on national integration. In an illuminating study of Somali politics A.A. Castagno draws some cautious conclusions about the role of ethnicity in Somali politics. According to him, "the strength of traditional clanship ties has been revealed in each of the elections and in the formation of each of the Somali governments". While acknowledging that the attempt by politicians to balance ethnic differences has its major disadvantages, he nonetheless maintains that if effectively done ethnic balance may lead to a harmonious blending of the traditional and the modern political systems, and even conjectures that "the segmentary character of the social system may prove to be an advantage rather than a liability in the process of politicizing and nationalizing the State"<sup>1</sup>. It may be observed, however, that in the early pages of his study Castagno sets Somalia out as a rather special case when he says that "the Somali Republic is the only Tropical African territory that has a relatively homogenous traditional culture". This would suggest that political factions and frictions there constitute a "cycle of rebellions", to borrow an anthropological concept from Max Gluckman, whereby what is aimed at is not so much the disruption of the social order as the removal of individual incumbents of the political

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1. A.A. Castagno, 'The Political Party System in the Somali Republic A Balancing-Coalitional Approach', in James S. Coleman and Carl G. Rosberg, Jr., (Eds.), Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1964.

hierarchy. But not all ethnic cleavages take this form. For instance, W.E. Abraham has observed that:

In the Congo, where the Balubas have an articulate philosophy to hold their culture together in strong contrast to the surrounding groups, the Balubas have played a role which, while disintegrative of the Congo, is at the same time consolidatory of them.

This, rather than the Somali example, appears to be the prevalent pattern of ethnic cleavage in Africa. At any rate such was the sudden upsurge of Asante nationalism in Ghana on the threshold of independence in 1954. But perhaps a classic illustration is the Nigerian crisis. Generally, what the ethnicity debate suggests to the author is that the problem may yield more valuable dividends when it is studied at the level of individual countries, against the background of the specific conditions of each country - the political culture (including the mentality and the attitudes of the political leaders) and the economic and socio-cultural environment.

This study takes the story of nationalism from the genesis of proto-modern nationalism, and therefore falls wholly within the period of the colonial presence.

#### THE GENESIS OF PROTO-MODERN NATIONALISM

Nationalism is first and foremost a feeling, but such as invariably spills over and out into speech and action. Everybody has the seeds of it in him by virtue of his belonging to a particular nation.

↳ But seeds have to be nurtured and fostered to grow into overt action. In modern Africa such nurturing has been provided largely by the exigencies of foreign domination. The imposition of European rule on Africa represents the beginnings of the transition from traditional nationalism to an all-embracing modern nationalism, a phenomenon which in the era of independent Africa has begun to transcend the boundaries of the individual countries into a pan-African nationalism.

J.E. Edu dates the beginnings of Gold Coast nationalism to 1868, to the events of native resistance to the Anglo-Dutch exchange of forts<sup>1</sup>. David Kimble is uncertain whether to date it from Governor "Hill's gathering of chiefs in 1852, which touched off the first supra-tribal protest movements, or perhaps rather to the inauguration of a legislative council in 1850, which increasingly provided a focus for nationalist demands for representative government"<sup>2</sup>.

We do not seek to pinpoint such a specific date, because, in our view, the genesis of nationalism, a thing which is only partly an outward expression, defies precision as to date of origin. What we seek to do is to isolate for discussion the pre-independence movements of a nationalist character, as well as those factors in the colonial situation which made easy or difficult the transition from traditional nationalism to modern nationalism.

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1. See his booklet, Gold Coast Self-Government, Cape Coast, Mfantseman Press, 1950.
  2. David Kimble, A Political History of Ghana, 1850-1928, Clarendon Press, 1963, p.554.

## THE FOUNDING OF BRITISH JURISDICTION

If we ignore earlier, rather vague references to the French<sup>1</sup>, then the earliest recorded European contact with what came to be known as the Gold Coast was by the Portuguese in 1471. One of the reasons which made the early Europeans to be interested in the West African coast was prospects of trade in gold and spices; and for a long time after contact had been made European interest in the Gold Coast remained mainly trade. Goods were brought from the interior and traded on the coast. Soon permanent factories, forts and castles were built by the Europeans to store their goods and thus facilitate trade. European trading companies operating in Africa were given active backing by their respective governments, and the granting to them of monopoly rights over their areas of dominant influence later on set in motion the general European stampede for territorial possessions in Africa. The companies remained responsible for the over-all administration of the factories, forts and castles until well into the nineteenth century.

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1. See for example W. Walton Claridge, A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti, Vol. 1, Second Edition, Frank Cass, 1964, pp.48 following; and John Mensah Sarbah, Fanti National Constitution, Second Edition Frank Cass, 1968, p.54. The story is that in 1382 a French ship, La Vierge, made a voyage to Komenda; and that in the next year a French settlement in the form of a garrisoned factory was established, followed in 1387 with the construction of a chapel. Bantama, near Elmina, was said to be the site of the chapel. A recent excavation of this site by Mr. David Calvocoressi of the Department of Archaeology, University of Ghana, Legon - to whom I am indebted for this information - produced no evidence of the supposed chapel. Mr. Calvocoressi has published an account of his excavation in the West African Archaeological Newsletter, Number 10, 1968. He has since then revised the chronology of his findings for publication in the same journal.

(It is true then that it was the flag which followed trade, but it is also equally true that the coming of the flag saw the intensification of trade).

It is probable that much early African resistance to the European presence arose out of economic considerations. Coastal African middlemen who feared that they might be put out of business with the establishment of permanent European settlement might have begun to resist any such attempt by Europeans. But, according to Kimble, well into the nineteenth century "the protests of the African merchants had not taken on a strictly nationalist character"<sup>1</sup> because they tended to identify their interests with their European counterparts vis-à-vis the colonial government. But of course trading with native peoples does not per se confer jurisdiction on the foreigner to rule over them. How then did the British come to acquire such jurisdiction over the Gold Coast people?

John Mensah Sarbah, barrister, author and nationalist, summed up the view of the early nationalists regarding the nature of British acquisition of sovereignty in these words:

British sovereignty over the Gold Coast territories was gradually acquired and at times by such gradual, slow and imperceptible steps that even now many questions of public importance are not free from doubt and difficulty<sup>2</sup>.

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1. D. Kimble, op. cit., p.13
  2. J. Mensah Sarbah, op. cit., p.92

Be that as it may, constitutionally the real foundations<sup>of</sup> British jurisdiction over the Gold Coast peoples are contained in a number of treaties made with individual chiefs at different times. The most important of these treaties was the Bond of 1844, signed between the representatives of the British Crown and some coastal chiefs. The interpretation of that Bond has been unendingly controversial and has generated ambivalent standpoints. One of these is represented by those scholars who say simply without qualification or explanation that by this agreement the Gold Coast chiefs acknowledged the jurisdiction, sovereignty and power of the British Crown, and accepted English law. Another standpoint is represented by the early nationalists and, indeed, by many a nationalist after them. Their argument was that the treaty did not cede territory to the British or confer jurisdiction on them to rule without the peoples' consent. As the Gold Coast Times put it on June 2, 1934:

The understanding at the time ... was that the British authorities were to co-operate with the native authorities in establishing peace, order and good government to the end that the British might have a stable market to carry on their trade and the people a settled country to develop along their own lines.

According to this view the Bond conferred only criminal jurisdiction to be exercised in conjunction with the chiefs; it did not give sovereignty over even those chieftaincies which were signatories to it, let alone the right to expansion into those which were not.

Even more recent interpretations have not been free from ambiguity. Writing in 1957 Dr. Danquah said that the aim of the Bond was "to justify the exercise of power by the British Governor beyond the forts and settlements"<sup>1</sup>. For him the Bond recognised the peoples of the Gold Coast Colony as independent; so that the relation between them and the British was not one of allegiance of subjects. Yet, in the same breath he says that by it "a free people, who were not subjects of the British sovereign, voluntarily placed themselves under a binding agreement to the British Crown"<sup>2</sup>. What reads like a compromise view of the state of affairs is expressed by de Graft Johnson when he writes:

True, the Bond gave no right beyond what the British had enjoyed previously, but accepting the protection of another power carried with it the corresponding corollary of the assumption of sovereignty by that power<sup>3</sup>.

But, surely, this view represents that of the scholar who reads a treaty and calculatingly and logically draws out its latent implications. It is important to note also that by the time that de Graft Johnson wrote his book in the twentieth century it had already become generally accepted in European circles that a protectorate treaty, such as the Bond was, implied a claim by the protector nation to sovereignty over the protected nation. On the other hand it is very doubtful whether in the 1840s the

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1. J.B. Danquah, "The Historical Significance of the Bond of 1844", Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, Vol.3, Part 1, 1957, pp.3-29.
  2. Ibid.
  3. J.W. de Graft Johnson in his book, Historical Geography of the Gold Coast, as quoted in the "Souvenir Programme of the Centenary Celebrations of the Bond of 1844".

Colony chiefs who signed the Bond knew or understood the full implications of a protectorate treaty. Thus while the Colonial Office might have drawn a reasonable implication from the circumstances of a people accepting the protection of the British Crown, nonetheless it is clear that there existed as between the British officials and the chiefs a dichotomy of outlook on the nature, meaning and implication of a protectorate treaty.

CHAPTER ONE

PROTO-MODERN NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS

The proto-modern nationalist movements discussed in this chapter do not represent the very first forms of African resistance to the colonial presence. In fact before the Fanti Confederation days such resistance, both by individuals and organized groups, had been going on for centuries. To cite two examples from Dr. Danquah<sup>1</sup>. In 1556 the people of Shama refused to trade with one Towerson, an Englishman, apparently because the Portuguese had taken a man away from there in the previous year. Again, in 1693 Asamani, an Akwamu trader, seized the fort of the Danes because the Danes had helped the people of Accra against Akwamu, a powerful inland state. But these earlier forms of resistance were ad hoc ones directed against specific, limited and, in a sense, momentary objects. When we come to the Fanti Confederation episode, however, we enter a period of properly organized and long duration movements. Not only did the 'resistance' movements revolt against certain things but they also aspired towards certain others. Moreover, it is only then, as a result of this latter feature, that the movements begin to be based on any identifiable form of what may be called ideology at all.

Ken Pest has suggested that with reference to West Africa the term "independence movements" is more appropriate than "nationalist

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1. Op cit.

movements"<sup>1</sup>. One defect of this suggestion is that, at least psychologically, it overemphasizes the political element of these movements almost to the utter exclusion of all others. But even more important is the fact that for the greater part of their existence some of these movements either did not talk about independence at all, or where they did, they meant something quite different from what we understand by independence today, or was understood by it by the West African nationalists of the post Second World War era.

(a) THE FANTE CONFEDERATION

The first proto-modern nationalist movement in the Gold Coast was the Fante Confederation formed in 1868. It comprised some eight or so original Fante states (Abura, Cape Coast, Ekumfi, Gomoa, Komenda, Mankesim, Nkusukum), and some non-Fante states which later joined it (Assin, Denkyera, Sehwi, Wassaw).

But why did these formerly separate and independent city-states come together to form a confederation? First, the British had, since the Bond of 1844, gradually taken over the administration of the traditional judicial rights and powers of the Fante people. Naturally, this was resented, and they now wanted to claim back those rights and powers. Secondly, by 1868 it had become clear to the Fante peoples that

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1. See K.W.J. Post, "Nationalist Movements in West Africa", J.C. Anene and G. Brown, (Eds.), Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, Ibadan University Press and Nelson, 1966.

British promises to defend them against the Asantes <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ vain, for the Asantes kept coming down in raiding expeditions. Yet in 1864 the British had disbanded the Gold Coast Rifle Volunteer Corps, originally a native Fante effort to organise specifically against the 1863 Asante war, but also generally to organise a standing army against the Asante threat. Thirdly, the Fantes found it a matter of great urgency to subjugate the people of Elmina, who were the allies of the Asantes and supplied the latter with fire arms.

Fourthly, the Fante peoples wanted to free themselves from British control. Aside from it being partly natural, the demand for self-government was intensified by the people's understanding of the Report of the 1865 Select Committee, set up by Britain to look into the question of the advisability or otherwise of her withdrawing from the Gold Coast territories. The Committee recommended that it would be unfair for the British to leave the Gold Coast "until some elements of union and self-government were established on the coast"<sup>1</sup>. When the government of the colony communicated this decision to the coastal peoples, it added also that thenceforth the people were not to expect any British help against invaders from the interior. Naturally, this gave them the urge to organise in order to govern and defend themselves.

Fifthly, in 1867 the British and the Dutch exchanged forts. This caused panic among some Fante chiefs; for Fantes west of Elmina, who

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1. J.W. de Graft Johnson, Towards Nationhood in West Africa, as quoted by the Gold Coast Times of August 4, 1934.

had hitherto been under British protection, were now to be handed over to the Dutch, who, in addition to being considered unprogressive with regard to education and missionary work, were disliked for their friendship with the Asantes. The Fantes thus affected appealed to their kin in the east to help them resist the transfer. In sum, then, the Confederation was formed primarily to promote unity among the Fante peoples so that they could manage their own affairs themselves as a viable entity: but it was also a defensive and offensive alliance against their common enemy.

Now what did this achieve? In the figure of a King-President a central government of some sort was achieved in Fanteland for the first time ever. This meant that all Fantes would now pool together their military resources in the event of an Asante invasion. An elaborate constitution spelling out the Confederation's aims and the duties of its officers was drawn up<sup>1</sup>. A programme of general social and economic developments was also drawn up for the whole of Fanteland; and works anticipated by the programme included the building of schools and roads and the promotion of agriculture by the introduction of new crops. Again, a confederate court was established with the King-President as chairman. These central or federal structures were meant to give the Fante peoples a sense of unity, security and strength, by removing,

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1. Those interested in the constitution can see a full text of it in J. Mensah Sarbah, Op cit, pp.199-209.

if temporarily, the petty quarrels and squables which had characterised relationships between the city-states. In fact the Fantes looked on the Confederation with so much regard that in 1869, just a year after its formation, they proclaimed themselves free from British jurisdiction<sup>1</sup>.

Colonial officials saw this movement as a threat to their authority and were almost unanimously hostile to the ideals and personalities of the Confederation. African scholars like Africanus Horton<sup>2</sup> who showed profound interest in the Confederacy because they saw in it the beginnings of a bigger union of African peoples, soon got disappointed. Government hostility to and interference with this native effort, made easy by what the Gold Coast Leader called "backsliders and weak-kneed brethren", by the clash of personalities between the important chiefs and between scholar and chief for the leadership of the Confederation, and by the lack of adequate finances - all these so plagued the Confederation that when in 1873 an Asante invasion wiped out any sense of security which the formation of the Confederation might have given to the coastal peoples, the movement fell to pieces.

But though short-lived, the Confederacy had achieved a positive good. In the verdict of David Kimble, it "stimulated indirectly several legislative, municipal and judicial reforms which were to be gradually

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1. See F. Agbodeka, "The Fanti Confederacy", Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, Vol.VII, 1964, pp.82-123.

2. For the influence of Africanus Horton on the Confederation, see Robert W. July, The Origins of Modern African Thought, Faber and Faber, 1968, chapter 6.

implemented over a long period of years"<sup>1</sup>. As the first of its kind, apart from being a notable achievement in that regard, it was the forerunner of modern nationalism in the Gold Coast and its ideals and methods were to be inherited by subsequent nationalist movements.

(b) THE ABORIGINES' RIGHTS PROTECTION SOCIETY

The second proto-modern nationalist movement in the Gold Coast was the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society<sup>2</sup>, formed in 1897. In its scope of activity, if not in ideal, it was an advance on the Fante Confederation. Its membership included nearly all the states along the coastal strip from Axim in the west to Accra in the east. The reasons for the formation of the Society may be grouped under two broad heads, general and immediate. There were three general causes for the formation of the Society. (1) Although the Fante Confederation had failed, it had left in its ruins, and lingering in the minds of the people, a desire for the satisfaction of those political and social needs for which it was conceived; (2) There was a demand for representation in the Legislative Council, the central governing body, which had all along been a white preserve. Representation on this body would give the Gold Coast peoples the opportunity of a say in their government and development; (3) the people desired to preserve their culture and traditions, which were in danger of destruction by the engulfing European influence.

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1. Op. cit., p.259

2. Hereafter referred to as the ARPS, or the Society.

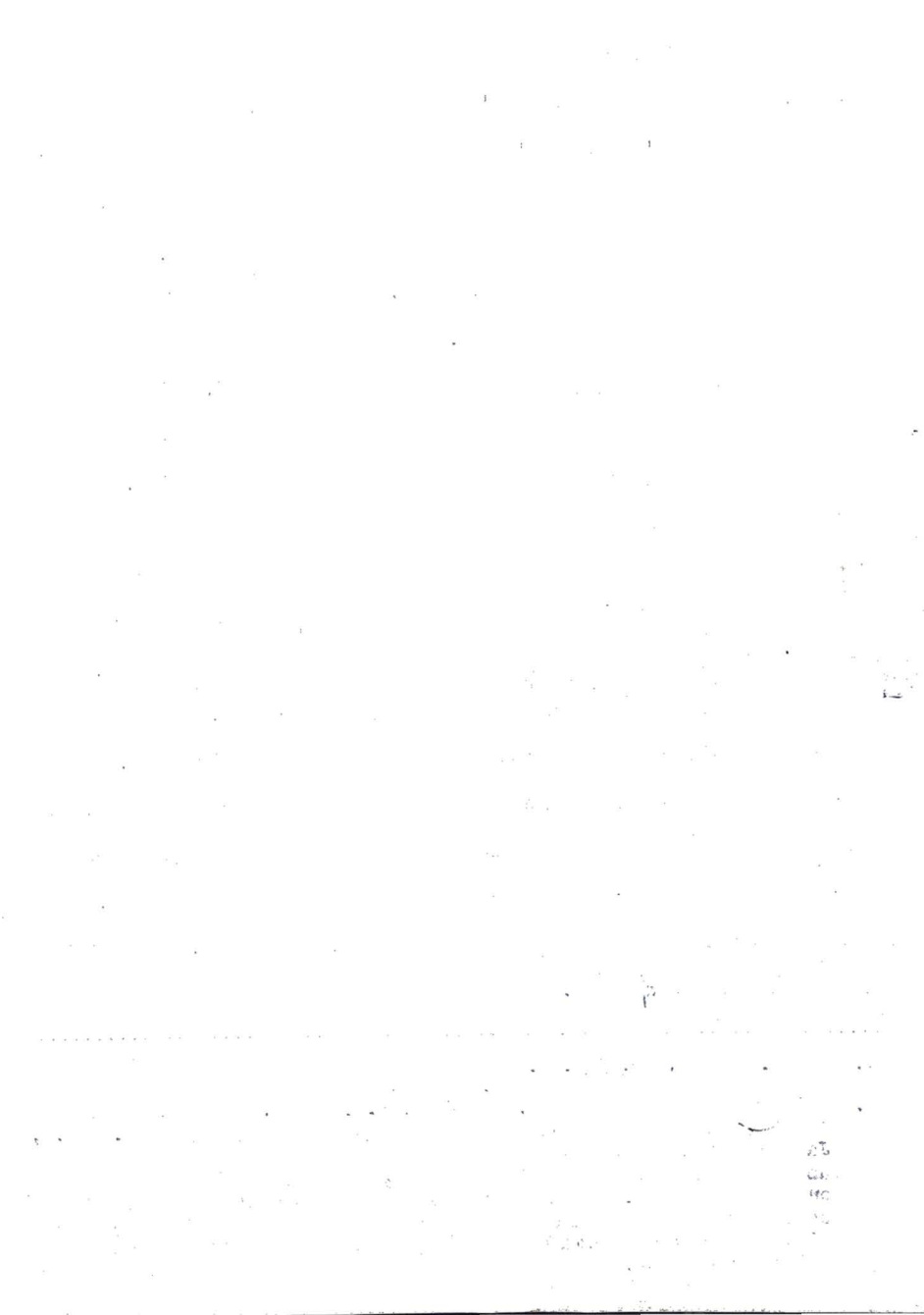
One immediate cause for the formation of the Society was that about 1891 the London Aborigines' Protection Society, formed to promote the interests and 'legitimate' aspirations of colonial subjects, encouraged and exhorted the Gold Coast peoples to form a similar association, with branches throughout the principal towns, in order to make it easy for the London society to know their grievances<sup>1</sup>. But the real spark of the Society was the lands bills of 1896. Thus a notice announcing the formation of the Society in the Gold Coast Express of July 1, 1897, said among other things that it had been formed to discuss bills passed by government with a view to making clear to the Gold Coast peoples their "meaning, purpose, object and effect".

According to the colonial government the lands bills were aimed to protect native land-owners from avaricious and unscrupulous European concessionists. But the Gold Coast peoples saw things differently. They viewed the bills as a direct attack on their birth-right, an attempt by the colonial government to seize and deprive them of their lands. The seriousness of the situation comes out clearly when we realise that, in spite of the fact that in traditional society land was communally owned by the whole people and only held in trust for them by their chief, nevertheless the chief who controlled the land, as it were, also controlled the people who lived on it<sup>2</sup>.

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1. See D. Kimble, op. cit. p.330

2. This may not be true today. In fact, I.M. Ofori, in an article: "Agriculture and the Land Problem" in The Legon Observer, Vol.4 No.1, January 1969, argues that the coming of cash-crop economy, mainly cocoa, as well as widespread trading activity, had undermined the communal ownership of land. But in terms of the colonial presence the effects of this phenomenon might not have been felt until relatively recent times; perhaps not until the 1930s, when the cash crop economy had gained firm roots.



In their arguments against the bills, the lawyer-members of the Society, led by J. Mensah Sarbah (an indispensable backbone of the Society), invoked the fact that the Bond of 1844 did not cede territory to the British. The forcefulness of their legal and traditional objections succeeded in eliciting from the Colonial Office the all-important statement that any devolution of land in the Gold Coast should be based on the customary practices of the Gold Coast peoples.

The Society's case had been argued largely in audience with the authorities. The success of this method urged the Society on to demand representation in the organs of government. The people were now convinced that if their representatives got into these governmental bodies their demands would be heard and acted upon. In 1901 the Society objected to and protested against the imposition of town council structures on the principal coastal towns of Sekondi and Cape Coast (Accra already had a town council). It would have nothing to do with town councils, which had government nominees on their boards and the District Commissioner as ex-officio President. Ten years later the Society's objection to the Forest Bill led to the suspension of the latter, which was not to be passed until 1927.

All these were significant achievements, but by 1920 the Society had slipped into decline. The reasons are not hard to find. One of the most important of them was World War I. Paradoxically, the outcome of that war was significant for the development of national consciousness

in the extent to which it made the Gold Coast peoples, as indeed peoples elsewhere in West Africa, more conscious of their disabilities under foreign rule. But there in lay the danger for the ARPS, which could not absorb the fresh nationalist upheaval. Through the medium of the press, the nationalists gave sufficient indication of what they were going to demand after the war was over. As the Gold Coast Leader said:

What is going to matter after the war, what mankind will insist upon, is not so much blind partitioning of territories and spheres of influences as the happiness, the welfare and the contentment of communities, be they white, or yellow, or black or brown<sup>1</sup>.

The war was thus seen by the nationalists as one between freedom and oppression, justice and injustice, right and wrong, sheer force and reason<sup>2</sup>. In their expectation one of the things which the war would surely do would be to "accentuate the difference between true civilisation and the type of it which borders on barbarism"<sup>3</sup>. And the lesson of it was that when it was over, subject peoples, who were making a contribution in money and blood on the side of freedom, would have to

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1. Gold Coast Leader, October 17, 1914.
  2. To a modern mind familiar with the causes of World War II, but particularly in view of the strong nationalist criticism of methods of colonial expansion, the reference to the war in these terms would seem rather odd. One would suspect that it was more of a repetition of war time propagandist cliches issued forth by the Allied media of mass communication than a proper appreciation of the issues of the war.
  3. Gold Coast Leader, October 24, 1914.

re-study their position, determine their wants and produce the right kind of leaders - people with strong convictions and the energy and strength of character to surmount the difficulties of the new way - to carry them to their goal. That goal was defined vaguely as liberty and justice. It was also believed to be inevitable that after the war changes would have to occur in "business and political relations of mankind born of the chastened ideas of the conquering nations".<sup>1</sup> It is only in the spirit of such sentiment that we can fully appreciate the statement of the Gold Coast Leader of March 2, 1918, that "never before in modern history has the black man had better opportunity for his uplift than in the present war".

A section of the nationalist press, manned by a new generation of intellectuals, was also instrumental in the decline of the Society. Conspicuous among such papers was the Gold Coast Leader.<sup>2</sup> The birth of that paper in 1902 marked the beginnings of the emphasis on 'youth'<sup>3</sup> and the open assertion on the part of the intellectuals of their leadership

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1. Gold Coast Leader, December 5, 1914.
  2. In the 28 years of its existence the paper counted among its editors such leading nationalists as Mensah Sarbah, the Rev. Attah-Ahuma, and Casely Hayford.
  3. The concept of 'youth' in proto-modern nationalist literature was a loose one. It is true that the 'youth' comprised mostly the younger or new generation of intellectuals who wanted to wrest leadership from the older-generation intellectuals and the chiefs. Yet the concept was not encompassed by limitations of age. The criterion for youthfulness here seems to have been simply dissatisfaction with the established leadership on the grounds of its not being progressive enough.

of the Gold Coast peoples independently of the chiefs, which self-assertion culminated in the formation of the National Congress of British West Africa. The paper opened its columns to the aspirations of the youth and the scholars, and later to the aspirations of West African unity. In its maiden issue on Saturday, January 28, 1902, it addressed a manifesto to the youth. Having charged that "Today as a people we live on our past, we are timid as to the future and hypocritical as to the present. The rank and file of our leading men evidently imbued as they are with patriotism barely know where they are", the manifesto asked the youth: "What are you as the hope of your country doing, or intend to do?" It painted the country and its leadership in very bad colours and called upon the youth to "come into the sunshine and drink anew of the nectar of True Patriotism - of the nectar of National Pride".

It is not surprising then that this nationalist paper soon began to call the Society the 'lethargic Aborigines' Society". Towards the end of 1902 the paper charged the Society with what it called a "tardy, careless way of attending to things" and asked: "What is the Society good for and what is the use of a thousand and one meetings if no action is taken?"<sup>1</sup> The Society had been born in the spirit of legislative opposition, and tended to appear idle when there was no contentious legislation to fight. This tendency was further aggravated by its executive being localised: in 1914 all the members of the

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1. Gold Coast Leader, November 1, 1902.

executive came from Cape Coast. The Society thus appeared to the younger generation of intellectuals more of a sporadic protest movement, conservative and even reactionary. They were dissatisfied, and justifiably so. Clearly, the times and circumstances called for a more dynamic and progressive approach to the problems posed by foreign domination; unfortunately, the Society could not rise to the occasion.

It must be said, however, that the new generation of intellectuals expected too much from the ARPS. They expected not only political leadership but a host of social and economic reforms, ranging from education to the control of the police. Such demands were clearly unreasonable and ignorant. For the Society did not only lack the monetary means, but, not being a part of the political power structure, it also lacked the political power to do these things. Yet, judging from the impatience and restlessness which seemed to have conditioned their disaffection for the Society, the new generation of intellectuals also appear to have held the view that in the colonial context the true nationalist was not the one who would wait till there was a crisis and then rise up to it; to them the nationalist would seem to have been the man who was always up and doing because the colonial situation by its very nature presented an arena of perpetual crisis, not only political but also social, cultural and economic.

Other elements were introduced into the decline. In 1915 Casely Hayford and E.J.P. Brown, both legal advisers to the ARPS, clashed over who was the chief adviser, a very influential position. A threatened

division of the Society was saved in the name of unity, but this mis-understanding introduced an element of personal rivalry into the nationalist camp. In that same year Casely Hayford mooted the idea of a West African Conference, though it is not here intended by the juxtaposition to connect the two events. It is most probable that Casely Hayford might have been turning the idea in his mind for quite some time prior to 1915. At any rate it was clear by 1915 that he had been deeply influenced by Blyden's pan-Negroism<sup>1</sup>. But unlike Blyden whose concern was with black peoples everywhere, Casely Hayford's doctrine may be called pan-West Africanism rather than pan-Negroism or even pan-Africanism<sup>2</sup>. Perhaps the reason for this was that while he could not be so sure about the performance of the entire black 'race', he was however firmly convinced that "The future of the West African races is sure"<sup>3</sup>.

In close association with Casely Hayford's pan-West Africanism must be taken his deep conviction that the war offered subject peoples an opportunity for their uplift, but that unless the West African peoples properly and specifically organised themselves for it, that opportunity would elude them.

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1. See Hellis R. Lynch, Edward Wilmot Blyden, London, Oxford University Press, 1967, Epilogue, p.248.
  2. See his article on the Negro in the Gold Coast Leader of April 21, 1920; also, his Ethiopia Unbound, London, 1911, p.210, where he writes: "It is not so much Afro-Americans that we want as Africans".
  3. Gold Coast Independent, June 13, 1896.

The press seized upon the idea of a pan-West-African conference. By 1918, it had generated enthusiastic support all over English-speaking West Africa. In April and May of that year meetings were held in Sierra Leone in pursuance of the idea, and a committee was appointed to co-ordinate efforts with sister colonies. Under the patronage of a new society, the Nigeria Reform Association, Nigeria too was doing quite well in respect of preparations towards the conference. In view of all this it was becoming apparent that the Gold Coast, the originator of the idea of the conference, had not made comparable progress towards its realisation. The obstacle was seen to be the leadership of the ARPS. E.J.P. Brown, now Vice-President, resisted re-organisation of the Society "to suit present day progress", which the new generation of intellectuals thought was long over-due. Moreover, he spoke disapprovingly of the proposed conference.

From the beginning of 1918 the Gold Coast Leader, which had all along championed the cause of the 'youth' and boosted the aspirations to West African unity, and, moreover, was to become the mouth-piece of the National Congress of British West Africa, repeatedly warned against resistance to the remodelling of the Society. It made it plain that if the old ways of dealing with public questions were not discarded in favour of new, more dynamic ones, no one could guarantee the smooth operation of the Society. Matters came to a head towards the end of the year. In November 1918, under the leadership of Casely Hayford and the Sierra Leonean lawyer-settler, Peter Awoonor Renner, meetings were held in Accra in preparation for the conference. The Gold Coast

Independent hailed it as a "healthy and serious movement" and commended the foresight of its leadership<sup>1</sup>. On October 5, 1918, the Gold Coast Leader wrote an open letter to Brown. He was accused of setting the ARPS up as some sort of fetish of which he was the high priest, and of being impervious to new ideas. He was called a humbug and declared a hopeless case.

The break between Casely Hayford, representing the new generation of intellectuals, and Brown, representing the older established leadership, was complete. Thereafter, the Gold Coast Leader embarked on a systematic destruction of Brown's image. The paper set his ideals in antithesis to those of Mensah Sarbah, a known and universally acclaimed Gold Coast patriot.

(e) THE NATIONAL CONGRESS OF BRITISH WEST AFRICA

The reasons outlined above contributed to widespread disaffection for the outlook and leadership of the ARPS. And, as we have seen above, towards the end of 1918 the new generation of intellectuals led by Casely Hayford and seized with the idea of West African unity, initiated a scheme for the formation of a body to be known later as the National Congress of British West Africa. In 1920 the Conference of Africans of British West Africa, so named to emphasize that it was purely a West African native effort, was called in Accra. Representatives from all over British West Africa attended. And at that conference was born the

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1. Gold Coast Independent, November 9, 1918.

## National Congress of British West Africa<sup>1</sup>.

Naturally, the NCBWA was opposed to the ARPS both in outlook and leadership. Casely Hayford said plainly in his speech at the very first meeting of the Congress that it was a movement of the educated classes of British West Africa. Moreover, the new Congress did not concern itself so much with winning back traditional rights as with seeking basic changes in the pattern of colonial relationships. Thus in addition to the methodology of protest, which it inherited from the earlier movements as an inevitable weapon of nationalist agitation, the Congress also initiated a period of "open explanation of our wants".

At its first conference in 1920, having expressed loyalty and devotion to the British Crown in the true spirit of the proto-modern nationalist movements, the Congress went on to ask for self-determination. It then demanded, among other things: (1) that constitutional and judicial reforms be effected both at the local level and at the centre; (2) that the composition of the Legislative Council should consist of members only half of whom were nominated, the other half being elected; (3) that a university be built in West Africa in order to promote a sense of African nationality; (4) that the press be improved and the civil service Africanised; and (5) that a West African Court of Appeal be instituted. As a later development, the Congress concerned itself with "the growing consciousness of our race the world over".

So far as the colonial government was concerned, the Congress was unrepresentative of the people and was created merely to oppose all governmental measures; the government's opposition to the Congress was

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<sup>1</sup>. Hereafter referred to as the NCBWA or the Congress.

therefore a matter of course. What was more important from the point of view of the development of national consciousness in the Gold Coast, however, was the conflict which ensued between the Congress and the ARPS, and between the Congress and the chiefs. There were two general grounds of opposition to the Congress: the chiefs opposed it because it claimed leadership of the people behind the chiefs' backs; the older intellectuals of the ARPS, on the other hand, argued that the Gold Coast was not a British possession in the same sense as the other British West African colonies were. Her connection with Britain was so peculiar that it was unwise, politically or otherwise, to associate with the other territories on the same level.

The leaders of the Gold Coast section of the Congress knew all too well that the new organisation would have to struggle with the ARPS for the leadership of the Gold Coast nationalist movement. The Congress was favoured to win. It had the appeal of a new movement. It showed a better understanding and appreciation of the stance of the twentieth-century anti-colonialist struggle. Its leadership had more drive, initiative and dynamism. And it had a vocal and influential press on its side. Gradually, the leadership of the Gold Coast branch of the Congress began to infiltrate the front rank of the ARPS. Eventually, when Henry Van Hein, a new-generation intellectual and a supporter of the Congress ideal, took over the Presidency of the Society in 1923, it was re-organised and its leadership radically purged. Thereafter, the ARPS virtually became the Gold Coast section of the NCBWA.

As is the case with many African peoples, chiefs occupied a pivotal position in Gold Coast indigenous political practice: they it was who held a traditional right to lead the people. Accordingly, the Congress' claim to represent educated and advanced opinion, and indeed all the peoples of the land, infuriated some chiefs. Nana Ofori Atta I, an influential colony chief, who in the beginning had been sympathetic, even co-operative with the aspiration of West African unity<sup>1</sup>, turned against the Congress and began organising the chiefs of the Eastern Region<sup>2</sup> in opposition to its leadership and claims. He regarded the Congress as a fraud and a usurper, and in the name of the chiefs denounced it in the Legislative Council in 1920. He was duly heard in London and the Colonial Office decided not to have anything to do with the Congress.

Nana Ofori Atta's denunciation undermined the basis of the right of the Congress to speak on behalf of the Gold Coast peoples, the very basis of its existence. But the Congress would not take this lying down and immediately started its own campaign to discredit the Nana. On December 29, 1920, Sir Hugh Clifford, Governor of Nigeria, claiming the support of "an important colony chief" who had written a letter to him, violently denounced the NCBWA in an address to the Nigeria Legislative Council. It was discovered that Nana Ofori Atta's denunciation of the Congress in the Gold Coast Legislative Council on December 30, 1920, in much the same terms, had taken place the very next day after that of Clifford. The close juxtaposition of the

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1. See editorial of Gold Coast Leader, November 30, 1918.

2. The Gold Coast was then divided into three regions: Western, Central and Eastern.

denunciation, plus the similarity of language, was sufficient evidence for the leaders of the Congress to conclude that the "important colony chief" who had written the letter was Ofori Atta. In that letter the important statement had been made that "the chiefs as a whole are watching to see to what extent our Governments intend to recognise this monstrous institution" .

On March 12; 1921, the Gold Coast Leader in an editorial titled 'Treachery at the Eleventh Hour', charged that Nana Ofori Atta was looking forward to something higher than the C.B.E. which he then held:

We should not be surprised if Nana Ofori Atta was rewarded with a K.B.E. for his efforts in putting back the hands of the clock and Mr. E.J.P. Brown with a C.B.E. for the same sort of work.

Nana Ofori Atta was called a native autocrat, but as "tame as a court lap-dog" in his dealings with the colonial administration. As for Brown, he was a mere instrument of the Colonial Office, and Sir Hugh Clifford an arch-imperialist. Meanwhile J.E.Biney, then President of the ARPS, had rendered a public apology to the NCBWA leadership for a telegramme he had sent to London to discredit the Congress.

On July 15, 1921, Nana Ofori Atta absented himself from a meeting of Colony chiefs. At that meeting correspondence between Nana Ofori Atta and the ARPS, on the strength of which he had said that he represented all Colony chiefs in denouncing the Congress, was read and condemned. The ARPS chiefs then affirmed their support of the Congress. Ofori Atta was then in turn attacked and denounced

in the Legislative Council by Casely Hayford. This denunciation and counter-denunciation initiated the period of open clash between the intellectuals of the Congress and some important Colony chiefs. It was to last through the greater part of the 1920s, partly because Governor Guggisberg supported chiefly authority against that of the intellectuals. Because Guggisberg was an advocate of traditional authority it was important for the Congress to number chiefs among its members. Accordingly, the Congress was careful to inspire confidence in its chief-members, even the illiterate ones. The idea was that so far as the leadership of the Congress, and therefore its driving force, was literate, the chiefs were welcome, literate or not.

It must be pointed out that but for government support the following which Nana Ofori Atta initially commanded was not formidable. The other important chiefs in his camp were Nana Essandoh III, Paramount Chief of Nkusukum, and Nene Mate Kole I, Konor of Manya Krobo. Added to this was the old leadership of the ARPS, which had been driven into alliance with Ofori Atta because of the threat which the success of the Congress posed to its position. But neither did the Congress initially have important chiefs as members. In fact the 1920 conference had been attended by only a few chiefs, the most important of whom was the Ga Manche. However, in 1923, when the Congress captured the ARPS, its chiefs became members of the Congress. Chiefly support of the Congress then grew so formidable that Guggisberg would eventually have been forced to recognise it if his 1925 constitution had not been brought in to drive a wedge

between chief and intellectual in the ARPS. Proof of this lies in the fact that on September 10, 1925, before the constitutional proposals were issued, a conference of ARPS chiefs had expressed confidence in the ideal and leadership of the Congress and had issued the important statement that the educated members of the Society had equal right with their 'Natural Rulers' to make representations on matters of national importance.

So that up to this point the increasing popularity of the Congress was a matter of serious concern to Guggisberg. He repudiated its claim to leadership as baseless and arrogant, but such repudiation in itself was not enough to undermine its power and influence. To achieve this he needed the combined force of government and chiefs. He was fortunate: he found a ready ally in the influential Nana Ofori Atta, who was thrown into the governor's open arms by the harsh attacks and denunciations of him by the Congress intellectuals and the press. In the end this alliance proved deadly, not just to the Congress in particular but to the nationalist movement in general. The 1925 constitution, clearly a product of the alliance, dealt an irreparable damage to the rising fortunes of the Congress. In principle the 1925 constitution conceded the idea of elective representation for which the nationalists had all along been fighting. Yet they pronounced it "unsatisfactory in many respects". In fact they viewed the constitution as presenting a crisis in Gold Coast history.

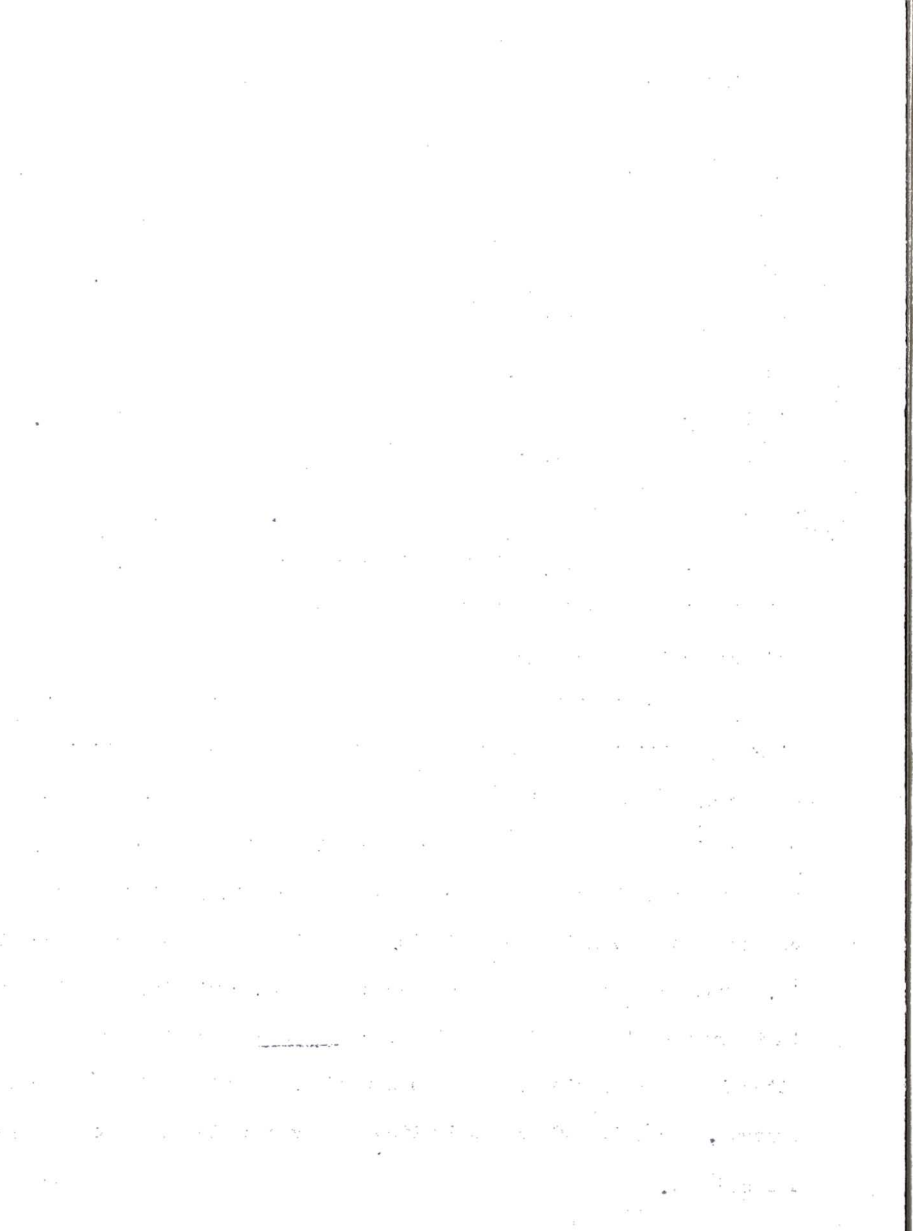
Out of nine elected African members of the Legislative Council, six would be chiefs elected by Provincial Councils. Only three municipal members, from Accra, Cape Coast and Sekondi, would be elected by popular vote. Moreover, the Western and Central Provinces, which had between them three members as compared with three for the Eastern Province alone, might have to do with government nominees because on the advice of the ARPS the chiefs of these provinces had rejected the Provincial Council idea and sworn oaths not to attend Provincial Council meetings. This preponderance of head chiefs in the Legislative Council through the Provincial Council system was considered by the intellectuals to be the most obnoxious feature of the constitutional proposals. The fear was expressed that the constitution was a subtle exercise intended gradually but systematically to approximate the political machinery of the country to that existing in Northern Nigeria, which was considered to be the archetype of indirect rule in West Africa. For the intellectuals this meant that "in a progressive age the representation of the people is deliberately placed in the hands of a majority who could hardly follow the proceedings in Council".<sup>1</sup> The constitution was therefore a clear attempt to impose the chiefs on the people, they said. They also contended that it was not in keeping with the educational attainments of the country and thereby constituted a flagrant slap in the face of the educated.

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1. Gold Coast Leader, January 16, 1926.

Casely Hayford strongly criticised the constitution as unsatisfactory, and appealed to the people to reject it. Nana Ofori Atta upheld it to the letter, and called for co-operation to make it a success. This deep-seated disagreement widened further the gulf between the Congress and the chiefs of the Eastern Province, who had accepted the constitution and the Provincial Council system. In a bid to present a unified front of intellectuals in opposition to the constitutional proposals, the ARPS members who had been expelled during the 1923 remodelling of the Society were reconciled back into it. But Ofori Atta was determined to deal a death-blow to the Congress and to the claim of the intellectuals to leadership. In 1927, under his influence, the Native Administration Ordinance was passed. This private bill ensured Provincial Council chiefs of government support and protection in no uncertain terms.

The Provincial Councils were constitutionally empowered to discuss, criticise, and offer suggestions on government policies and measures. This meant in effect that they had undermined the work of the nationalist movements and thus rendered them virtually redundant. Largely through the influence and propaganda of Ofori Atta, chiefs who had opposed the Provincial Council in the beginning now began to accept it. Another reason for the popularity of the Provincial Council was that government paid £4 a day to every Omanhene who attended its meetings. Attending ARPS meetings, on the other hand, entailed a lot of personal expense, exclusive of the obligation to pay contributions for running the society.



The combined opposition of the government and Nana Ofori Atta, the creation of the Provincial Councils, and the passage of the Native Administration Ordinance - which ensured the desertion of the ARPS chiefs - proved too much for Casely Hayford. After 1927 he seems to have come to accept the idea that any claim to the leadership of the Gold Coast peoples was futile if it was not tradition-based. Accordingly, at great cost to his dynamism and the ideal of West African unity, he began to work his way back into the confidence of the government and the chiefs. He succeeded. When he died in 1930 he was mourned by government, chief, scholar and people. But the National Congress of British West Africa was dead too.

For one reason or other, the Congress had failed to generate as much enthusiasm for its ideals elsewhere in West Africa as it did in the Gold Coast. As a result, well before 1927 the idea of West African unity had waned, emphasis being now placed on internal development of the individual countries. As a correspondent of the Gold Coast Independent wrote on May 25, 1929: "We are fighting for our country and I do not think it is our duty to go too deep into what may happen to any other state." Casely Hayford had, however, resolutely remained the embodiment of the Congress, its source of spiritual sustenance and strength and vitality. The man was too far ahead of his age. He would have done better in the present. Even beyond. In his day he was an odd-man-out, a visionary seeing far into the distant future. It was inevitable that the Congress should die with him.

But the Congress had done a good job. It was the open assertion of its intellectuals to leadership independently of the chiefs which forced the colonial administration to concede a measure of political power to the chiefs in the form of the Provincial Councils. The initial enthusiasm the Congress had evoked in West Africa as a whole, but particularly in the Gold Coast, was clearly generative of national consciousness, self-analysis and stock-taking. Again, the insight and foresight of the Congress in internationalising the struggle of the West African peoples against colonial domination, on the grounds of common problems and aspirations, was commendable. It bore fruit. In the 1920s the Gold Coast, Nigeria and Sierra Leone were given a measure of elective representation. The Achimota and Yaba colleges represented a modest way of meeting the demand of the Congress for a University in West Africa. And in 1930 a West African Court of Appeal, one of the major demands of the Congress, was established.

CHAPTER 2

EDUCATION, CHRISTIANITY AND NATIONALISM

There are two views about who were the pioneers in Western education on the Gold Coast. One view makes them the missionaries. This is contradicted by those who say that Western education in the Gold Coast began with what may be called government schools in the castles. These were established by the Danes and the Dutch mainly for their mulatto children, but probably they took in a few black children from the surrounding towns.

The controversy is, without doubt, an interesting one; but we are not much interested in it on that score. What we are concerned to find is that whoever the pioneers in Western education in the then Gold Coast were, the Wesleyan and the Basel missionaries had become the dominant educators in the country by the turn of the nineteenth century. So much so that in 1902 the Gold Coast Leader observed that "whatever there is of education that this country can speak of, has been the work of the Mission Bodies"<sup>1</sup>. Again, whichever side of the controversy one takes, the fact comes out clearly that Western education has had a fairly long history on the coast, although it was not until 1890 that a Director of Education was appointed for the first time.

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1. Gold Coast Leader, November 1, 1902.

Compared with the coast, education in Ashanti, and more so in Northern Ghana, is recent. For a long time Ashanti chiefs had misgivings about what Western education would do to their children<sup>1</sup>. They thought that it would make them idle and rebellious of traditional authority. Mainly because of this chiefly resistance, it was not until about 1900 that education got underway in Ashanti, under the aegis of the Basel and Wesleyan missions. In the north, colonial officials (the Chief Commissioners) rather than local chiefs, seem, for one reason or another, to have constituted the major impediment to missionary effort to establish schools there at the beginning of the twentieth century; so that planned Western education did not begin there until 1927, when a Superintendent of Education for the Northern Territories was first appointed. It was the missionaries who took the lead in secondary education. In 1876 the Wesleyans opened a High School at Cape Coast. As is to be expected, secondary education reached Ashanti and the north much later.

Today Government has come to dominate and take the initiatives in education, but even so the missions continue to make significant contributions to elementary and secondary education. It goes without saying then that the missions have been a very important factor in bringing Western education to this country.

In Ghana, as elsewhere in Africa, Western education has been a multi-result activity. It has been a vehicle of change in the social,

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1. See Bartels, op. cit., particularly p.52.

economic, and political spheres. It has been, and still continues to be, the main medium of social mobility, and therefore one of the main determinants of social status. It has introduced new ways of life and thought, and new ways of social, economic and political organisation. In this multi-purpose role Western education is not unlike modern African nationalism, for modern African nationalism is also a vehicle of change. It seeks to effect social, economic and political change. This in part explains the affinity and intimacy that exists between Western education and modern African nationalism. As a general statement it is true that Western education and modern nationalism have been bed-fellows in Africa.

It is probable that it is this fact, plus the fact that missionaries have played so important a role in Ghanaian education, that has led to the view, strongly held, that Christianity and nationalist activity have shared a close intimacy in Ghana. However, different versions exist as to the nature and content of that relationship. Bartels refers to the leaders of pre-twentieth century Gold Coast nationalism as men who were ambitious for the church as well as for the state.<sup>1</sup> David Kimble says explicitly that it was the African ministers of the church who played an important role in the development of the nationalist movement. According to him? "the training for

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1. Op. cit., passim. A review of this book has been done by K.A.B. Jones-Quartey in the Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, Vol.8, 1965, pp.172-176.

leadership given to African ministers, and their growing self-confidence in working alongside Europeans, may be regarded as a positive stimulus to the development of the nationalist movement."<sup>1</sup> Expressing similar sentiments the Rev. F.C.F. Grant, President of the Methodist Church of Ghana, in his foreword to Bartels' cited book says that the "councils of the church provided a training ground for leadership in Church and State". It was no accident therefore

that men like King Gharthey of Winneba, George Grant of Anomabu, F.C. Grant, J.M. Sarbah, Casely Hayford and a host of many others, who have all been trained in the Methodist Church, became leaders of political thought in the Gold Coast.

The phrase "people trained in the church" is a highly ambiguous one. It could mean anything from training as a minister to merely receiving education in a mission-operated school. It is noteworthy that while Mensah Sarbah is full of praise for the "incalculable benefits West Africa owes to her Christian converts", he however categorizes such converts as those "of the right stamp, who never ceased to be Africans".<sup>2</sup>

This cluster of varying shades of viewpoint is bound to complicate the effort to assess the role of the church in the development of nationalism. But it should be evident that if there is anything

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1. Op. cit. p.161.

2. Op. cit., Preface, XIV.

peculiar in missionary education which is cou  
of nationalism, then we would expect what Kimble a  
the role of the African minister in the development of  
movement to be the case. However, in respect of his role in  
development of the nationalist movement, the nationalist press ha  
a variant version of the story to tell about the African minister of  
the church. For, so far as one can gather from the nationalist press,  
very few African ministers became leaders in the nationalist movement.  
Moreover, these appear to have been of a rather unusual make of church  
minister!

Perhaps the most famous of the minister-nationalists was the  
Rev. S.R.B. Attoh-Ahuma, a Methodist minister who published a booklet  
entitled The Gold Coast Nation and National Consciousness and founded  
the Axim section of the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society. As  
editor of his church's newspaper The Gold Coast Methodist Times, he  
performed brilliantly. But, staunch nationalist that he was, he  
"promptly converted it into a burning nationalist journal"<sup>1</sup> for which  
he soon got into trouble with the church authorities. He was fired,  
and he left to edit the Gold Coast Leader, a militant nationalist  
paper. Another such minister was the Rev. Egyir Aseam, a contemporary

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1. K.A.B. Jones-Quartey, "Thought and Expression in the Gold Coast Press, 1874-1930". This article, originally published in Universitas Vol.3, No.3, June 1958, is available on microfilm at the Balme Library, Legon.

and a companion of Attoh-Ahuma. Both of them returned to the Gold Coast in 1883 after studies in Britain in preparation for the ministry and changed their 'European' names for African ones, Attoh-Ahuma from Solomon R.B. Solomon, and Egyir Asaam from William F. Penny.<sup>1</sup> A third minister-nationalist was the Rev. J.B. Anaman, also a Methodist. He resigned from the Methodist Church for his nationalist convictions and founded the Nigritian Episcopal Church at Anomabu in May, 1907.

Although there were many African ministers of the church, so far as the nationalist press was concerned there were only a handful of Attoh-Ahumas. In fact a view that African ministers may generally be said to have stood outside, if not altogether aloof, from the mainstream of Gold Coast nationalism would find ample support in the press of the proto-modern nationalist period. During that period the nationalist press was very critical of Christianity in general but of African ministers of the church in particular. On February 4, 1905, on the eve of the Annual Session of the Wesleyan Synod, the Gold Coast Leader wrote an editorial entitled, "Christianization or Denationalization?" That editorial centred on the question: "Ought not the Christian Religion be taught the people divested of all its foreign elements, if to win souls for Christ is all that is being aimed at?" It expressed dissatisfaction with the results of over half a century of missionary activity and suggested that thenceforth

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1. See Bartels, op. cit., pp.122-123.

the gospel should be carried to the people in all its simplicity. For,

The apostles in obedience to their Master's command, went into the world and preached the Gospel to every creature, but we read of no attempt to make their converts Jews. Why then should the European seek to Europeanise us in bringing the Gospel to us?

In 1935, the Gold Coast Spectator said, "Christianity, that religion of beautiful humility, is used as one of the weapons by which Africa is held in leash."<sup>1</sup> And on June 6, the following year, the paper took the Christian Council to task:

Politics, the Council Members shun like Gehema. They will not touch it. The Methodists lose no opportunity to announce that they do not take part in politics. It concerns them little how political reverses swamp the aspirations of their flock.

The African minister of the church was singled out for criticism.

In 1915, in an editorial entitled "Need for a National Church", the Gold Coast Leader expressed the view that "the splendid disciplinary system of the Church ought ... to produce better results in national life than it is apparent." It went on to say:

We would like to feel that our African Ministers of the Church are sufficiently enlightened, sufficiently patriotic, as to take up the educational burden upon their shoulders and not never to rest until the dreams of the Fante Confederation days are realised ... To this end our Ministers must get more and more into touch with the people, and their elders and chiefs and leaders ... We trust ... that our African Ministers will have the manhood to stand out for the nation and strike out for further progress and healthy development on practical national lines<sup>2</sup>.

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1. Gold Coast Spectator, November 23, 1935.
  2. Gold Coast Leader, March 6, 1915.

It is true that the nationalist movement would not have gathered so much momentum so early "had it not been for the remarkable work of the Missions in the field of education".<sup>1</sup> For virtually all the educated Africans who became leaders of the nationalist movement were products of mission schools. But this was a matter of simple historical accident; for in the early days most of the schools were run by missionaries. Rather than any peculiar missionary or Christian content of the education the nationalists received, what seems to have been crucial was the simple fact that they received Western education and could therefore understand and appraise the ways and doings of the colonial administration. In the view of the present writer any contribution that churches might have made towards the development of nationalism was largely incidental. It is doubtful whether they viewed such missionary activities as education and the reduction of the vernaculars into writing as vehicles of nationalist development.

In fact so far as nationalism is concerned what could be put on the plus side of Christianity is a possible common feeling which it might have fostered among the peoples of different tribes that they all belonged to one church. But the validity of this assertion presupposes that there was widespread, difused intercommunication between the different sections of the church communities in various parts of the country, to such an extent that any section was aware of the

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1. D. Kimble, op. cit. p.166.

existence of the others and the community of interest between it and them. This is doubtful. Christian converts were predominantly illiterate and the mass communication media were either non-existent or undeveloped.

In the eyes of the nationalists the syncretic or breakaway churches stood in a different category from the established or orthodox Christian churches. The first of these, the A.M.E. Zion, appeared in 1898. Manned solely by Africans, they were essentially protest movements, protesting against what they considered as the rigidity of (white) Christian norms, and against the control of the church by the white man. As Bartels has said, the nationalist leaders

tended to think that the Christian religion introduced by missionaries was foreign in thought and practice, and that what Africa needed was a religion with roots in the teaching of Christ but African in conception, interpretation and control.

In consequence the nationalist press was very appreciative of the idea of African churches. For example, on March 27, 1915, the Gold Coast Leader noted that:

In Nigeria there are arising native independent churches. We say nothing of the formula or method of these churches, but in principle, we think it is a healthy sign that the people wish to be free - that they desire to work on their own salvation.

Paradoxically then, as a revolt against Established Christianity, syncretism appears to have been the only direct contribution of Established Christianity to the development of modern African nationalism.

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1. Op. cit., p.161.

CHAPTER THREE

GOVERNOR, CHIEF, AND INTELLECTUAL

We shall be concerned in this section with examining further the web of inter-relationships between governor, chief and intellectual, with a view to throwing more light on its impact on the development of nationalism.

Broadly speaking, colonial society was a three-tier society. So far as the colony was concerned, the governor and his high white officials formed the super-power of the colonial structure. The chiefs and the Western-educated population constituted the elites of the indigenous society.<sup>1</sup> And the lowest tier was taken up by the masses of the people, who throughout our political history have always been a numerical majority but a political minority.

To the colonial administration it was the class of African (or local) elites, small though it was, which mattered; because this class was believed to contain within its confines all the persons adjudged capable of any resistance to the colonial set-up. This idea was discarded

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1. I use the term 'Western-educated' in a broad sense. It is not restricted in meaning to 'educated in Europe or America', although this would be true of the great majority of the earlier nationalists. As used here, the necessary and sufficient connotation is that of having received a Western type of education, irrespective of where it was received.

as invalid by the 'radical' nationalists after World War II, due partly to the great increase in the number of the educated, and the social upheaval which largely led to the spread of national consciousness to the rural areas. However, it is well worth bearing in mind its importance in the earlier period, in order to better appreciate the colonial government's (over)-concern with these two groups, to the utter exclusion of the third.

Not only that. It also explains why the concept of 'elite' should be very important in the analysis of the nationalist movement in the Gold Coast. In fact, conscious of it or not, the masses of our people have always been subject to two major pulls on their attention, corresponding with a two-fold division of the elites - the pull of traditional allegiance represented by the chiefs, and the pull of modernity represented by the 'scholars'. To the group of elites must be added also the class of merchants. For some time after the Crown had formally taken over the administration of the Gold Coast territories, the British merchants, who had previously administered the pockets of territory in the vicinity of the forts and castles, continued to wield considerable influence in matters of government. With time, however, this influence began to wane. Thereafter, the class of merchants would, upon occasion, act as a pressure group on the colonial administration.

In the beginning the African and the European merchants shared common interests, but later on the two groups became alienated. Some degree of identification with the political power of a territory would seem to be a common prerequisite for successful business enterprise in

that territory, for without it favourable trading terms would be hard to get. Accordingly, as political power gradually drifted away from their hands, the British merchants increasingly came to identify with the colonial administration. Unfortunately, they failed to take the African merchants along with them. This was opportunity for the nationalist press to lash out at the British merchants. In 1902 the Gold Coast Leader called the Cape Coast Chamber of Commerce, which had no native merchants among its members, the "Gold Coast Foreign Chamber of Commerce", a secret society, a "Mysterious Brotherhood". It accused its members of being "secret service men working as the tool of the Government".<sup>1</sup> In 1930 the Gold Coast Times accused the British merchants of monopolising the trade and the industries of the country, and of "forming trusts and combines to make the exploitation of the people more effective."<sup>2</sup> And in 1931 the paper concluded that "there are two hostile elements to native organisation in this country- the Government and British traders".<sup>3</sup> Once the African merchant came to look on his European counter-part as a collaborator with the colonial administration against his interests he readily came to be absorbed into the mainstream of the nationalist movement.

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1. Gold Coast Leader, September 13, 1902.
  2. Gold Coast Times, October 4-11, 1930.
  3. Gold Coast Times, May 2, 1931.

It is appropriate at this stage to attempt a description of elites in Ghana, and K.E. de Graft-Johnson has offered a valuable analytical guide.<sup>1</sup> He suggests that the Marxian or Weberian concept of social class is inappropriate to the Ghanaian situation, because "in Ghana the elites are not necessarily opposed." That is to say that there is among the Ghanaian elite groups a complement of roles functionally needful for the creation of a viable modern nation.

According to de Graft Johnson:

As applied to Ghana ... the elite must be seen in functional terms, i.e. in terms of the part they play in preserving or in reshaping the social structure. Looked at this way there emerges not one but several elite groups.

He goes on to suggest a breakdown of the elites into the intelligentsia, the political elite, and the chiefly elite. "The intelligentsia elite", he writes,

represent a source of skills, intellectual and professional, indispensable to the purpose of a new

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1. K.E. de Graft-Johnson, "The Evolution of the Elite in Ghana", in P.C. Lloyd (Ed), The New Elites of Tropical Africa, Oxford University Press, 1966. Unless otherwise stated any reference to K.E. de Graft-Johnson in this chapter refers to this article.

and progressive nation. The political elite represent the hope and aspirations of the 'common man'. They seek by political direction to create a new society. Of the three elites, the chiefs are now the least powerful, and the political elite the most powerful.

There is no doubt that this division of the elites is valid for the period immediately preceding independence and the post independence era. But its validity for the period before World War II is not so clear. During that period there had not as yet emerged a political elite distinct from either the educated elite or the chiefly elite. In fact, the whole struggle within the nationalist camp during that period was concerned with one basic question: Who shall emerge as the political elite of the new society, the traditional rulers or the intellectuals? In a true sense then the Ghanaian elites have been an evolutionary group, having passed through a period of sorting out before reaching what we must now recognise as a stage of near-distinct categorisation. We must now recognise a new classification of four groups; a political elite, an intellectual elite, the chiefly elite, and an entrepreneurial elite.

The concept of elite in Ghana does not connote anything close to a homogenous economic class in any particular group. Each elite group contains both rich and poor. They are the elites all the same because they tend to see themselves as groups apart - groups privileged by their positions in traditional society, their education,

or their personal enterprise, to lead the masses of the people. If we interpret the struggle within the nationalist camp during the period of proto-modern nationalism as one for political leadership then the educated elite were eventually bound to emerge victorious. By virtue of their Western education they could claim enlightenment and insight with regard to the ways and thought of the colonial master. Moreover, they had the requisite skills to successfully work the new political structures introduced by Britain. This sounds like simple dialectics, but the attitude of the colonial government to the educated elite would seem to suggest that it saw things differently. The educated African of the nineteenth century was not only contemned by the colonial government, but attempts were made to exclude him from spheres of social and political influence. Increasingly, he came in for special blame for all the disabilities and troubles of the Gold Coast. His newspaper received persistent rebuke as an organ of malicious incitement. As a matter of general policy the Colonial Office decided to have nothing to do with his kind as a body. And a host of obnoxious adjectives were employed in the description of him. He was "irresponsible", "mischievous", "the curse of the West Coast", "a demagogue", "a thorn in the side of the government of the Gold Coast", and more.

But who in reality was this strange, troublesome creature who wanted to lead Gold Coast society, and what was the basis of his claims?

Of course he belonged to that group which has come down to us in our political history as the 'intelligentsia'. David Kimble refers to this group as made up of "the educated, cash-conscious, politically restless minority".<sup>1</sup> K.E. de Graft-Johnson sees them pretty much as a homogenous group; and suggests, by implication, that differentiation occurred in their category only after World War II. The picture thus presented is one of a homogenous group of well-educated men, as it were journeying down the corridors of our political history, to be joined (only) after the Second World War by another group of not-so-well educated people, the so-called elementary school leavers. But when de Graft Johnson goes on to say that "In the struggle for independence these groups made a bid for leadership", it should be clear that he has in mind the two types of scholar who in the late 1940s supported 'conservative' and 'radical' nationalism respectively.

We may have no reason to tie ourselves down to such a division, because the age of 'radical' nationalism proper antedates the period of proto-modern nationalism. But even so, it would seem that there is a valid basis for a two-fold general division of the educated class during the early nationalist period. Reference abounds in the political literature of the period to the educated as "so-called scholars," "natives who can read and write", "people with a mere

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1. D. Kimble, op. cit., p.21.

smattering of education". Obviously such description could not have referred to the well-educated or the intellectuals, most of whom had received training in European institutions of higher learning, and who would analyse bills passed by government and bring forward reasoned and learned objections against them. On May 22, 1875 the Gold Coast Times put the proportion of Gold Coast people who could "understand letters" at "something like one in a hundred", and the ratio of those who could understand what they read at one in a thousand. This was confirmed by the ARPS in 1897 when it said that "the greater part of those able to read cannot well-comprehend the meaning of Bills passed from time to time by the Government."<sup>1</sup> In 1906 the Gold Coast Leader estimated the number of people who could read and write to be about five thousand, out of which only about fifty could "boast of a sound education". In 1939 the officer in charge of broadcasting, Mr. T.A. Huxtable, broke down the educated local listeners into two, namely, the intelligentsia, comprising those who enjoyed B.B.C. programmes and "High Brow" music, and the 'educated listeners' who did not appreciate high brow music.<sup>2</sup> It is obvious, too, that the scholars' unions and literary societies which by the 1930s had become popular even outside the urban areas did not comprise only well-educated people.

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1. Gold Coast Express, July 1, 1897.

2. See the Colonial Secretary's Office (C.S.O.) file No. 222/35 Vol. II, 314A. The C.S.O. files are available at the Ghana National Archives, Accra.

The above evidence supports a division of educated Gold Coasters of the early nationalist period into two broad groups. The first group would comprise such as the Bannermans, the Monsah Sarbahs and the Casely Hayfords - people whose claim to being well-educated, to genuine scholarship, was by no means pretentious. These were the scholars who understood the workings of the colonial machinery and, representing a modernising influence, would vie with chiefs for leadership at the centre. The second group would comprise in the main people whose claim to scholarship barely went beyond the three Rs - the 'Village Scholar', we may call him (although he was not exclusive to the rural environment), with preposterous pretensions to knowledge of the ways of the white man.

The existence of two categories of scholar seems, then, well enough defined. During most of the period under consideration only the well-educated group constituted a headache to the colonial administration. However, the two groups should not necessarily be viewed as being functionally mutually exclusive. Rather, they should be viewed as operating at two different levels of the society. The 'village scholar' might begin by counselling the local chief; but later on when he would have become seasoned in his pretensions and accepted as knowledgeable by the people, he might come to demand a say in the leadership of the local people. On the other hand, the true scholar, even the radical one, who was both in principle and outlook opposed to chiefly claims to political leadership, would yet counsel the chiefs. But although functionally the two groups may not be mutually exclusive, nonetheless

it would be wrong to bunch them together and label them the way colonial officials tended to do: "irresponsible and mischievous".

We shall now consider the basis of the claim of the educated elite to the leadership of the people. It was not only the chiefs - whose leadership was challenged - that demanded from the intellectuals the justification for their claims, but also the colonial government. Yet such justification was amply forthcoming. The strongest argument of the intellectual was that the new political structures, like the Legislative Council, which the British had introduced into the country, had no basis in tradition and as such fell outside the jurisdiction, experience and competence of traditional authority. The implication was clear. Any chief who wanted to operate the new structures would have to compete on equal terms with other nationals.

Having thus, in their view, established the basis of equal competition, the scholars contended that the Western education which they had received invested them with the skills, the attitude of mind and the aptitude requisite for operating the new structures. Their education, they said, had provided them with a reliable source of information and the ability easily to acquire new knowledge; and this twin-virtue gave them a claim to a considerable amount of certainty of judgement. They were thus more able to judge between right and wrong and between true and false principles, and could see deeper and father into the future. All this meant that their education gave them a clear advantage over the chiefs, most of whom were illiterate, in working the new political structures.

We have already noted the objection by the chiefs to the leadership of the intellectuals, namely, that they had no traditional mandate to lead the people. We may now note the rationale of the colonial government's own rejection of the intellectuals. Such rationale was given by the Governor of Nigeria, Sir Hugh Clifford, in 1919. While admitting that the educated classes made enlightened advisers and gave incisive criticism of local affairs, he said however that their 'exotic' education put them so far ahead of their countrymen that it was not always safe or wise to accept their view as representative of the people's interests. This provoked a reply from a committee of educated Gold Coasters specifically set up to answer Sir Hugh.<sup>1</sup> The committee asked two basic questions: (1) Does a native cease to be native once he is educated?; (2) "Before the days of the Magna Carta and the introduction of the Reform Bill and the ballot box what sort of mandate did the lawyer, priest and other educated leaders of the people require from the illiterate masses before putting forward requests for reforms?" On the basis of these rhetorical questions the committee said that since the educated class formed an integral part of Gold Coast society they did not require the mandate of "all the chiefs" as a precondition to petitioning for the redressing of grievances. Their education might be exotic, but that

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1. As reported by the Gold Coast Leader, May 3-10, 1919.

was the more reason why they should assume the "okyamiship"<sup>1</sup> of the country in its dealings with "a dominant Exotic Party", such as the colonial Government was.

Individuals took the matter up. For example, in the issue of the Gold Coast Leader for March 12, 1921, a correspondent who called himself 'Africamus' likened the government to Pharoah, the educated class to Moses, and the chiefs to Pharoah's satellites, and said: "if Moses fails to take upon himself the imperative duty which is incumbent upon him alone to lead Israel out of moral, political and material thraldom, it is manifestly inconceivable that Pharoah and his interested satellites are competent to do so, even if they would". The leadership of scholars in modern society was an indispensable "natural prerogative", he said. In a later article (Gold Coast Leader, March 19, 1921) the same correspondent even tried to show that "under our indigenou constitution the position of the Omanhin is not representative".<sup>2</sup>

Charge and counter-charge, claim and counter-claim apart, were the educated elite, numerically insignificant throughout the greater part of the proto-modern nationalist period, justified in claiming leadership of the masses? In independent Africa, removed as we are from the colonial context, but especially with the coming of universal adult suffrage, the appeal of the problem today may be mainly academic. Yet, viewed in proper perspective, the debate was a spirited one over a living issue of crucial importance for the development of nationalism.

1. Okyeame means spokesman.

2. Omanhin, or in its most familiar form Omanhene, means Paramount Chief.

And it is in that light that we interest ourselves in it here.

Before going on to venture an answer it would be a good thing first to indicate the sort of considerations likely to condition one's answer. It is not very useful to present the debate as one between constitutionalism and unconstitutionality, because nationalist agitation by both chief and intellectual was enshrined in professions and protestations of commitment to constitutionalism. Nor is much light thrown on it when presented as a tussle between 'chiefly conservatism' and 'intellectual radicalism'. Rather, in the main, at any rate in its ideological form, the conflict between chief and intellectual represented a tussle between an evolutionary as opposed to a revolutionary approach to the question of development. The evolutionary approach advocated mainly, if not exclusively, by the chiefs implied a large measure of waiting upon the colonial government to supply the initiatives in political, social and economic development. This is what the Ashanti Pioneer editorial of August 11, 1947, referred to as: "looking up to Nurse Britain for guidance, protection and support, articulating our own views rather indirectly - through petitions, memorials and delegations."

The revolutionary approach represented by the anti-chief intellectuals implied, as it were, forcing the hands of the colonial government to concede change. While no claim of finality or exhaustiveness attaches to this division (in fact neat divisions exclusive of any shades whatsoever hardly occur in social movements,

especially where ideologies, even of an elementary nature, are involved), it is not difficult to see how one's answer to the question whether the claim of the intellectuals was justified or not would show an inclination to this or the other of the two conceptions of development in a colonial context. Yet, in itself this inclination would entail answers to a number of more preliminary questions, such as the following: Did the colonial context present any challenges of leadership to the indigenous elite,<sup>1</sup> and if so what were these? How best could these challenges be met? As between chief and intellectual, who was better suited or equipped to meet the challenges? Could not chief and intellectual have always united in common opposition to the colonial government, or was there something inevitable about chief and intellectual becoming rival claimants of leadership?

It would appear that with the introduction of the elective principle, however limited, into the Gold Coast in the 1920s, there arose the need to mobilise the indigenous peoples in order to keep in tune with this Western political practice introduced by the colonial government into the traditional setting. If so, a revolutionary situation could be said to have arisen in the colony. This would give the educated elite a representational role, poised as they were, albeit precariously, between traditionalism and Westernism, and able to

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1. Indigenous elite refers to both the traditional (chiefly) elite and the educated elite.

claim some understanding of those institutions as well as some ability to operate them by virtue of their Western education. Theoretically, this vindicates their claim to leadership of the indigenous peoples. However, one must hasten to add that to say that a claim to leadership is valid is not necessarily to imply that leadership is actually supplied by the claimant. The crux of the matter then turns out in the final analysis to be the question: Did the intellectuals actually give leadership to the masses?

Leadership of a people should imply on the part of the leader an identification with, and the articulation of, their aspirations, hopes, fears and problems. This the intellectuals of the proto-modern nationalist period failed to accomplish. So far as the indigenous population was concerned socio-political communication occurred predominantly through the medium of the English-language press and was therefore restricted to the educated elite. As between the educated elite and the masses such communication was absent. Consequently public opinion was essentially that of the educated few. Obviously factors like the overwhelming size of illiteracy, lack of access to the country's financial resources, the poor state of the mass communication media, etc., radically circumscribed the extent to which a two-way flow of elite-masses communication could be operative and effective. In any case, what the intellectuals did was, as the occasion arose, to correlate sporadic but spontaneous outbursts of feelings of discontent among the masses over such things as taxation, legislation, land problems and economic grievances into big nationalist issues. But this fell short of that sustained search for and

articulation of the interests and grievances of the masses which leadership of them should entail.

We have indicated that by opposing the chief's leadership and at the same time offering him counsel against the colonial government, the scholar assumed an ambivalent attitude towards the chief. Such ambivalence was a function of the clash that existed between two authority systems - the traditional system of authority by ascription and the new Western idea of authority by personal achievement - both operating within a system of indirect rule. Governor, chief and intellectual were all caught up in the resulting mess; and this introduced an element of confusion into the pattern of relationships in colonial society. In both his roles as aspirant to leadership and counsellor of the chief, the intellectual was hated by the colonial government. But he was hated by the chief only when he put his claim to leadership independently of the chief, as was done in the NCBWA. We have seen the reason for this. In fact the chief never compromised his 'natural rulership' till he was outpaced and outdone by the 'radical' nationalists of the Nkrumah era of the mid-twentieth century. Before then any concession he made to the 'scholar' by way of a place in the leadership structure was more in the nature of a reward.

A clash between chief and scholar there was. That was inevitable. The whole process of Westernisation is systematically corrosive of chiefly authority. But the chief would not budge. It would be wrong,

however, to draw too simplistic a picture of the chief as perpetually allied with the governor against the intellectual. For there were also clashes between chief and governor. The truth of the matter is that to the extent that the colonial administration recognised the chief, and not the 'scholar', as the rightful leader and spokesman of the people, government and chief were allies. But on those occasions when government policy sought to deprive the chief of power he had hitherto wielded (as in the land problems), or when an unpopular legislation was introduced (as in the case of tax legislations), chief and governor were opposed. In such moments chief and 'scholar' were allies against the government. Such, largely, was the alliance represented by the ARPS.

In general, indirect rule fitted pretty well into the pattern of colonial paternalism, but it was not as thoroughly applied in the Gold Coast as it was in Nigeria. The governors of the Gold Coast were not even uniformly approving of the authority traditionally ascribed to the institution of chieftaincy. While left to himself H.T. Ussher, who was governor during the Fanti Confederation days, would have nothing to do with the chiefs, his successor, Sir Samuel Rowe, was of the conviction that the only way to rule the Gold Coast effectively was through the chiefs. It may be said, however, that up to the rise of the CPP to political power colonial rule was indirect rule, at least in temper. However, as we have already noted, there does not seem to have been a consistent colonial policy towards the chiefs until the governorship of Guggisberg.

So long as the chiefs were acquiescent, colonial officials were ready to pay lip-service to their 'natural rulership' and to use this to clamp down on the intellectuals aspiring to political leadership; but colonial officialdom was also equally ready to deal high-handedly with chiefs who wanted to exert their political and judicial independence. All along, the consistency in British colonial policy lay in the uniform determination of the colonial official to have his authority not only unchallenged but unshared. Of course this was the logical consequence of a paternalist attitude to subject peoples.

Guggisberg's provincial councils attempted for the first time to rationalise and institutionalise indirect rule in the Gold Coast. And he was openly vocal about his intentions in that respect. In his annual message to the Legislative Council on January 21, 1921, he said:

The question has often been asked what will be the effect of high education on stool rule. Personally I am firmly of the opinion that the latter will strengthen the former. We know that the chief feature of the administration of this country is tribal rule. We know that the Chiefs are, in accordance with certain native customs and law elected by their people. We know that the Chiefs while they are on the stool, represent their people. We know that Chiefs, with the aid of their

councillors, have from time to time carried out legitimately the wishes of their peoples. We know, for instance, that this colony belongs to the British Empire by virtue of many sacred treaties made by the Chiefs for their people with Queen Victoria. **Nothing can alter our Constitution in that respect and nothing can alter our Constitution that does not come to us from the Chiefs who are elected and legitimate representatives of the people. That is why no person or persons who are not themselves Chiefs or have not been elected by the Chiefs and their peoples have any right to claim to represent the people of this country in any matter whatever, much less any matter concerning the Constitution.**<sup>1</sup>

This speech, given at a time when the NCBWA was quickly flowering, sets the political tone and tenor of Guggisberg's administration in very clear terms and underscores his attitude to that organisation. Also, in the light of this speech, considering that the broad vistas of Guggisberg's policies were systematically followed up by

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1. As quoted by Nana Amanfi III, Omanhene of Asebu, then President of the Joint Provincial Councils, in his Foreword to the Souvenir Programme, 1944 Centenary Celebrations of the Bond of 1844, under the auspices of the Joint Provincial Councils; Ntantaman Press, Cape Coast, 1944.

subsequent governors, it is easy to see why the nationalist leaders won little by their method of constitutional agitation, except on those occasions when chief and scholar united in a common constitutional protest. Again, Guggisberg's dedication to the principles enunciated in this speech explains why more than any governor before him he received the most violent criticism of his policies from the anti-chief intellectuals, especially after the 1925 constitution had come into being. However, before then two features of Guggisberg's rule had considerably endeared him to all sections of the society. First, a few years of his reign began to show signs of economic and social improvement. Secondly, with the establishment of Achimota the nationalists came to believe that the country's education was proceeding on the right lines.

Achimota was seen as "the vision of the future not only of the people of West Africa, but, to some extent of the entire race".<sup>1</sup> It was hoped that Achimota would revolutionize the country's educational system on the lines advocated by the nationalists. In fact, Achimota was believed by the nationalists as able to do for the Gold Coast peoples what Hampton Institute and Tuskegee were doing for the emancipation of the American Negro. Not only would it give her students a sound education and such skills as were

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1. Gold Coast Leader, November 29, 1924.

required in modern society, but it would also help them to realize themselves as respectable members of the human race. During the Achimota Conferences which were held periodically to review the school's progress and discuss its problems, difficulties and methods, the governor gave the nationalists a chance to have a say in what Achimota should be. Kobina Sekyi, J.P. Brown, and the Rev. J.B. Anaman were among the nationalists who took the opportunity offered by these conferences to express their views. This sense of involvement in the fortunes of Achimota, plus the tactful choice of "our own Aggrey" as Assistant Vice-Principal, brought nationalist and governor closer together than ever before. This otherwise happy development was, however, to be completely disrupted by the general furor and confusion over the Provincial Council system.

#### CHAPTER 4

##### AN OVERVIEW OF THE NINETEEN THIRTIES

By 1930 it was clear that Guggisberg's constitution had cost the nationalist movement its unity. And that is an understatement: there had in fact ceased to exist a well-organised nationalist movement with a considerable appeal for the people.

The ARPS tried to sort itself out from the wreckage of the NCBWA, but the invasion of the Society by the Congress had been fatal, and government had decided to ignore the latter. Consequently, although in the 1930s the leadership of the ARPS came into the hands of such able men as Kobina Sekyi (who was known in official circles as W.S.G. Sekyi), George Moore and R.S. Wood, attempts to press government to reinstate it to its former status bore no fruits. Nor did lecture and fund-raising tours undertaken by these men succeed in evoking much enthusiasm.

Yet in 1934 the Society sent a delegation to London to protest against the Criminal Code (Amendment) Ordinance, popularly called the "Sedition Bill." The delegation was refused audience. This meant that the Colonial Office had written the Society off as a political body representative of the peoples of the Colony. In Accra the Mambii Party soon superseded the Society, and Wallace Johnson's Youth League captured the imagination and attention of the youth of the Colony. Within a year of its formation the League had established branches in the following towns: Accra, Nsawam, Mangoase, Koforidua, Odumase,

Akuse, Somanya, Keta, Saltpond, Cape Coast, Sekondi, Takoradi, Axim, Elmina, Nyakrom and Kwanyaku<sup>1</sup>. The Society was completely ineffective, politically or otherwise. But in this moribund state it continued to linger on nebulously through the Thirties and far beyond, with the celebration of its annuals as its most conspicuous feature<sup>2</sup>.

This is an appropriate place to say a few words about Kobina Sekyi. This remarkable personality was once described by a newspaper reader as a "robust-minded Barrister ... the eye of the Gold Coast Colony" (Gold Coast Times, May 27, 1933). A very successful Cape Coast-based lawyer, he had a long history of nationalist activity behind him. All along he was a prolific contributor of articles to the nationalist press, one of his specialties being critiques of governors' speeches. As an outflow of his view of the colonial process he became an uncompromising advocate of cultural nationalism. He regarded the colonial process as a system directed:

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1. See Samuel Rohdie, 'The Gold Coast Aborigines Abroad', The Journal of African History, Vol.6, No.3, 1965.
  2. It is interesting to note that some people make claims for its existence even today. The Daily Graphic of November 13, 1968, reported on page 7 that under the Presidency of one V.C.A. Fynn the ARPS had sent a telegramme to the military regime, the National Liberation Council, protesting against the composition of the Constituent Assembly.

towards the eradication of the Africanity of the African, the obliteration of his tradition from his memory, and the substitution thereof of the Europeanity of the European<sup>1</sup>.

Consequently, he persistently wrote and spoke against the aping of European mannerisms and dress, and advocated the study of native traditions and languages.

In 1933 Kobina Sekyi came into open conflict with Dr. Danquah<sup>2</sup>. His unfavourable opinion of the ARPS aside, Dr. Danquah had said also that Kobina Sekyi's criticism of the colonial administration was unjustifiably violent. This conflict provoked a series of press attacks on Dr. Danquah, which attested to the popularity of Kobina Sekyi even at this time of complete decline of the movement he stood so vehemently for. A correspondent of the Gold Coast Spectator called Dr. Danquah a

'Yes-man' politician, who under the guise of service to country fawns on the European and draws fine metaphysical distinctions as to what constitutes a government and a nation and their respective duties<sup>3</sup>.

Despite his popularity, or rather in spite of it, it is not easy to determine exactly where in the nationalist camp to place Kobina Sekyi.

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1. Gold Coast Leader, March 4, 1922.
  2. They never really reconciled afterwards. In 1938 when Dr. Danquah was the General Secretary of the Youth Conference, Kobina Sekyi resigned from the movement when the ARPS failed in an attempt to use the Conference to bring back the chiefs into the Society. Again, in 1947 he refused to attend the meeting of nationalist leaders out of which the United Gold Coast Convention was formed, on the claim that only the ARPS had the right to call such a meeting.
  3. Gold Coast Spectator, December 9, 1933: see article by "Countryman".

elder statesman, Nana Ofori Atta, whom he boosted up at every opportunity. While in Britain he was kept informed by his brother of the political developments in the Gold Coast, and he came back convinced that the ARPS intellectuals were demanding far too much by way of reforms<sup>1</sup>. They in turn came to regard him as the champion of his brother's (obnoxious) causes.

After 1934, however, in the wake of the general confusion which followed upon the failure of the much-heralded delegation jointly sent to London by the Colony and Ashanti (the Gold Coast and Ashanti Delegation to the Colonial Office, 1934) to protest against the Sedition Bill of that year, we see Dr. Danquah beginning to sort himself out, to evolve a personal political philosophy.<sup>2</sup> Nana Ofori Atta was the chairman, and Dr. Danquah the Secretary, of the delegation<sup>3</sup>.

The delegation was elaborately arranged and cost a lot of money. Obviously the people would expect good results from it. In the event, however, chairman and secretary issued conflicting reports about its outcome. Although the fate of the delegation had led Nana Ofori Atta to the conviction that it was useless for colonial subjects to look to the Colonial Office for 'grandfatherly' help or sympathy if they could not get the governor of their country to do their will, he was unwilling

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1. See H.K. Akyeampong (compiler), Historic Speeches and Writings on Ghana by Dr. J.B. Danquah, Accra, George Boakie Publishing Company, 1966, p.65.

2. This philosophy found expression when he revived the Gold Coast Youth Conference in 1938. This movement is discussed in detail in a later section.

3. It was separate from that of the ARPS led by Woodé and Moore.

to admit that the delegation had been a failure. It is not difficult to see why! Apart from the money wasted, the failure was a blow to him personally as leader of the chiefs, for the implication was that the government, which had all along professed confidence in the chiefs, had done the latter down in the eyes of the nation.

On the other hand, Dr. Danquah, who had remained behind in Britain reportedly to do research into Gold Coast history, insisted that the delegation had failed. Of course he was astute enough to realise the implications of the failure; but it was better to accept the truth. He was now convinced that:

Future assurances of the need for confidence (in chief and governor) would have a hollow twang, and the inner awakening is bound to be followed by a turning off in search of a new political direction - as to where confidence may be usefully placed. The Gold Coast will not grow to be self-dependent if the centre of gravity is to be left entirely at the Colonial Office. No doubt political wisdom of the Paramount Chiefs will prevent an inverted orientation, but a new direction is bound to be entirely new, something that will refuse to place the wisdom of indirect rule at a premium<sup>1</sup>.

He admitted that the failure of the delegation had left the Gold Coast in a thorough mess; and then he posed the pregnant question, "What next?"

His answer?:

There is nothing in the way of reconstruction which anybody can do for us if we cannot do it ourselves. But ... we have to turn back to the states<sup>2</sup>.

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1. Gold Coast Spectator, October 6, 1934.

2. Gold Coast Spectator, November 3, 1934.

These two quotations are very significant from the point of view of Dr. Danquah's future political career. For, taken together, these statements, uttered, no doubt, after deep reflection and self-analysis, after a period of stock-taking on 'the fate of the country, give us a look into the innermost recesses of the man's mind. Moreover, they betray a web of deep and intricately inter-connected but by no means harmonious convictions. The first conviction was that if the Gold Coast was ever to be 'self-dependent' then there was need for a "new political direction" which would shift the emphasis away from indirect rule. Superimposed on that conviction was another: that it would be impossible to completely circumvent the paramount chiefs in this effort at a new political direction. Hence the third conviction that "we have to turn back to the states". The irony and the paradox of Dr. Danquah's new direction lay in the simple fact that at the level of the states the paramount chiefs formed the pivot of political activity.

The conflict of opinion, or rather Dr. Danquah's acceptance of the delegation as a failure and Nana Ofori Atta's insistence that it was not, finally ended in a rift between the two brothers. In the series of articles<sup>1</sup> which Dr. Danquah wrote about the delegation, he said that the Provincial Councils, the Legislative Council, and the "pretended confidence" of the government in the chiefs, were doomed, as effective

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1. See Gold Coast Spectator, October and November, 1934.

political factors. This infuriated Nana Ofori Atta. He interpreted Dr. Danquah's statements as a condemnation of the chiefs and attacked him in an open letter to the press<sup>1</sup>. Dr. Danquah wrote an open reply to Nana Ofori Atta entitled, "Get on or get out, Brother".<sup>2</sup> Nana Ofori Atta would have to make a choice, he said. He should either deem it dignified for a paramount chief to keep on pressing the British for the peoples' liberty or else retire from central politics and concentrate his energies on his native state, in this case Akim Abuakwa.

Nana Ofori Atta's political career is open to varied interpretation. After much initial opposition he was ultimately accepted by the Colony chiefs as their leader, so that when under his influence the Joint Provincial Council of Chiefs was established there was no opposition to it by the chiefs. The traditionalist scholars (i.e., those who thought that the educated class were duty-bound to help the chiefs make a success of the provincial council system) saw his leadership in much the right direction, although some of them felt that things would have been better if the chiefs had channeled their efforts through a nationalist movement like the ARPS, comprising chiefs and scholars alike. On the other hand, the radical scholars (i.e., those who aimed at the political leadership of the educated class alone) regarded his political career as a positive setback on the development of any healthy nationalism in the Gold Coast.

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1. As reported by the Gold Coast Spectator on December 15, 1934.

2. See the Gold Coast Spectator for December 15 and 22, 1934.

However, irrespective of its effects, one cannot help admiring the dedication, purposefulness and consistency which Nana Ofori Atta brought to bear upon his life-long work of trying to institutionalise anew the traditional legitimacy of chiefly authority. Again, irrespective of what interpretation we may put on his political career, we cannot deny his wide influence with his fellow chiefs and with successive governors of the country. Moreover, his long list of political successes against the intellectuals made some influential scholars, including, of course, Dr. Danquah, to believe that the only medium of political leadership of the people by the scholars lay through the chiefs, a belief which persists even until today. Being a man of quick decision, energy, undaunted spirit and an unflinching will and determination to stick to his decisions, the Nana, "that extraordinary personality" as Jones-Quartey has referred to him<sup>1</sup>, was much discussed and opposed, and as widely hated as loved. Thus, perhaps truly, did the African Morning Post say about him when he died on August 20, 1943, that:

the success he has achieved as a ruler as well as the high honour he has attained, is not so much attributable to his extremely high intellect as to his resolute will, indomitable courage and daring character.

Although the influence of the Nana continued to be felt beyond the early Thirties, the mid-Thirties were dominated first by the general confusion and unrest caused by Governor Sir Shenton Thomas's unpopular

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1. K.A.B. Jones-Quartey, A Life of Azikiwe, Penguin, 1965, p.112 .

legislations resulting <sup>in</sup> his recall; and then by the efforts of Wallace Johnson and Azikiwe to give a new direction to the nationalist movement.

The most unpopular of Sir Shenton's bills was the 1934 Sedition Bill<sup>1</sup>. Like all unpopular colonial legislations it was subjected by government and nationalists to differing interpretations. The government said that the aim of the bill was simply to suppress sedition and seditious movements. To the contrary, the nationalist press<sup>2</sup> called it an attempt by government to stifle public opinion, abridge the liberty of the press and restrict the freedom of speech at public gatherings. The contention was that the terms of the bill were so vague and so full of pitfalls that they would make it, therefore, extremely precarious, if not foolhardy, for anybody to criticise government officials or government policy. On account of the intensity of the opposition to his unpopular bills Sir Shenton's regime was termed "the new despotism". According to the press, the strength of the regime consisted in "the existing legislative machinery, with its standing official majority and the reserve of white nominated unofficial element"<sup>3</sup>. In fact, on legislation affecting native affairs, Sir Shenton Thomas used his official majority and white unofficials on such an unprecedented scale that voting in the Legislative

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1. Others were the Waterworks Bill, the Import Quotas Ordinance and the Common Tax Bill, all of which were opposed for introducing taxation.
  2. See, e.g., the issues of the Gold Coast Times for February, March and April, 1934.
  3. Gold Coast Times, April 7, 1934.

Council won the appellation 'Nineteen to Nine'.<sup>1</sup>

As we have seen above, the Sedition Ordinance led to the sending of two protest delegations to England, the outcome of one of which resulted in a rift between Dr. Danquah and Nana Ofori Atta. It was also in the wake of the general confusion resulting from Governor Thomas's bills that a man called Wallace Johnson, through his Youth League<sup>2</sup> and Nnamdi Azikiwe, through his journalism and the public platform, attempted to give a new direction to nationalist agitation in the Gold Coast.

After a period of study and teaching in America, Nnamdi Azikiwe, an Ibo from Onitsha in the former Eastern Region of Nigeria, returned to his native West Africa. He came to the Gold Coast in 1934, at the invitation of A.J. Ocansey, the then Ada merchant of Pagan Road, Accra, to edit a new paper called the African Morning Post<sup>3</sup>. True to its motto ("Independent in all things and neutral in nothing affecting the destiny of Africa"), the paper always took an uncompromising stand on anything it thought affected the destiny of the country and of Africa. In addition, Azikiwe gave to his journalism a romantic touch. He was convinced that West African

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1. Ibid.

2. Wallace Johnson and his Youth League are discussed in a separate section, beginning on page 89 .

3. In fact, the Morning Post was practically established by Ocansey for Azikiwe, who made it famous immediately, and whom it soon, in turn, gave a popular image as "Zik", the man behind the "Inside Stuff" column.

journalism of that time ought to be in the nature of glamorous romance if it were to gain a firm hold.<sup>1</sup>

Azikiwe's journalism proved a success. According to Jones-Quartey, as editor of the African Morning Post, Azikiwe became almost overnight West Africa's most outstanding journalist-cum public figure.<sup>2</sup> His paper soon put Dr. Danquah's out of business by capturing the latter's advertising revenue. And after only a year of operation, Azikiwe put the net circulation, perhaps not without a journalist's exaggeration, at some 7,000 copies daily.

While in America Azikiwe had followed the unfolding of the colonial process in West Africa with uncommon interest. He arrived in the Gold Coast convinced that the country was ripe for dominion status. Such status would number the Gold Coast among a community of sister nations consisting of autonomous units cemented by common allegiance to the British Crown.<sup>3</sup> He was also convinced that one of the great evils of colonialism was the economic enslavement of its subject peoples. And he never lost the opportunity, through his penetrating and incisive, if emotional and sensational, articles in the press, and through speeches he gave at gatherings of literary societies, scholars'

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1. The African Morning Post was a well-laid out paper, with clear heads and sub-heads, and, except for technical terms, simply but charmingly written.
  2. Jones-Quartey, op cit. p.107.
  3. See the African Morning Post, May 11, 1935.

unions and semi-political associations, to drum this twin-conviction into the ears of the Gold Coast peoples.

It was inevitable that a man of Azikiwe's convictions and forcefulness should get involved in local politics. During the 1935 Accra elections to the Legislative Council, his paper supported Barrister A.W. Kojo Thompson, the 'young' intellectual, against Dr. Nanka Bruce of the old leadership. The former won. This in part explains the hostility of the Gold Coast Independent, Dr. Nanka Bruce's paper, to Azikiwe. On account of his violent criticism of the colonial structure, policies and legislation, his involvement in local politics, and his influence with the youth and the radical intellectuals, Azikiwe won the hatred of the government, the chiefs and the intellectuals of the old leadership. He was seen by them in much the same light as Wallace Johnson - an evil influence. And in 1936 the two of them were prosecuted together under the Sedition Bill which they had protested so much against. Azikiwe was first convicted but later acquitted on appeal; but he soon left for Nigeria. It may be said, however, that he left his mark on Gold Coast journalism.<sup>1</sup>

As we said earlier on, Dr. Danquah had stayed behind in England after the 1934 delegation. He did not come back until 1936. Two years

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1. For a fuller account of Azikiwe's influence on West Africa, both as a journalist and as a politician, see K.A.B. Jones-Quartey, op cit.

after his return, in 1938, he got the Gold Coast Youth Conference revived. Thereafter, as the General Secretary of the Conference<sup>1</sup> throughout the period of its life, he became the pivot of nationalist activity, until the great division occurred in the nationalist camp in the late 1940s with the formation of the Convention Peoples' Party.

Another feature of the 1930s was the formation of nationalist-oriented social and literary clubs.<sup>2</sup> These groups were forums for co-operative thinking, operating on the basis that the country's problems must be tackled with that intelligent appreciation which is the result of accurate knowledge, free discussion, and exchange of views. They also aimed by their example to interest the public in matters of general concern. However, initially, they were concerned with national development in a non-political way. Accordingly, political discussions were either absent or couched in the most general terms. At their meetings papers were read on various topics and discussed. For example, at a Kumasi 'Conference Towards National Development', organised in 1944 by the Kumasi Discussion Group with the co-operation of the Achimota Discussion Group, the subjects tabled included the

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1. A detailed discussion of this movement is undertaken in a separate section beginning on page 99 .
  2. I include in this category the Achimota and Kumasi Discussion Groups.

following: "Mass Education", "The Position of Women", "Industries and Forest Products," "The Problem of Indebtedness", "The Principles of Partnership", and "The Cleavage between Young and Old".<sup>1</sup> Their general aim was to re-educate the 'scholar' to become conscious of and concerned about the problems of development which the country faced.

One incident which produced a profound effect on nationalist thinking in the Gold Coast was the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. In the heat of the conflict, West Africa wrote an editorial saying that: "Abyssinians do not for a moment regard West Africans, Mohammedan, Christian or Pagan, as friends of theirs."<sup>2</sup> To which the Gold Coast Spectator, in one of their own entitled "We are all Ethiopians", retorted: "This is a riot of ignorance".<sup>3</sup> Both papers were right, and that is no contradiction.

Ethiopia's interest in, let alone concern for, the rest of Africa is a post-Second World War phenomenon. What West Africa said was therefore factually true. However, in matters of emotional attachment, even where such attachment is unreciprocated, hard facts are often completely irrelevant or of little use. This was exactly the position of the West African nationalists. They had, especially

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1. See the Gold Coast Observer, April 21, 1944.

2. West Africa, October 12, 1935.

3. Gold Coast Spectator, November 2, 1935.

since the 1920s, exhibited a strong emotional attachment to Ethiopia; so that, in effect, what the Gold Coast Spectator was saying was simply that it did not matter so much what the Ethiopians thought about West Africans as what West Africans thought about Ethiopia. And what and how did West Africans think and feel about Ethiopia?

Before the era of Africa's independence, which opened with that of Ghana in 1957, the only independent black nations in the world, besides the ancient Kingdom of Ethiopia, were Haiti and Liberia. But these two countries were hardly sources of inspiration and hope to black peoples by the time of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. The reason for this was, according to one commentator, that:

Haiti gained its freedom from the U.S. at the price of shouldering an enormous debt which will enslave her for many decades. (And) Liberia was practically mortgaged to the Firestone Rubber Company after being threatened with absorption by both France and Great Britain (in turn).

Ethiopia had thus become the last bastion of hope and inspiration for black peoples. She was romanticised. This proud and beautiful queen of Africa represented the only spark of glory and independence on the vast continent, an island in a desert, a spiritual Zion. The future of all black peoples therefore appeared to be mirrored in the fate of Ethiopia. As the Gold Coast Independent said:

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1. Gold Coast Spectator, November 23, 1935. See article by CERI. For comments on the Firestone Lease, see the editorials in the issues of the Gold Coast Leader for November 14 and December 5, 1925, and September 11, 1926.

The final curtain has been rung down over a dismal and disgraceful episode in world history. The Kingdom of Ethiopia, the lone bulwark of African sovereignty that has withstood the storms and blasts of a thousand years, is no more. The ancient Kingdom that had its roots deep in antiquity and existed when the world was young has crumbled under the heel of a conquerer. The rocky domain against which the Ceasars of Ancient Rome's palmiest and mightiest days shattered their legions in vain, is now over-run by the effeminate soldiery of a puny imitation Ceasar.<sup>1</sup>

It blamed the League of Nations, which it said had betrayed, sold and then formally handed over "the Kingdom of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah" to Italy. In the same issue, in an even more passionate but prophetic-toned article entitled "The Abomination of Desolation", the paper summed up the feelings of the nationalists in words which can be paraphrased only at the expense of their intensity of feeling. It said:

The rape of Abyssinia will be revenged; a restitution will be made. Other nations of Europe will be raped; restitution will be made by the laying waste of her cities even as the villages and towns of Abyssinia have been laid waste; restitution will be made by her population being made to suffer the agonies of poison gas even as poor and defenceless Abyssinians suffered; restitution will be made by many of her people being made to go through life blinded, maimed and otherwise mutilated even as Abyssinia's people have been consigned to; restitution will be made by the shedding of copious streams of blood to water the plains of Europe even as that which dyed red the countryside of Ethiopia. <sup>1</sup>These things must come to pass to prove to an erring and perfidious world that truth and justice shall not

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1. Gold Coast Independent, July 11, 1936

be overthrown with impunity. These things must come to pass so that the counter-poise and the equilibrium governing world conscience might be upheld and sustained. These things must come to pass so that outraged world conscience might be appeased; these things must come to pass even as the forces of good preponderate over the forces of evil; in short, these things must come to pass if the Scriptural prophecy of the millenium, when the wolf shall march with the young goat and the lion with the lamb under the leadership of a little child, must be fulfilled.

Barely three years after these words had been written, the Second World War, which ravaged Europe for some five years, broke out.

Viewed against the background sketched above, it was inevitable that the fall of Ethiopia should have had a great impact on Gold Coast nationalists. The Gold Coast Leader had said in 1924 that "When the African everywhere realises that the glory of Abyssinia is his glory ... it will be half the battle [won] in racial emancipation."<sup>1</sup> For the nationalists the injustice involved in the 'betrayal' of Ethiopia far surpassed that involved in Germany's display of force in World War I. The resulting bitter resentment against Italy, the common enemy, and the League of Nations, the 'betrayers' of Ethiopia, tended to invest Gold Coast nationalism with a racialist colouring; for the colonial struggle came to be viewed in terms of a struggle between the white and black races. This contributed a great deal to the appeal of what Wallace Johnson and his Youth League stood for. Another important

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1. Gold Coast Leader, July 19, 1924.

offshoot of the conflict was widespread press criticism against the role of Christianity in Africa. In fact, it was the Italo-Ethiopian conflict and the part which the League of Nations, whose members were Christian nations, had played in it that provoked the statement in the Gold Coast Spectator on November 23, 1935, that Christianity was one of the instruments of suppression employed in Africa.<sup>1</sup> It was said too that Italy, the home of Catholicism, was now also the home of the new barbarism against Africa, and ancient Christian Africa at that.

In concluding our overview, we must emphasize that apart from the nationalist movements (to be discussed later in chapter five), two incidents, although ad hoc and transitional, even episodic, contributed towards cohesion in Gold Coast society. First, the unpopular bills of Governor Sir Shenton Thomas united the chiefs, scholars and people in righteous anger against the government; and secondly, the cocoa pool controversy of 1937 came to repeat and reinforce this sense of common self-protection. In that year the European companies connected with the purchase of cocoa pooled together in a common effort to control the cocoa market. The nationalists viewed the pool as calculated to cheat the Gold Coast farmer by giving him a uniform low price for his product. The controversy became the clarion call to unity among all sections of the Colony, Ashanti and Togoland and evoked nationalist sentiment in

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1. See page 45.

the three territories on a scale unprecedented in their political history.

It has been said that the cocoa pool affair offered a fortuitous opportunity for the formation of a political party, but that the nationalists threw it away.<sup>1</sup> This view leaves unclarified a very important issue. Would such a political party have embraced all the three territories? If yes, there was an obvious impediment. The three territories were separate, which means that there did not exist among them at that time the feeling of one common political destiny; yet such feeling would seem to be basic and fundamental to the formation of such a political party. If no, it may be pointed out that although the controversy did not give rise to a new political movement, it might however have contributed in no small way to Dr. Danquah's success in reviving the dead Gold Coast Youth Conference in 1938.

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1. See e.g. John Hatch, A History of Post-War Africa, London, Andre Deutsch, 1965, p.43.

CHAPTER 5

THE YOUTH MOVEMENTS

(a) The West African Youth League (Gold Coast Branch)

Isaac Theophilus Akkuna Wallace Johnson, the founder of the West African Youth League and of its Gold Coast branch, was a man of many parts.<sup>1</sup> Before coming to the Gold Coast he had been a school teacher, a solicitor, a freelance journalist, and a trade unionist. A Sierra Leonean from Wilberforce Village, Freetown, he preferred to describe himself as an 'international African' with ancestors from Abeokuta in Nigeria, the West Indies and Nova Scotia. He had been at school in England, returning home at the age of 15. He had also attended the Peoples' University in Moscow, where he had Jomo Kenyatta for his room-mate.

Ejected from Nigeria for his political, journalistic and trade union activities, this controversial man landed comfortably in the Gold Coast towards the end of 1933, in the heat of nationalist agitation against Sir Shenton Thomas's legislation. On Monday, December 4, 1933, Wallace Johnson explained the purpose of his coming to the Gold Coast to a meeting of the Accra Clubs Union, an amalgamation of various clubs in Accra. He announced himself to be the representative of the Negro Welfare Association (which had its headquarters in London), and his immediate aim to be to solicit financial and

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1. Unless otherwise specified, my information about Wallace Johnson's life is taken from Wallace Johnson, I.T.A., "Inspector General of Police versus Isaac T.A. Wallace Johnson", a pamphlet available in the Library of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, and classified as Dp.

moral support for the Negro youths involved in the Scottsboro case.<sup>1</sup>

He also took the opportunity to talk about the injustice and oppression which black peoples in general suffered in America, Europe and Africa, and how dangerous certain types of Africans were to the struggle against colonial domination. He ended his speech with an appeal to the youth of the country to come together to emancipate their motherland. At that meeting he seemed to have created the impression that he hated the white race in general, but the British colonial government in particular; and bitter exchanges passed between him and J.E. Kitson Mills, a member of the Accra Municipal Council, who attacked his anti-British sentiments.

For quite some time Wallace Johnson succeeded in convincing the people of the Colony about how worthy his Scottsboro cause was. For the time being even Dr. Danquah seemed to have been convinced by his propaganda.<sup>2</sup> Even more than Azikiwe, a man of Wallace Johnson's make and background could hardly be expected to keep out of the agitation

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1. 7 Negro boys from Scottsboro, Alabama (U.S.A.) were accused of attempted rape on some white girls and sent to court. According to the African Morning Post of April 27, 1931, all the boys were under age and none could read or write; there were no blacks on the jury, nor were any allowed in the courtroom at all. The trial began on April 6, 1931, and the defence counsel was a Stephen Roddy, a white attorney from Chattanooga, Alabama, provided by the state. If convicted the penalty could be death.
  2. On February 6, 1934, the two men addressed a meeting at the Palladium in Accra in aid of the appeal for the Scottsboro boys.

over the 1934 bills in particular and politics in general. In fact it did not take him long to arrive right at the centre of both. Soon after his arrival in 1933 he founded the Gold Coast Motor Car Union. In 1934 we find him helping to draft the ARPS's petition against the Sedition Bill, and collaborating with the Gold Coast Mine Workers' Union. In 1936 he founded the West African Youth League with the help of one Bankole Renner. The League immediately threw its support behind the moribund ARPS, and behind the Mambii Party, a non-elitist party struggling against the elitist Rate-payers' Association for political power in Accra.<sup>1</sup> When Kojo Thompson of the Mambii Party won against Dr. Nanka Bruce of the Ratepayers' Association in the 1935 Legislative Council elections it was interpreted as victory for the youth and the masses.

The League also criticised and protested against the Sedition Bill, the Waterworks Bill, and the Asamankese Ordinance which sought to control the property and revenue of the Asamankese stool. Under the banner of the Youth League Wallace Johnson also formed an Ethiopian Defence Committee in 1935, and rallied the ex-servicemen and the old and the young of Accra against the invasion of Ethiopia.

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1. A third party was the Gold Coast Muslim Association, although the author has not been able to ascertain its attitude to the League. However, it would appear that by 1939 it was a force to reckon with in Accra politics; for in that year the Association seems to have been strong enough to have forced the other two rival parties to collaborate before they could win the elections of that year to the Town Council and the Legislative Council. In fact the three parties reached an agreement whereby they jointly sponsored four candidates to the Accra Town Council and one to the Legislative Council.

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He wrote in bitter criticism of government policy on the 1934 cocoa crisis engendered by the low market-price pool movement. In an article entitled "Isn't Cocoa a Necessity" he said that the answer to the demands of the Gold Coast peoples was not their "sensible and restrained attitude" on which the governor had congratulated them. The only answer was an urgent, almost overdue, need to "organise determinedly to fight for their liberation from the bonds of ... economic slavery".<sup>1</sup>

Wallace Johnson tried as much as possible to define clearly the nature and role of the Youth League. He wrote:

It is not a Conservative body, neither is it aristocratic nor autocratic. It is also neither clanistic nor chauvenistic and does not encourage the spirit of partisanship or superiority complexism.

Its aim, he said, was to bring the masses together: "the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned". For that reason the League would refer to all its members simply as Comrades, instead of "Mr., Mrs., Miss and the rest of those distinctive appellations common among the aristocrats of the old era".<sup>2</sup> According to him the League was

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1. Gold Coast Spectator, January 13, 1934.

2. Wallace Johnson, op. cit., p.8.

organised to champion the cause of the people and particularly the less favoured and down-trodden, and to defend the natural and constitutional rights of the inhabitants of West Africa.<sup>1</sup>

The members of the League pledged thus :

We the Youth of the GC and WA in general, in order to form a more united body to watch carefully and sincerely, affairs political, educational, economical [sic] and otherwise that may be to the interest of the masses of the motherland, to sacrifice, if need be, all we have for the progress and liberty of our country and race, and to ensure happiness to ourselves and our posterity, do hereby form ourselves into the body designated as the Youth League.<sup>2</sup>

He said he had found it necessary to form the League because the Old School<sup>3</sup> could not be entrusted with the effective handling, reconstruction and re-organisation of West African society.

For this work

needs new ideas and new visions; new determination and will; and above all an unfathomable degree of patience, and these qualities are far more the virtue of the Youth - the Youth in age and the Youth in mind - than of the old and decrepit.

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1. Wallace Johnson, op. cit., p.7.

2. Ibid.

3. He meant by this not only the old in age but everybody who did not share his political philosophy.

Wallace Johnson claimed that the League had contacts outside British West Africa with French and Portuguese Guinea. But from the outset it was decided to concentrate on British West Africa.

The youth rallied to join the League and before 1936 was out branches had sprouted all over the Colony.<sup>1</sup> Overtures were made to such principal towns of Ashanti as Kumasi and Bekwai, but the League did not make as great an impact there as it did in the Colony. At any rate here was a movement which sought to offer a new dimension to Gold Coast nationalism. It was avowedly political, but unlike any movement before it, it would go it all out and all alone without the chiefs. Again, here was a movement which completely declared for the masses, the "toiling masses", the "working class", as they were usually described by, say, the Gold Coast Observer.

Sometime in December 1933, Wallace Johnson was reported to have formed the Gold Coast Workers' Protection Association. This association, which would operate not only in the Colony and Ashanti but also in the Northern Territories and British Togoland, had the following aims: (1) Unity and co-operation among members of the working class - clerks, artisans, mechanics, engineers, skilled and unskilled labourers, journalists, reporters; (2) the protection of the working class; (3) the protection and development of native industries; (4) providing means of education and support for the working class, and free education for the masses; (5) providing old age pensions and insurance against accidents. →

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1. See footnote, page 69.

Wallace-Johnson advocated press and platform propoganda to bring the masses together under one common understanding. This was necessary, he said, if the League was not just going to lead the masses but to take them into partnership in the struggle against colonialism. This open declaration for the youth and the masses formed the support base of the League. Its insistence on new ideas and new visions constituted a tremendous appeal to these groups of people, especially the youth, as a rising third generation of intellectuals who had hitherto been denied any effective voice at the centre of nationalist activity.

Like any innovator in any facet of human life, let alone a political and an ideological innovator, Wallace Johnson was as much praised and admired as he was condemned and hated. It took some time for even Azikiwe, also a new factor in Gold Coast nationalism, to see eye to eye with him. In 1935, in obvious criticism of Wallace Johnson, Azikwe wrote:

Most of the reports of the so-called "Scottsbore Case" have been written from a sentimental point of view. Some of these articles are pure propoganda engineered by certain organisations with an ulterior motive.

But before the year ended Azikiwe and Wallace Johnson had entered into ideological partnership. They had come to realise the community of interest between them. Both of them shared a common broad perspective of the colonial process and of its effects and needed remedies.

The base of their support and popularity was the same, namely, the youth, the Mambii Party and what was left of the ARPS. They were condemned together as strangers and carriers of harmful influences: by the government, the chiefs, a section of the Accra intelligentsia and a section of the Accra press. Moreover, Wallace Johnson had gathered such a following that it would have been very unwise for Azikiwe to have alienated him.

In a more profound way than the NCBWA, the success of the League might have spelt doom for the chiefs. Nana Ofori Atta was quick to see this, and he lost no time in condemning it as a notorious movement which corrupted the young by teaching them to disrespect the authority of the old. As a move to check the influence of Wallace Johnson and Azikiwe he got the Eastern Provincial Council to pass a resolution in 1936 demanding the deportation of strangers.

The most formidable opponent of the League, however, seems to have been a section of the Accra press, headed by the Gold Coast Independent, which was owned and controlled by Dr. F.V. Nanka-Bruce of the old leadership. Through its columns the League was misinterpreted and misrepresented, and every effort was made to bring Wallace Johnson into disrepute. It called him "meddlesome", "a rabid confusionist", "an upstart", "a man of wild views", "an anarchist", "an aimless firebrand", etc., and asked him either to shut up or get out of the country.<sup>1</sup> The paper accused him of introducing "Bolshevik or reactionary policy" into Gold Coast politics.

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1. See Gold Coast Independent, September 29, 1934.

It intimated that he was concerned to establish a 'Soviet Kingdom' and advised him to go back to his homeland to do so: "After he shall have succeeded in establishing a Soviet Kingdom in the land of his ancestors, he can then attempt to make proselytes of us."<sup>1</sup> Ironically, the paper had said in 1932, before Wallace Johnson arrived in the country, that "If the world should prosper, then the capitalist and his system must go away for good. What Russia is doing is the only way by which we can get over our difficulties."<sup>2</sup>

By the end of 1935 the government and the local political echelons had firmly decided that Wallace Johnson was a menace to the political stability of the country, a persona non grata who ought to be ejected from the country at the earliest opportunity. That opportunity offered itself by mid-1936. In June of that year, Wallace Johnson and Azikiwe were charged with publishing a seditious article entitled "Has the African a God" in the African Morning Post of May 5, 1936. The article had been no more than a strongly-worded criticism of colonial rule in Africa, but in those days sedition meant no more, either, than criticism which was unpalatable to the government of the colony. Wallace Johnson and Azikiwe were sent to court and were convicted, but they appealed against it. Azikiwe won his appeal by pleading an alibi, but Wallace Johnson lost and was deported to Sierra Leone, where he continued his activities.

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1. Ibid.

2. Gold Coast Independent, November 19, 1932.

Wallace Johnson was no more, but his message to the youth had got through. A correspondent of the Gold Coast Spectator, Kwabla Tibo, calling on the youth to rise, shine and save "mother Africa," denounced the leaders of the day as "toadies" and "worse than the imperialists", for they were "the builders of the gallows on which this and the generations unborn will be hanged".<sup>1</sup> Another correspondent of the same paper called for the adoption of Russian methods of improving Gold Coast conditions and recommended the setting up of a State Planning Commission on the lines of the Russian "Gosplan".

Evidently, Wallace Johnson had made a deep and lasting impression, especially upon the young. He always aimed his articles, and his public speeches to social and literary clubs, at exposing the 'tricks' of 'colonial imperialism'. He stressed the need for the colonies to control their own finances. He kept telling the Gold Coast peoples that they were ripe for 'Self-Government now'. He openly recommended socialism to colonial subjects as the only means of socio-economic organisation whereby colonial subjects could be redeemed from the bonds of economic slavery. Thus for the first time in the history of the Gold Coast nationalist movement, a concrete attempt had been made to give it a mass base, and to interest the people in matters of importance to black peoples as a whole.

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1. Gold Coast Spectator, June 9, 1935.

Perhaps the best testimony of the influence of Wallace Johnson was given by the Spectator Daily when in 1939, some two years after his deportation, it said: "The Youth Conference with all the beautiful claims that have been made for it cannot supplant the League, and it will be better for the two movements to come together."<sup>1</sup> Again, when a correspondent of the Gold Coast Observer said in 1942 that "Old men may dream dreams, but it is the youth who see visions and create the great morrows of national life"<sup>2</sup>, he was evoking the spirit of the days of the League. The themes and ideals which Wallace Johnson and the League stood for have periodically come to be re-enacted as the main themes of contention among the nationalists ever since. It was Wallace Johnson who consolidated the foundations of what has been called "radical nationalism", which found its full expression in the Convention People's Party.<sup>3</sup>

(b) THE GOLD COAST YOUTH CONFERENCE

The origins of the Gold Coast Youth Conference go back a few years earlier than the League. It was formed in 1930 and it held its first assembly at Achimota College from April 17 to April 21 of that year. Membership was through clubs and societies only,

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1. Spectator Daily, January 11, 1939.
  2. Gold Coast Observer, October 2, 1942, article by M.F. Dei-Anang.
  3. See Chapter 7.

and some thirty of these registered as members. The first General Chairman of the Conference was John Buckman, of Accra, a well-known surveyor, cartographer and illuminator trained in Ceylon.

As we have already seen, by 1930 the NCBWA was dead, the ARPS was but a mere shadow of its former self, the Provincial Council system had driven a wedge between the chiefs and the intellectuals, and in the ensuing conflict the chiefs had been driven into alliance with the government. This state of affairs was unfortunate for Gold Coast nationalism, and the Conference sought to correct the situation. Thus its immediate aim was to

reintegrate the integrity of the Chiefs with their people, to reinstate them in the affection of their kinsmen, pull them away from the unholy alliance, and make them and the people realize that the salvation of the Gold Coast lay in the Chiefs using the intelligentsia and the intelligentsia using the Chiefs.

In addition to this immediate aim of rapprochement between the intelligentsia and the chiefs, the Youth Conference also aimed

to foster in the Gold Coast Youth the essentials of the development and progress of the country by bringing all together in a round table conference to discuss and exchange views on such matters affecting the vital interests of the country [as are] calculated to provide<sup>2</sup> and ensure development and progress on healthy lines.

The management of the Youth Conference was vested in two bodies, the Continuation Committee and the General Council - the executive and the legislature respectively; after 1938 the General Council met annually.

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1. Gold Coast Observer, April 21, 1944.

2. Gold Coast Leader, March 29, 1930.

From the very beginning the Youth Conference was conceived to be a wide umbrella holding beneath it a variety of political views. Yet this movement, which wanted to bring chiefs and peoples together, excluded chiefs from membership. The reason might have been that irrespective of age a chief by definition could not be a youth and was always an elder. This reason is made very plausible by the fact that at any one time most of its patrons were chiefs: in fact in 1939 all the twelve patrons were chiefs. This should not, however, imply that the Youth Conference adhered to any strict definition of youth. Indeed, in accord with the popular usage of the term during the early nationalist period, 'youth' has to be defined in conceptual or functional terms.<sup>1</sup> This means that so far as the Youth Conference was concerned, anybody counted for a youth who accepted its basic aim of rapprochement between the chiefs and the people.

The Youth Conference began in 1930 with a big bang. Its assembly was well attended and hope and optimism were expressed for its aims and ideals. However, no sooner had the assembly ended than the movement began to slip into indolence. Dr. Danquah attributed this to the lack of "adequate machinery for spreading the policy for which it stood", and said he had established his paper, the Times of West Africa, basically to remedy this serious deficiency.<sup>2</sup> →

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1. The Youth League might have been an exception.

2. See H.K. Akyeampong (compiler), op. cit., p.66.

Dr. Danquah's paper did not, however, save the movement, and it was not until 1938 that a second assembly of the Conference was held. Other reasons need therefore be suggested. First, the fate of the Congress and the ARPS might have been too fresh in the people's minds for them to be enthusiastic about a new but similar movement. Secondly, the heterogeneity of political views which the Conference aimed to contain was a point of weakness which made effective organisation difficult. This basic flaw was reinforced by a third factor, namely, that the leadership of the Youth Conference was not as dedicated in 1930 as it became after 1938.

In that year, under the leadership of Danquah, the Gold Coast Youth Conference was revived, after seven years of inactivity; its second assembly was held at Mfantshipim School, Cape Coast, from April 14 to 18, 1938. Apart from being more efficiently organised there was in the revival neither a departure from the basic ideals of 1930, nor (were) important structural changes evident in the body itself. The Conference still professed commitment to progress and development but in very vague terms. According to the Gold Coast Times the assembly was well attended by "youth of different stations in life and of diverse shades of opinion"; there was no element of self-assertion or self-advertisement. The atmosphere was one of a sub-mergence of self in the interest of the nation, and its great message was: "Unity is our Strength".<sup>1</sup> G.E. Moore was the General Chairman of the Conference and Danquah the General Secretary.

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1. Gold Coast Times, April 30, 1938.

The deliberations were directed towards means of improving education, health, trade and commerce, marriage, inheritance, funeral customs, and the institution of a National Fund. The ARPS held fruitless discussions with the Conference on the possibility of using the latter's good offices to get the chiefs back into the Society.

After the meeting Dr. Danquah went on lecture tours to explain the Youth Conference and its activities to the people. From 1938 he devoted so much attention, energy and time to the work of the movement that its assemblies became much locked-forward-to annual affairs, only to be disrupted by the war. In the 1940s the Youth Conference became identified with its "undefatigable General Secretary".<sup>1</sup>

In March, 1939, Dr. Danquah sought permission to broadcast an appeal talk over the radio in connection with a proposed assembly at Kumasi. He also intended to use the opportunity to speak about a memorandum which the Joint Provincial Council of Chiefs had asked the Conference to prepare on the social, educational, political and economic needs of the country to be attended to after the war. A subordinate radio officer passing Danquah's speech on to the Director of Broadcasting for his decision, attached a scurrilous comment, saying:

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1. Dr. Danquah was so described at the 1938 assembly, which had been made possible through his efforts.

Personally, I am opposed to permission being granted. If the Conference had a person more stable than Danquah, I might be disposed to think better of the movement. To talk about what is going to happen after the war at this stage is ridiculous.

The Director differed with his subordinate officer and permitted the talk, on the grounds that "this Youth Conference, not to be confused with Wallace Johnson's Youth League, is so far as I am aware a harmless institution."<sup>2</sup> In his broadcast talk, entitled "Getting Ready for Kumasi", Danquah extended an invitation to "Youth of all classes, budding youth, thinking youth, active youth, youth that cares and youth that has experience of what great tribulations can bring, what happiness of years used to be."<sup>3</sup> He said he was worried over the conditions of employment in the country and the huge amount of money which the country spent annually on imported food, which estimated at £1,000,000 yearly, and he appealed for co-operation in the devising of a solution.

By 1943 the Youth Conference had achieved great success in bringing chiefs and people together. A memorandum on desired

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1. C.S.O. File No. 0153/S.4, memorandum 2. The C.S.O. Files are available at the Ghana National Archives, Accra.
  2. C.S.O. File No. 222/35 Vol. II, exhibit 271. It is not unlikely that what was uppermost in the subordinate officer's mind was not so much Wallace Johnson's Youth League as Dr. Danquah's conflict with Nana Ofori Atta.
  3. Op. cit., 281a.

changes in the country's constitution presented in that year to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Col. Oliver Stanley, was signed by the intelligentsia and the chiefs, including the Asantehene and the Asante Confederacy Council. The Conference could now devote its attention to a more positive programme of 'development and progress', and the 1943 assembly was dedicated to such an attempt. It was devoted to the theme "Self-help and Expansion". In his report<sup>1</sup> on that assembly, Dr. Danquah urged the country to expand its production "from the present farming economy to its full industrial capacity". He called the new programme of the Conference a "new gospel of self-help and expansion", and said that the Conference would carry it to the people in their own villages. He asked the co-operation of the chiefs, the press, the government and the people to ensure that the new programme was a success.

Other speakers at the assembly chose topics related to the new theme. E. Ajayi, a Yoruba Nigerian then employed by the Accra Town Council as a civil engineer, emphasized the need for "increasing the social services for the poorer among the community", as well as mass education. J. Quist-Therson, a private lawyer, stressed "the necessity for self-government if our economic rehabilitation was to be early and complete and under our control". Dr. M. Fortes, an Englishman, urged the Conference, on the other hand, to go step by step before ultimately reaching the goal of self-government.

A suggestion to change the character of the Conference from educative and propagandist to political was defeated "by an overwhelming majority"; for it was felt that it would not help the "Conference to limit its activities to any sectarian political field, and that the present seemingly limited aim gave a greater opportunity to contact all classes of political and other bodies and to exert a useful influence in all directions."<sup>1</sup> The Conference however decided to appoint a full-time propaganda officer, on a salary of £72 a year, to organise chapters in all centres. Dr. I.B. Asafu-Adjaye, one of the delegates from the Asante Kotoko Society, Kumasi, was appointed President of the Conference, and Miss Mercy Quartey-Papafio, of Accra, Vice-President.

After the assembly Dr. Danquah wrote to the Acting Colonial Secretary for permission to broadcast its results to the nation. Refusing permission, the Acting Colonial Secretary called Dr. Danquah's report "a series of pseudo-philosophy and ectasies". The speech, he said, contained at best a pious hope, and he particularly abhorred phrases like "republic of youth", "the bleeding heart of insurgent youth", and "expansion of our competence to strike a blow", which abounded in the report. The Secretary harboured great doubts indeed: "What the semi-literate and even moderately literate will make of them is a matter for speculation", he wrote. He concluded by saying that the radio was being used for the war effort and there was no time for "this sort of talk".<sup>2</sup>

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1. Ibid.

2. Op. cit., exhibit 24.

The Youth Conference was virtually dead by the time the war ended. Colonial officials used the war effort as an excuse for not giving the movement the attention, freedom and scope it deserved. Notwithstanding this, the Conference can be said to have achieved considerable success. The most positive of these was that the chiefs and intellectuals were once more prepared to think together on national issues, as evidenced by the 1943 memorandum. There were other, less important 'successes'. The attempt by the Conference to bring the Colony and Ashanti together in a National Central Council, although it fell through, was commendable in itself. In the 1940s it began to encourage the idea of trade unions. With the approach of the 1944 Centenary celebration of the Bond of 1844 the Conference did the greater part of the organisational work, and a series of lectures and talks given by Dr. Danquah and some members of the Conference, awakened national consciousness for the celebration.

However, although there is no doubt that the Youth Conference would have achieved much more than it did if the 1940s had been a normal peace-time, it must be said that certain deficiencies inherent in the nature of the Conference would hardly have enabled it to effect any profound changes in Gold Coast society. Inchoate in membership, the Conference had at best only a common aim without a common ideology. In consequence, its ideas and programmes had to be formulated in very vague terms. Moreover, a movement whose

declared duty it was "to guide the destiny of the country" had qualms and reservations about openly declaring that it was political; nor had it clearly defined the hows of the situation. Moreover, it did not make any positive attempts at involving the masses in its programmes and activities, so that its support-base remained insulted against them. Thus, in spite of frequent criticisms from the nationalist press urging it to be more practical, the Youth Conference remained in effect only a talking shop, an advanced discussion group operating on a national scale.

## CHAPTER 6

### SOCIAL UPHEAVAL IN POST-SECOND WORLD WAR GOLD COAST SOCIETY

It is now almost a truism that the social upheaval brought about by World War II was completely disruptive of the existing social order in the colonies. But, like all truisms, this one has, more often than not, been accepted as a generalisation of universal validity without being substantiated in the experiences of the individual colonies. In this chapter we shall examine in some detail two aspects of the social upheaval, namely (1) socio-economic hardships and (2) the ex-soldier, in the particular experience of the Gold Coast, if for no other reason than to validate the generalisation.

#### 1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC HARDSHIPS

The general economic advance which the Gold Coast had begun to experience during Guggisberg's administration had been seriously interrupted by the world slump of the 1930s and the economy had only begun to recover when World War II broke out. For the duration of the war the test of the loyalty of a colony to the "mother" country came to consist in the volume of its contribution to the war effort, measured in men, money and goods. During the war the Gold Coast territories proved loyal, even if, on the part of the people, it was within the framework of a tacit truce between government and people that all would not be the same again after the war.

The first point that we would like to note is that the war effort unleashed new forces. As Britain lost access to her traditional sources of supply for certain commodities with the progress of the war, she turned increasingly to look to her colonies as substitute suppliers for those commodities. In the Gold Coast this led to an intensive exploitation of such commodities as cocoa, palm kernel, timber and rubber. For the colonies, on the other hand, the war meant that Britain would not be able regularly to supply commodities for which they depended upon her. In the Gold Coast this stimulated local industries like shoes, soap, perfume and corn bread. In 1943 the Gold Coast Agricultural and Commercial Society in Accra tried to boost these local industries by advertising their products. However, local industries either quickly died off or remained small scale operations for lack of capital and proper patronage. Cocoa butter factories established at Nsawam in the Colony and Akrokkerri in Ashanti could not last the duration of the war and had to be closed down by mid-1944. Even an established industry like cocoa suffered during the war. A resolution passed by a joint session of the Provincial Councils at Dodowa on September 28, 1943, complained that farmers were neglecting their cocoa because of low market price, which in that year stood at 7s per load of 60 lbs.

Secondly, the war years appear to have coincided with, and accentuated, a drift of people from the rural areas to the big towns. Apart from the attraction of employment opportunities it is not easy to find other reasons for this urban inflow. It cannot be traced

solely to an increase in the number of people coming out of the schools, for although it would be true that a significant proportion comprised the new literates, it would also be true that an equally significant proportion comprised of illiterate people. What seems to have been the case was that, prospects of employment apart, people dissatisfied with rural life for one reason or another preferred to float in the big towns and be lost in the anonymity of the mass of people who were unemployed like oneself, than be left to the constant and familiar gaze of the rural community.

At any rate, the influx occurred; and in the circumstances wide spread unemployment was the inevitable result. A state of unemployment is always sufficiently bad in itself, but there were additional difficulties as a result of the price inflation and high cost of living during and after the war, especially in the big towns. Commodities like kerosene, sugar, beer, butter, cigarettes, tobacco, flour and candles were either not available at all or available only at exorbitant prices. A price control system evolved to check the inflation proved inefficient or was ignored, the police being suspected of acquiescence in or even connivance at the breakdown. Moreover, sales at the big stores which had the goods were now done predominantly through a 'pass book' system. Naturally, the local people charged the foreign-owned firms, which had a virtual monopoly of imported goods, with responsibility for

the hardships. Pressure of widespread discontent, expressed mainly through the press, led to the setting up on December 26, 1942, of the "Commission of Enquiry on Imported Goods" (cynically called by the press the 'Profiteering Commission'), to "investigate the prices and distribution of imported goods". It held its first meeting in Accra on February 15, 1943.

Food shortages also hit the urban areas, although it was believed that food abounded in the rural areas and could not be got at only for lack of transportation. Food sellers in the big towns, like the firms, also defied the prices stipulated by the Controller of Food Supply. The general feeling of the time was summed up pretty well by a writer to the press. When 1943 was barely half-way through this writer lamented the state of affairs thus:

[the] cost of living has increased mercilessly. It is more than 50 per centum over that of 1942. This is due to the increase of population. The farmer's earnings [have] also dropped because he has no transport to carry his products to good markets.<sup>1</sup>

In subsequent years the food situation took a turn for the worse, and by 1944 it had become so bad in Accra that government now proposed to buy and sell foodstuffs at a controlled price as a means of beating down the high cost of living. But the Accra Town Council opposed

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1. African Morning Post, March 2, 1943.

the move: "Why only foodstuffs, why not also foreign goods and other commodities?", it argued, concluding that the proposal was a calculated move to impoverish the local people even more. By 1949 the food situation had become so critical that there seems to have been no opposition to government buying foodstuffs and selling them to needy areas.<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, in the big towns, especially in Accra, the influx of people put pressure on accommodation, and landlords took the advantage arbitrarily to increase rent whenever they felt like it. It was estimated that in Accra rent for a single room rose from between 10 and 30 shillings before the war to between 50 and 60 shillings after the war.<sup>2</sup> A Rent Assessment Committee was created but frequent press attacks on it suggest that it was inefficient and ineffective.

This social condition in which large numbers of people had no jobs, no money and no accommodation, easily bred social ills. One such was prostitution. According to the African Morning Post of April 3, 1943, prostitution was fast becoming a "moral epidemic" in Accra, Sekondi, Kumasi, and other urban areas. On February 13 of that year, a "Voice from Kumasi" had reported in the same paper that false 'registration' of wives was taking place there as a cover for prostitution; and in

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1. See Daily Echo, September 17, 1949.

2. Daily Echo, August 26, 1949.

August the Asante Confederacy "beat gong-gong" throughout Ashanti condemning immorality.<sup>1</sup> In fact prostitution had become so common in the society that when an Anti-Prostitution Law was passed on February 24, 1943 (effective 1st March), it was welcomed by the press and the responsible public. But needless to say the law did not end prostitution. To make matters worse, another feature of the times was an increase in crime. Pick-pocketing and burglary were rife. Imprisonments increased from 2,346 in 1942 to 2,560 in 1943, "Accra contributing almost solely to the increase".<sup>2</sup> The suburbs of Accra, with no police stations, were particularly notorious for the crime wave.

It was to bring this prevalent situation forcibly to the notice of government that the Joint Provincial Councils (JPC) asked its legal panel to draw up a list of improvements which the country needed, to be attended to after the war. The panel's work was publicised in a series of articles in the press in January 1944, under the title "What the Country Needs". Improvements were said to be needed in industry and in trade and commerce, in order to create more jobs for the people. The panel also noted that water and sanitation, and public health generally, were in a bad condition. Hospitals and dispensaries were inadequate, and it was estimated that there were only fifty doctors

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1. African Morning Post, August 7, 1943.
  2. Editorial, African Morning Post, July 17, 1943.

in the country, which worked out at one doctor for some 64,000 people.<sup>1</sup>

Naturally, many solutions for the various disabilities were prescribed by individuals and groups. Some of the prescriptions were too simplistic. "Unemployment? Go Back to the Land", said a headline splashed across the back page of the issue of the African Morning Post for August 10, 1943. On the following day the paper commented editorially that the educated youth would not heed the message because in their education they had not received that orientation whereby "the head and the heart and the HAND will work in harmony." There was truth in this, but also, quite apart from any wrong orientation that the educated might have received, the "go back to the land" cry was bound to be a vain one precisely because it was being addressed to the poor people in the community, to thieves, prostitutes, burglars, and others equally wretched. And it should have been realised that to be a successful farmer one required not only knowledge of farming but also capital to buy implements and to hire labour. So that, in fact, without substantial government help the problem and the prescribed solution constituted a vicious circle.

Fortunately, but expectedly, government's solution was not of the simplistic kind. In 1944, with money provided by the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, government made a concrete effort to improve

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1. See African Morning Post, March 6, 1944, editorial.

the social situation by giving priority to social services in the budget for the year. Expenditure on health and education was increased; training of teachers was stepped up and new hospitals and schools were proposed. A housing scheme was also proposed for the big towns but it was not begun until 1945. An Economic Adviser was appointed, and a Department of Social Services created. Agriculture received considerable attention (though basically at the experimental stage), and the scientific battle against the cocoa disease called the swollen shoot, which had by then already destroyed numerous trees, was begun in earnest.

The trend towards development continued, with a few individuals taking the initiative to supplement government effort. In March 1945, Lady Burns, wife of the Governor of the Gold Coast, Sir Alan Burns, inaugurated a social centre for girls, set up in Accra under the supervision of a Mrs. Joyce Heselton to "promote the spiritual, mental and physical welfare of girls recently out of school", through talks, discussion and handicraft. The following June the Accra Youth Centre for boys was inaugurated under the supervision of Mr. Andrew Atkinson of the Social Services Department. It was equipped with a library, a reading room, a meeting hall, a games room and a canteen. One such centre had recently been opened at Sekondi. Again in the same year a government ordinance ensured the setting up of industrial training schools and Remand Homes for juvenile criminals.

Commendable though these efforts were, however, they were not such as would have brought even minimum relief to as many people as possible. For they were not carried out on a large scale, nor did they touch the most immediate areas of economic discontent: inflation, unemployment and the cocoa problem. Consequently, after the war economic discontent was particularly rife, with these themes easily coming to the fore.

The cocoa problem was particularly sour. Before the war about thirteen European firms had been engaged in the purchase and shipping of cocoa. This practice was stopped during the war and the marketing and shipping of cocoa became a government monopoly. While this may have been permissible as a war-time measure, the farmers were however determined to return to the pre-war state of affairs as soon as the war had ended. Government on the other hand was determined to maintain the monopoly. To this end new government measures operative after 1945 stipulated that all West African cocoa would be bought at a fixed price by bodies created and empowered by government to prescribe the price to be paid to the producers, and to buy and ship the product. A similar control was also put on timber and on the importation of certain commodities. A delegation of farmers' representatives went to London in 1945 to protest against the scheme. While the delegation was still there, the farmers at home threatened a hold-up of their produce if it should become necessary to do so, as a last measure against government monopoly. They demanded 25s per load as against

the control price of 12s. 6d. The delegation failed, but after considerable lobbying at home government increased the price to 15s, which was grudgingly accepted by the farmers.

Other grievances obtained. The editorial of the Ashanti Pioneer of February 23, 1945, complained that dismissals of junior officers from the Civil Service <sup>were</sup> ~~was~~ becoming common on the slightest excuse. Again, instead of easing up, the inflationary situation had rather heightened after the war. The paper complained that while the average daily wage of the Gold Coast worker was 1s. 6d., the price of a tin of corned beef, for instance, was 1s. 9d.,

So that each time the African Labourer buys a tin of corned beef he is indebted by 3d. That is simple economics .... The Message of the Corned Beef is simple. It tells the African that he has tolerated too long a situation that brooded of no continued toleration.

In 1947 the Accra press submitted a memo to government urging a rationing of such commodities as sugar, milk, butter, flour, kerosene, candles and cotton prints.

It was the view of the press and of the nationalists that the inflationary situation had been brought about mainly by the Association of West African Merchants, popularly known as AWAM, a big consortium of European firms operating in West Africa. Thus when a Department of Co-operation was established by government in 1945 to help small African businesses to come together, it was lauded by press and people

as the antidote to AWAM, whose influence was said to operate from a base in the Home Office in London, with the result that it was "too much in the way of the [African] peoples' advance and welfare".<sup>1</sup> But the Department existed more on paper than in reality. Accordingly, the feeling became widespread that until AWAM, with its 'curiously ridiculous' principle of business, was disbanded, the economic conditions of the people would never improve. The Pioneer stated AWAM's principle of business as one whereby "the same people buy our products and fix the price, ... sell us their imported products and ... fix the price".<sup>2</sup>

African feeling against AWAM was so intense that when Kojo Thompson, the Legislative Council member for Accra, was prosecuted in 1945 on charges of demanding £25,000 from a prominent AWAM official so that he might not criticise the Association, the version of the story told by the Accra press was that the story had been trumped up to silence African criticism of a pool of European firms aimed at monopolising business and ousting small African merchants from it. Dr. Danquah added his voice to the denunciation of AWAM in the Legislative Council in 1947. He said that the greatest evil perpetrated by the Association was its monopoly of import licence, and called its policy a "dog-in-the-manger policy".

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1. Ashanti Pioneer, June 5, 1944.
  2. Ashanti Pioneer, February 6, 1946.

For a long time during the controversy over AWAM, the attitudes to it of the chiefs and the government were unknown. Then in February 1947 the Spectator Daily openly criticised the chiefs, alleging that they supported AWAM. Apparently, the paper had misinterpreted a statement attributed to Nana Amanfi III, then President of the JPC. What the Nana had actually said was that upon inquiry government had informed the chiefs that AWAM was an independent association formed in London and that therefore the Gold Coast Government could not dissolve it.<sup>1</sup> However, this explanation did not clear the suspicion that the chiefs were not opposed to the combine. In the following month the Spectator Daily also attacked the relationship between the government and the Association. On March 15, it published two letters which had been exchanged between the United Kingdom Chairman of AWAM, C.P. Zochonis, and R. Barrow, the Accra Chairman. In his letter, Barrow claimed "excellent relations" and "fullest confidence" between the government and the Association. Thereafter, the question frequently asked in the press was how to find ways and means to end the "AWAM menace" as early as possible.

Of course prescriptions were not wanting. For example, on March 26, in an editorial entitled "Purgative for AWAM" the Ashanti Pioneer said that the only remedy against the Association's

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1. See Ashanti Pioneer, February 17, 1947, editorial.

"closed-shop tactics", whereby goods were hoarded in wholesales and doled out to the people in small quantities, was a country-wide boycott, for only that could lead to a reduction in prices. Two days later the paper recommended party politics as the answer to the general "political and economic indolence of the masses", adding, in apparent criticism of the chiefs:

We have had enough of the Leadership by Elders and up-holders of Custom, which at best, has yielded this harvest of ignorant masses, irresponsible citizens and cowardly workers who are afraid to "ask" for their legitimate rights.

It was in these confused social conditions that for the first time in the Gold Coast a congress of the various trade unions was held at Sekondi on September 8, 1945. It was hailed by the press as epoch-making, because it was looked upon as a "common cause against ... poverty, low wages, bad living, bad working conditions, labour exploitation and employment discrimination." The union, it was believed, would end the "riot of labour prostitution" by opposing "the monopolist employers and capitalist inspired agents".<sup>1</sup> Under the ideological guidance of the press the young trade union quickly developed the strategy of the strike. The Ashanti Pioneer was one of the papers which were consistent in their advocacy of this weapon. It preached that strikes were a necessary evil within the framework of capitalism, because they served as safety valves to regulate excessive exploitation.<sup>2</sup>

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1. African Morning Post, September 8, 1945, editorial.

2. See, e.g., the editorial of the issue of the paper for July 7, 1945.

It also depicted strikes as a world-wide phenomenon of the post-Second World War era, in which the Gold Coast had to take part in order to get labour grievances redressed.

The news of strikes and threats of strikes all over the world, which reach us daily through the B.B.C. and the press, should speak the same language to us - we here should also have to rely on our strength and readiness to fight for freedom.

By mid-1947 the paper had come to the conclusion that "only strikes will make capital in the Gold Coast respect labour".

That the Gold Coast workers widely adopted this philosophy of the strike is evidenced by even a random listing of some of the strikes which occurred between 1945 and 1950. In 1945 the Konongo Mine Workers' Union went on strike. In 1946 there occurred strikes by the Gold Coast Mines' Certificated Winding Engine Drivers' Union and the Takeradi Oil Storage (Shell) Company Workers' Union. In 1947 the Tarkwa U.A.C. Pass Book Holders, the Accra Brewery Workers' Union, the African Mines Employees' Union, the employees of Messrs. Thompson, Moir and Galloway at Dunkwa, and the Railwaymen of the Kumasi Railway Department went on strike. In January 1948 occurred Nii Bonne's massive country-wide boycott of European goods.<sup>2</sup> In July, 1949,

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1. Ashanti Pioneer, January 18, 1946.

2. The nature and effects of this strike and the riots initiated by the ex-servicemen in 1948, which followed closely on the heels of the strikes, have been widely discussed. See, e.g., Dennis Austin, Politics in Ghana: 1946-1960, Oxford University Press, 1964, chapter 2. These events do not receive detailed treatment anywhere in this work; however, they receive more than a mention in passing on page 137.

a strike of Railwaymen at Sekondi affected the Takoradi harbour, the Sekondi railway station and rail traffic to Kumasi. Beginning October 3, about 1,000 employees of Messrs Bartholomew Stores in Accra, Kumasi and Sekondi-Takoradi went on a one-month strike. On November 24 there was a strike by some of the workers of the Printing Department in Accra.

But the most far-reaching strike of that year was that of the employees of the Meteorological Department, which began on October 13. When 81 of the strikers were later dismissed the Trades Union Congress threatened a country-wide strike in sympathy. All efforts at solution by government, the Joint Provincial Councils and the Legislative Council failed. Meanwhile Kwame Nkrumah, who had resigned as General Secretary of the United Gold Coast Convention (the first truly political party founded in the country in 1947) and formed his own political party, the Convention Peoples' Party (CPP), in June 1949, was also threatening what he called "Positive Action", being a programme of strikes, boycotts and non-co-operation "based on the principle of absolute non-violence",<sup>1</sup> to be applied when constitutional means of achieving self-government in 1949 failed. On December 29, 1949, in an editorial entitled "Invitation to Starvation" the Daily Echo connected the two threats lv and called the TUC "a fellow-traveller and bedfellow of Positive Action".

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1. Accra Evening News, January 4, 1950.

The TUC had announced that its threatened general strike would begin in January 1950, about the same time as Nkrumah's positive action was due to begin. This identification of Nkrumah with the grievances of the TUC later proved to be one of the sources of the strength of the CPP. In fact when the TUC refused to call off its proposed strike after a two-hour meeting with some members of the Legislative Council on November 22, 1949 (including Nana Tsibu Darku, leader of the chiefs, and important members of the UGCC like Dr. Danquah, Obetsebi Lamptey, Nii Amaa Ollenu and Dr. Nanka-Bruce), the implication was that the Congress had rejected the leadership of both the chiefs and the UGCC.

By 1949, having witnessed a wave of strikes in the country, government had realised the full implications of the possibility of an alliance between labour and politics. Accordingly, in an address to the Legislative Council on July 13, Robert Scott, the Officer Administering the Government, warned that strikes, boycotts and civil disobedience, in so far as they related to the furtherance of political aims, were illegitimate and unconstitutional. And towards the end of the year a bill was passed making it illegitimate to use trade union funds for political purposes.

## 2. THE EX-SERVICEMEN

When the Gold Coast soldiers who had taken part in the war returned home, they became an important aspect of the social upheaval in the society. In fact they were caught up in the wheels of an

on-going process, but they also contributed much to its subsequent volume, especially after 1947 when their grievances began to take on a political colouring. Thus, it is very important that we should ask, and try to answer, a few questions that readily come to mind about the soldiers. What did the articulate section of Gold Coast society think about them and their future? What did they themselves think about their future position in the society? What efforts did government make to demobilise them, and how successfully? What was their contribution to nationalism?

By 1943, well before the end of the war was in sight, the press had begun to worry about the future life of the soldiers. Naturally, this worry intensified as the end of the war drew near; for, as the African Morning Post editorialised on May 19, 1944: "When the Herrenvolks and the Samurais shall have been defeated, there will be home-coming and flag-waving, when the excitement ends, our men will expect to share in the fruits of victory." The constituents of 'the fruits of victory' comprised hopes, wishes and aspirations, all of which envisaged a peaceful and orderly, if rapid, development, leading to a better Gold Coast society than had been known before. In terms of the soldiers, who were believed by their countrymen to be fighting because of their patriotism and courage, but, above all, so that "men will cease to cheat, exploit, plunder and ill-use their fellow men",<sup>1</sup>

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1. Ashanti Pioneer, February 18, 1944 .

the fruits of victory meant, first and foremost, employment for the thousands of young men then in the army as clerks, drivers, mechanics, radio operators, surveyors, dispatch riders, etc.

While the soldiers were still fighting in the battlefield, it was believed at home that important changes were taking place in their mental complexion, so that they would return home different men from what they were before they went. "Travel and experience have sharpened their intellect, and made them conscious of their rights, and increasingly critical of their future", said the African Morning Post on June 16, 1945. And it was estimated that some 30,000 of the Gold Coast soldiers had seen service abroad.<sup>1</sup> Even the illiterate among them would have acquired important technical skills, even if they would not have become fully literate as well. It was envisaged, too, that the soldiers would assume positions in the modern sector of society: they would "certainly not be content to revert to the primitive conditions and precarious means of livelihood which they knew in the past", said the Post.<sup>2</sup> To this end it would obviously not be enough simply to give them a neatly signed Discharge Certificate and then send them out into the world to battle with life. The Empire owed them a duty for their courage and sacrifice. Moreover, it was felt that if the impending

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1. See African Morning Post, October 17, 1945.

2. African Morning Post, September 4, 1944.

demobilization exercise was intelligently done it would uncover skills and capabilities which would be conducive to general progress and healthy development of the country. For, it was argued, the soldiers could be gainfully utilised in providing good housing, roads, food and better farming, etc. As one correspondent writing on the educational values of army training said: "The country will benefit from the large stock of experience of the sergeants, corporals and others when they return triumphantly from the battle fields".<sup>1</sup>

When the thoughts, hopes and aspirations of the soldiers on the battlefield ultimately came to be known, they were not at all dissimilar to those of the general public expressed through the press. Ultimately - because for a long time information about the soldiers reaching the public through the press was simple in content, consisting mainly of general descriptions of what they saw and did during their movements from place to place, and how happy they were over it all. Of course anything more than that was not to be expected during the initial stages of the war. For one thing the soldiers had not been in the army long enough to have undergone the process of transformation which they were to report later on. Secondly, when the end of the war was not near they might not have seriously begun to think about their future. Moreover, the logic of the colonial military censorship set up during the war was to permit the publication of only such material as was conducive both to eliciting from the people

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1. African Morning Post, January 13, 1945.

at home 'the right spirit' for the war effort, and to good future recruitment prospects. However, the censorship seems to have been relaxed considerably towards the end of the war, and with it the thoughts of the soldiers, now well-developed, became known through their letters to the press.

Significantly, they saw their experiences abroad as a process of education, as widening their horizons. A Corporal H.C.A. Thompson, writing from the Far East, visualised the post-war years as a period of reconstruction, educational advancement, and "social and political refinement." Mindful of his civic duty, he enclosed in his letter a donation of 3s. as his contribution towards the building of a palace for the Ga Mantse (Paramount Chief of Accra)<sup>1</sup>. While still in combat, soldiers from the neighbourhood of Accra had formed the Ga Servicemen Society. The president of the society, one Reuben Tackie, said that he had plans to study economics and history after the war, so that he could return home "fully fledged to take a major side in Accra politics." He also had plans to form a Discussion Group in Accra to discuss social, political and economic matters.<sup>2</sup>

A letter from one Private A. Maliki of the Far East Command, published in the African Morning Post on June 24, 1945, complained about discrimination in pay between African and European soldiers of the same rank. He did not say how much a European soldier earned, but said that

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1. See the African Morning Post, January 2, 1945.

2. Ibid.

the ordinary African soldier earned 1s. 6d a day. However, if the post-war scale of benefits was anything to go by, then, according to a Corporal Kotey, the amount of money paid to the African soldier upon his discharge amounted to only 25 per cent of that received by the European soldier of the same rank.<sup>1</sup> A day after the publication of Maliki's letter, the African Morning Post commented that a 'Jap' bullet, for its own part, did not discriminate! But perhaps Maliki's letter was more revealing for what he envisaged for his own future. He thought that an economic crisis would be inevitable in Gold Coast society after the war, but said in plain language that he expected government to do something definite for him.

Stripped of its individualism Maliki's letter may be taken to be representative of the general feeling of the soldiers in so far as it expected government to do something definite and better than before for the ex-soldier. In any case, most soldiers talked in general rather than individualistic terms. For example, on June 29, the same paper carried another letter from a Gold Coast soldier in South-East Asia, in which the writer, Kwasi K.B. Gyamfosu, complained that the West African soldiers had not been kept properly informed about political developments at home. Yet, he wrote:

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1. See Gold Coast Observer, May 25, 1945.

The West African soldier ... wishes to return to see his motherland a free country, and especially the Gold Coast troops wish to know whether the British are prepared to display a bit of generosity by leaving the Gold Coast into the hands of competent Africans now that the Bond of 1844 has 'expired'.

He said he had been worried about whether there would be 'jobs for all' when they returned, stating the reason for his worry thus:

We have seen and learnt many things and, as a matter of fact, we are determined to play our part for the future improvements of social life. [But] we can do nothing when the time comes, unless we have jobs to do, and of course for a fairly good pay.

Expressing similar sentiments, Sgt. K.S. Essa, who was introduced as an old student of Achimota, had written as follows in a letter to the Gold Coast Observer in 1944:

I sometimes wonder what is happening at home, Gold Coast, with regard to affairs social, economic and political. There is a great awakening in every land today and it is time our youngmen got themselves together to strive and seek to find and not to yield to the problems facing our land.<sup>1</sup>

He went on to say: "We are fighting for world freedom, and freedom also for the Gold Coast - Self-Government - not in words alone but in deed ... Self Government is our target, our goal, and our Aim".

The soldiers might have become racially conscious, too, from widespread contact with other peoples. In any case, they found colour prejudice not only among Europeans but also Indians, Chinese and Japanese. A Corporal Albert Sam for one had realised that:

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1. Gold Coast Observer, September 29, 1944.

The African with all his high educational qualifications is still not known by many in the world outside; and he is never given any place in high societies where even the Indian and the Chinese are accepted, all due, perhaps, to the colour of the African.<sup>1</sup>

It is not possible to say how many soldiers were capable of, or shared in the thoughts and sentiments expressed in these examples. However, irrespective of numbers, it is significant that such thoughts were held at all. Moreover, it is always a few people who lead; the rest follow. And, indeed, the history of the role of the ex-soldiers in post-Second World War Gold Coast society either argues for general enlightenment among the ex-soldiers or confirms this point about leadership, or even perhaps does both.

Perhaps we need hardly prefix a review - which we are now going to present - of government's plans for demobilising the soldiers (and in response to the sentiments expressed) by urging that they must be viewed in the context not only of the soldiers', but also of the people's, awakened social consciousness.

In 1944 an 800-bed Rehabilitation Centre was built in Accra to cater for sick, wounded and maimed soldiers. Towards the end of the year, the Gold Coast Legion was formed, with government encouragement, and it soon set up an appeal fund aimed at raising the ambitious sum of £50,000 to build social clubs for soldiers and to care for the needy and disabled among them when they returned. Branches of the Legion were

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1. African Morning Post, November 21, 1945.

opened in Accra, Cape Coast, Koforidua, Sekondi, Kumasi and Tamale. However, apart from these, government's plans for demobilising the soldiers remained unknown to the general public until 1945, although the press had all along tried to impress it upon the authorities that it was necessary to make known their plans so as to alleviate the fears of the people concerning the future of the soldiers. It was estimated that the colonial establishment would be demobilising some 50,000 soldiers.<sup>1</sup> In sum, the problem facing it was to resettle and employ these soldiers and help them to readjust to civilian life.

Obviously the task was going to be difficult, and both the authorities and the people realised so. The numbers involved were large. While more than half of them had been farmers before they enlisted, it was now not certain whether they would return to farming; but in the event of their failing to do so, it would be difficult to know exactly what each of them wanted to do, since they said they were coming back with new ideas, new visions, new incentives, and a broader outlook on life. For example, of 17,000 soldiers classified as army tradesmen, only 400 had indicated their intention to seek further training upon their release.<sup>2</sup> Above all, when the war was over, the economy, which had been geared to the war effort, had to be gradually

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1. See the African Morning Post, October 17, 1945.

2. Ibid.

restructured, which meant that its capacity to absorb the soldiers, if at all, would be slow indeed.

The year 1945 was a very busy one so far as government's demobilisation plans were concerned. On February 7, the press reported details of money payments to be made to West African soldiers upon their release from the army, consisting of a lump sum according to the length of service and rank.<sup>1</sup> In an address to the Legislative Council in March, the Governor, Sir Alan Burns, announced that Lt. S.K. Anthony,<sup>2</sup> the most senior(!) of the Gold Coast soldiers, then serving in Burma, had been provisionally selected for appointment as administrative officer. In May, Brigadier C.E.M. Richards, Gold Coast Area Commander, assured the Gold Coast people thus about the future of the soldiers in a broadcast to the nation: "Your men will be looked after when they do come".<sup>3</sup> According to the issue of the Post of October 17, 1945, government had plans to use soldiers for road construction and the expansion of the medical services; also, the Department of Agriculture would offer advice to would-be farmers. Government had another scheme whereby before demobilization the soldiers could learn brick-laying, concreting, well-construction, and how to make tables and chairs (African Morning Post, September 1, 1945). The idea behind this was

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1. For the details see, e.g., the African Morning Post of that date.
  2. Subsequently, he rose to the rank of Major before retiring from the army. Thereafter, he served in the Ghana diplomatic service, as High Commissioner first in ~~London~~, and, after the February 1966 coup, in London, which position he holds as of May, 1969.
  3. See African Morning Post, May 15, 1945.

that the soldiers who took the course would be able to build their own houses out of materials available in West Africa. Again, it was planned to sell second-hand army lorries, tyres and spare parts to the ex-soldiers.

To supervise the implementation of these plans, Resettlement Officers were appointed and stationed at Takoradi, Kumasi and Tamale, responsible for the Western Province, Ashanti and the Northern Territories respectively. The Chief Resettlement Officer, stationed in Accra, was responsible for the Eastern Province and British Togoland. This officer, Lt. Col. Whitecombe, however made it abundantly clear that government alone could not resettle every soldier, and, therefore, made a firm appeal to private companies and businesses to help in the effort.<sup>1</sup> To underscore the seriousness of this appeal, a bill was passed two months later compelling employers to re-employ their former employees who had left them to serve in the army.

It would thus be seen that as from the beginning of 1945 the government had been taking concrete steps to demobilize the soldiers; yet it was the case that the prospects for a satisfactory demobilization were still not good when the first batch of Gold Coast soldiers docked at Takoradi on Tuesday, November 27, 1945, and received a heroic

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1. See African Morning Post, August 27, 1945.

welcome from their countrymen. Perhaps it was not without significance that in his welcome address the next day, the Governor only praised the soldiers for their courage and wished them well, without saying anything about government's plans to demobilise them.

Evidence adduced so far in this chapter tends to the view that, relative to what they were before they enlisted, the army had had a profound modernising effect on the soldiers.<sup>1</sup> They had acquired technical skills for most of which a demand did not exist in traditional society. In themselves, travel overseas and the mixing of races had formed a valuable experience. And, even more importantly, the army had proved to be an important factor in literacy in West Africa: virtually all the soldiers had come back able to read and write basic English. However, the modernising process is not a simple generative one; so that within the same society a modernised sector can exist side by side with a traditional sector, insulated from one another in peaceful disequilibrium. Thus to say that a person or a group of persons are modernised is not ipso facto to give an indication of the extent of the modernising influence, if any, that they themselves exert on their countrymen.

With particular reference to the Gold Coast it is the view of this author that, although the ex-soldiers were modernised in many

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1. For a contrary view see Eugene P.A. Schless, "The Post-War careers of Ex-servicemen in Ghana and Uganda," Journal of Modern African Studies, 6, 2 (1968), pp.203-20.

respects, they might not, however, have exerted any great modernising influence on their fellow citizens. In fact, their capacity to do so was limited by three factors. First, the greater number of them had no jobs and no money, and therefore had to live basically the same lives as the ordinary citizen. Secondly, angered by his having to "rough it with his stay-at-home brother who never went to fight for freedom and liberty"<sup>1</sup> the ex-soldier developed what the Ashanti Pioneer termed a "Burma Complex", i.e., an attitude of superiority over his civilian worker-colleague. Finally, ex-soldiers who had jobs lived and worked in places where they were by no means the most modernised element of the society.

But then it does not seem to be necessary to be a great modernising force in order to contribute to the development of nationalism. At any rate we would like to suggest that the part which the ex-soldiers played in post-war Gold Coast nationalism must be seen not so much in terms of their modernising influence on the society as in terms of the failure of the demobilization exercise and the "extras" which this contributed to the general ferment; thus - it is to be emphasized - the ex-soldiers formed only a factor in the social upheaval. Nonetheless, whether they were aware of it or not, two important factors stood them in good stead for their significant role in nationalism. First, they constituted a large, well-organised, literate

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1. Gold Coast Observer, May 25, 1945.

and articulate group, which cut across tribal and regional boundaries. Secondly, they had been told by government not to worry about their future; so that when this promise proved to be barren and their aspirations became frustrated, they felt, both as a group and as individuals, a special justification in making their grievances known.

The failure of the demobilization exercise was clearly evident by 1947. In that year, out of 1093 ex-soldiers who applied for appointment in the junior civil service in April, <sup>only</sup> 244 had been found jobs by October.<sup>1</sup> In that same month, Nii Bonne, an Accra chief, led a far-reaching, countrywide boycott of imported goods. Most probably the success of this boycott gave psychological impetus to the ex-soldiers' march in February 1948, to present their grievances to the Governor, a few weeks after the boycott had officially come to an end. A panic-stricken British police officer had his men fire at the marchers, killing two and wounding others. This incident, commonly known in Gold Coast history since then as the 28th February Christianborg Crossroads incident, led to countrywide rioting and the looting of foreign-owned firms. In its direct results the riots proved even more far reaching than the Nii Bonne boycott. The UGCC tried to take advantage of the grievances of the ex-soldiers and the chaos following on the heels of the riots to demand self-government. They led to the

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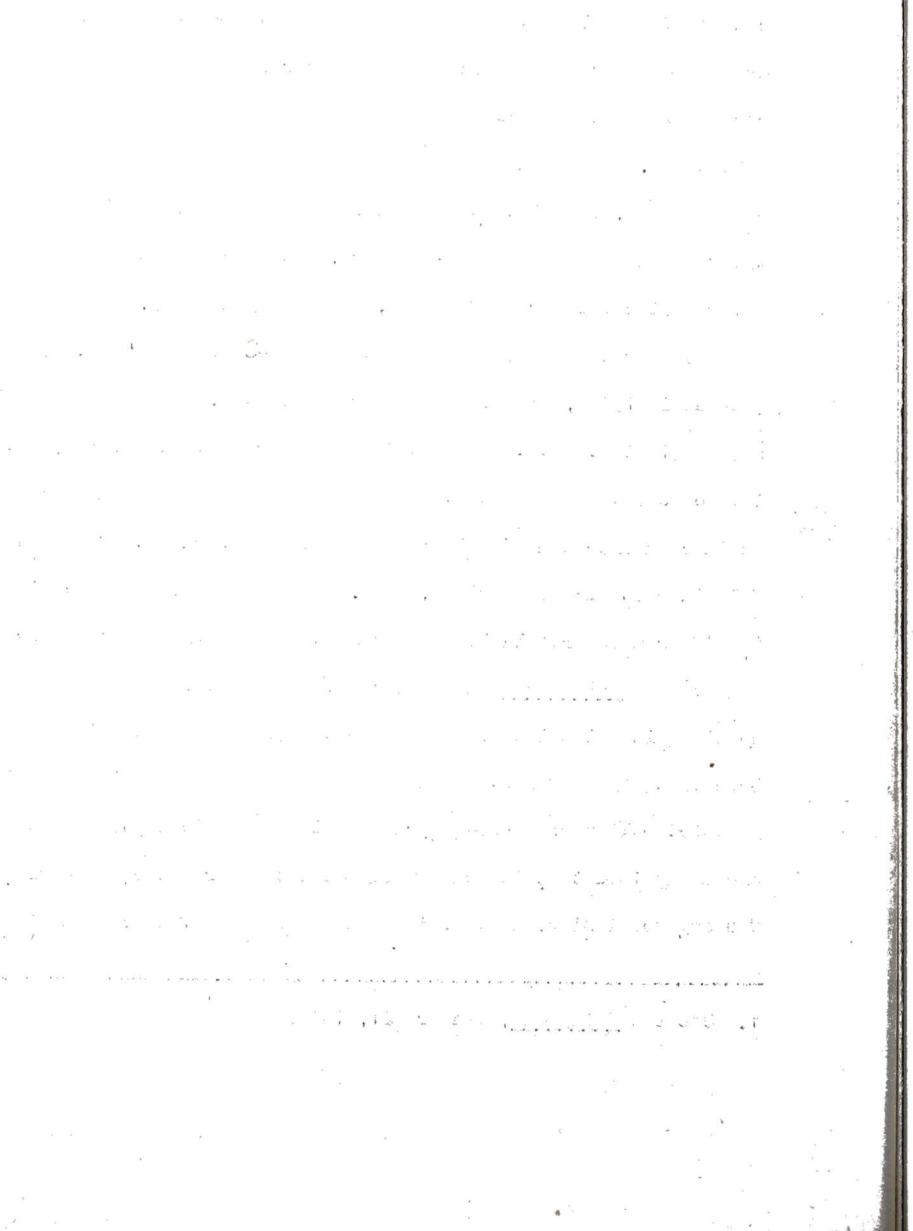
1. See the Ashanti Pioneer, October 2, 1947.

appointment first of the Watson Commission which inquired into the causes of the disturbances, and then the Coussey Committee which drew up a new constitution for the country. The riots also engendered racial mistrust and antagonism and this heightened anti-colonialism sentiments.

Again, the riots seem to have infused greater solidarity into the rank and file of the ex-soldiers, with the result that they became a very articulate pressure group, especially in 1949. On January 14 of that year the Takoradi branch of the ex-Servicemen's Union (formed in 1946), claiming a membership of 365, passed a resolution saying (1) that the Gold Coast was ripe for independence; (2) that the Coussey Constitution (then in the making) should be regarded as an independence constitution; and (3) that government should declare full independence by April 1, 1949.<sup>1</sup> The UGCC was quick to dissociate itself from the resolution. In a statement published on the front page of the Daily Echo on February 9, the Convention said that at no time since its inception in August 1947 had any definite date been fixed by it for the grant of independence. It reiterated its hallowed policy of "self-government at the earliest possible time", and emphasized that it would wait patiently for the outcome of the Coussey Commission, namely, "The answer that Providence and the will

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1. See the Daily Echo, January 21, 1949.



of our people have in store for the country". On the following day the editorial of the Daily Echo added its voice to the denunciation when it said that the statement of a target date was as irresponsible as the people who had made it.

The month of May was a particularly busy period for the ex-soldiers. First, they sent a resolution to the War Office in London demanding that at least £20 should accompany each campaign medal due to a Gold Coast ex-soldier. Secondly, they protested against delays in the releasing of a War-Office grant to all ex-soldiers. Apart from the delay, the Gold Coast Government had said that the grant would be given to only those soldiers adjudged to be of good conduct. The Ex-Servicemen's Union contended that the criterion was subject to gross abuse.<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, undaunted by the denunciation of similar demands made by its Takoradi branch, the national Union sent what it described as an "ultimatum" to the Coussey Committee threatening that if it did not complete its work by the end of June, they would stage "vehement anti-Coussey Delay Demonstrations", throughout the Colony, Ashanti and the Northern Territories.

The 'ultimatum' was strongly condemned by the government and the JPC.<sup>2</sup> As with the TUC, such denunciation predisposed the

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1. See the Daily Echo, May 19, 1949.

2. See the Daily Echo, July 18, 1949.

Ex-servicemen's Union to alliance with the CPP. It was therefore no surprise that in September 1949 Solomon Annan, Secretary of the Western Province branch of the Union, stood trial together with Kwame Nkrumah and J.H. Afriyee, publisher and editor respectively of the Morning Telegraph (Sekondi) for contempt of court. Annan had published in the paper a copy of a telegram which he had sent to the governor, warning that if the latter did not intercede and stop the many libel cases then pending against Kwame Nkrumah, there would be disaster in the country. They were all found guilty of contempt of court and fined. There is no doubt that the numerous libel cases brought against Nkrumah, and almost always sensationally reported in the press, helped to make the man known to a wider public.

## CHAPTER 7

### A FERMENT OF IDEAS

In the preceding chapter, we reviewed two important aspects of social upheaval in Gold Coast society during and after the Second World War, in order that we might get an insight into the general social ferment during the period. In this chapter, we intend to do a similar thing in the realm of ideas, so that we may have an indication of the general ideological ferment, thrown forth largely by, and existing alongside, the social ferment.

We have seen that, as elsewhere, the war years represented hard times for the Gold Coast people. Yet there seemed to lie behind all the hardships and suffering a pulsant optimism of a bright future for the country and her people. To a large extent, this was engendered and bolstered by the speeches of colonial officials at home, as well as by those of the leaders of the Allied nations, in which was proclaimed and glorified the universality of the principles of equality, freedom and self-determination. Widely publicised in the local press, these speeches made the colonial peoples to believe that the post-war years would represent the dawn of a new era for them, an era in which their visions during the war years would become actualities.

These visions came to be symbolized by the Atlantic Charter.<sup>1</sup>

Colonial peoples had no doubts at all that the principles inunciated by the Charter applied to them; for they argued that the principles applied to humanity as a whole and colonial peoples formed a legitimate part of that whole. They (the colonial peoples) even wished to believe that the Charter had a special application to them. The Charter, they said, meant not only economic and social advancement, but also a greater share by subject peoples in their own governance.<sup>2</sup>

During the war years, rural dignitaries seized the opportunity offered by the visit of the governor to their areas to make demands for socio-economic improvements, although there was among people a general preparedness to wait until after the war before such improvements

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1. In august 1941 President Roosevelt of the U.S. and Prime Minister Winston Churchill of the U.K. held a meeting in the North Atlantic. After the meeting they issued the document which came to be called the 'Atlantic Charter', defining the aims of their two countries, first, as they concerned each other, and, secondly, as they involved other countries. In one of the eight clauses of the Charter, the two heads of state affirmed their respect for "the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live", as well as their wish "to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them". Naturally, this clause came to be of special importance to all colonial peoples. For a West-African reaction to attempts by Churchill to restrict the applicability of the principles of the Charter to only non-colonials, see James Hocker, Black Revolutionary, Pall Mall, 1967, p.63.
  2. See, e.g., the editorials of the African Morning Post, October 28, 1942, and March 19, 1943.

would be undertaken. Often, in reply to these demands, the governor would say no more than just that he would consider them at the appropriate time; but then, if you ask a people to cooperate with you in some endeavour, as the governors did for the war effort, it would be reasonable for them to assume that you would reciprocate the cooperation. So it was that colonial peoples everywhere came to believe that their lot would improve after the war.

This general optimism would seem to offer us an explanation as to why on the eve of the end of the war, with the surrender of Japan in August, 1945, the African Morning Post wrote an editorial entitled "THE PROMISED TIME AT LAST".<sup>1</sup> In that editorial the paper said that the enemies of democracy had been demolished and the way thus laid open for "more battles against disease, poverty, ignorance, selfishness and politico-economic inequalities". It reiterated that the colonial peoples had contributed much to the defeat of the enemy, adding: "Of this we are proud. But for it also we expect to get the things to which we are rightly entitled as human beings".

It would be true especially of the new generation of Gold Coast nationalists of the post-Second World War period, that, unlike their counterparts of the post-First World War era, who perhaps made too much of political grievances, they placed the emphasis on socio-economic problems. However, this is not to say that political questions were

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1. African Morning Post, August 16, 1945.

ignored, even during the war itself. Indeed, apart from the fact that politics and economics go hand in hand, both during and after the war the recurrent themes of nationalist agitation - representation in government and the Africanization of the civil service - were as buoyant as ever. Thus our exclusion of these perennial themes from consideration in this chapter can only be deliberate.

The fluidity of Gold Coast society in the Forties, resulting from the intensity of the social upheaval, plus the rather gay visions which people from all walks of life had of the future, made it highly receptive to ideas, especially those which were framed in terms of the common man and his involvement in politics as the only way to achieve a better life for all. This fluidity, heightened, as it was, by a post-war deflation of the people's hopes and visions and the manifold problems posed by the socio-economic hardships (plus differences in the possibilities, as conceived by the nationalists, of solving them) bred or implied varying ideas about how Gold Coast society should be organized. The common denominator of these ideas was the common belief that the Gold Coast had attained a stage of development, both human and material, where she should begin to shelve her colonial status. This common standpoint raised certain common questions: When should self-government come? What kind of socio-economic organization should the country adopt? What kind of (political) leadership should the people have? It is to the answers which the nationalists gave to these questions that we shall address ourselves here.

(a) SELF - GOVERNMENT

For two main reasons, we wish to begin this exploration of the ideological ferment with the debate on self-government. First, the debate was pursued throughout the Forties, and beyond. Secondly, it appears to be the case that all the ideas and doctrines about government, politics, economics, and about social organization generally, that one reads about in the press during this period were expounded in anticipation of self-government.

There were three broad schools of thought on the question of self-government. One school, best exemplified and articulated by Dr. Danquah, but perhaps identifiable with the Old School of nationalists, talked in terms of self-government now in the early Forties but stressed the need to achieve it through constitutional means. The contention of this school was that "economic power could not be ours until we had the power of self-government".<sup>1</sup> Another school insisted on the need for mass political education as a necessary prerequisite for self-government. The most consistent advocate of this view was a columnist of the Gold Coast Observer who called himself "K.K. of K" (sometimes just 'K.K.'). The third school was represented by another anonymous writer, "Candide", who also made frequent

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1. Dr. Danquah in the Ashanti Pioneer, January 14, 1944. le

appearances in the columns of the Gold Coast Observer.<sup>1</sup> This school stressed that "economic self-determination" should precede self-government.

With the approach of the centenary celebration (March 1944) of the Bond of 1844, Dr. Danquah asked for "Terms of a New Bond of 1844" and worked out a scheme for a Gold Coast Federal Union, whereby the Colony, Ashanti, the Northern Territories and Togoland would become "co-equal territories". He advocated that before the celebration all the territories should collectively draw up a constitution for their own self-government. With regard to the relationship that was to subsist between the Union and the Crown, Danquah said that there would be a British High Commissioner in the Union; he would be selected in consultation with the government of the Union (comprising mostly of 'Natural Rulers') which would pay his salary. In addition to protecting British interests, the High Commissioner would also advise the Union on matters referred to him by its government. In exchange the Union would also send a Commissioner to London.<sup>2</sup>

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1. An Accra weekly, the Guardian, of March 20-26, 1969 (p.8), identifies 'Candide' as Dr. M. Davy-Hayford, a private medical practitioner, of Accra. He is the nephew of the great J.E. Casely Hayford and first cousin of J.E.'s only son, the ex-politician Archie Casely Hayford.

2. See the African Morning Post, November 23, 1943.

This scheme was at once both nebulous and unrealistic: nebulous, because what it asked for was neither simply self-government nor complete independence, but something containing elements from both; and unrealistic for two reasons: first, as in fact Dr. Danquah himself had said just about a year ago:

No sane Gold Coast man or woman would ask that the next step in the Gold Coast constitution, from her present fourth rate status, should be Dominion status, [i.e. in political status - equality with Britain], for two reasons: first, every sensible Gold Coast man knows that there is no profit in crying for the moon. The British are not going to grant the Gold Coast dominion status today or tomorrow, because it is not the British way of doing things. The British believe in gradualness.

Secondly, irrespective of Britain's unpreparedness to accede to such a scheme, the territories did not as yet have enough in common to make them unite, even in a federation.

Perhaps it was with such considerations in mind that K.K. of K charged Danquah with having asked for "independence made in Britain". However, the realism in his own argument that self-government should be preceded by a massive, nation-wide political education was not immediately apparent in the face of the peculiar socio-economic

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1. The Ashanti Pioneer, September 7, 1942. See Dr. Danquah's article entitled "Gold Coast Awake", on page 2 column 3.

circumstances of the time. For according to him:

The children of the senior classes of primary schools, both boys and girls; the students of the secondary schools in the country, and almost all the literate section of the community, must all join forces to work out a scheme whereby the people can by constitutional means bring pressure to bear on the 'governing classes' to release more...of the general revenue of the country... for the speeding up of this vital work of political education of the people so very necessary before taking up the reins of government in this country on foreign lines, otherwise it would be a forbidden fruit because of the unpreparedness of the people.

Danquah's reply to this in the same paper six days later was that no government would give money to train men, knowing that they would overthrow it after their training. Such talk was therefore "childish play, like a series of nonsense syllables jumbled together". As for him, he would rather see "action now, or in patience as our chiefs decide".

The principle underlying Candide's argument for self-government was that society must be conceived "as one unit in which all are potential contributors to its progress".<sup>2</sup> It followed from this view that the Gold Coast should not be a society in which "only the big five of the chiefs may think and speak for the country, and the rest may keep silence". Hence any re-organization of Gold Coast society

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1. Gold Coast Observer, January 21, 1944.

2. Ashanti Pioneer, January 29, 1944, see the article entitled 'Eyes Right'.

should begin with the economic because it was that which affected the lives of all. But although the economic approach was, according to him, "the only reasonable approach to our problems, we must decide whether we are to approach them in the spirit of isolated Robinson Crusoe or in the spirit of [communalism], by thinking and living together, and developing sound relationship with one another."<sup>1</sup>

He said he had arrived at this conclusion as a result of his analysis of the existing economic situation, especially with respect to farming, the mainstay of the country's economy. Giving reasons why the existing economic system should be condemned, he wrote:

Under the present dispensation the farmer is compelled to sell to a single market three thousand miles away in conditions that are beyond his control...he is virtually a waged labourer, instead of getting what is due to him not only as a worker of his own farm, but also as owner of his own stock. More, because he has to buy imported goods at the importer's price his poor revenue is constantly leaving the country, he is discouraged in his productions, and the country grows poorer all the time.

Candide called this process the "rock of British capitalist monopoly", and went on to add that it would continue to bring havoc on the people until a concerted effort was made to put a stop to it. And the way to do that would be for all to realise that "the road to [our] economic salvation is the short one that runs to our own markets, and the markets of our neighbouring countries." In economics 'Candide' showed an understanding of the real problems of the country and was thus able to isolate some of the prerequisites for development; and there is no doubt that what he said rang true

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1. Ibid.

in the ears of his countrymen at the time. Yet under the colonial umbrella the likelihood that his ideals would be achieved was perhaps no greater than that either Dr. Danquah's or K.K.'s scheme would. In fact, in so far as the Ghanaian farmer is concerned, the conditions which Candide described in 1944 are pretty much the same even today, although the market may not be single any more.

Despite the difference in the priorities of self-government between Candide and K.K., both of them stressed the need to involve the common man in politics, and therefore attacked Dr. Danquah's preference for leadership by a few well-educated men. In the two articles by them cited above, each of them had ended with an attack on Dr. Danquah and his organisation, the Youth Conference. Candide, for example, had concluded by saying that the advisers of the chiefs were not representative of all shades of opinion in the country and warned the chiefs against dependence on the lawyer for everything, because the days when the lawyer was considered to be a know-all were gone by. 'K.K. of K', on the other hand, had ended his article with an attack on the Youth Conference in general, but Dr. Danquah in particular, for having decided against turning the organisation into a political body (see page 106). We shall quote him at some length, because,

stripped of its verbal violence, cynicism and mythology, the passage seems to this author to have been prophetic of Dr. Danquah's position in the nationalist struggle. He wrote:

A champion of an organization made up of youth thinks that it is an atrocious crime to include politics in the activities of that organization...At once this shows where the wind blows! Here is a typical case of a Buridan's ass of a leader who, according to that Greek sophist, being placed between two haystacks, with the choice evenly balanced, is starving to death in the midst of plenty - wondering whether he should risk offending the "governing class" by dabbling in politics...or cut politics out altogether in order that he might continue in their good favour. Or, like the proverbial ghost of Iturey (Sweet River) who upon setting eye, for the first time, on the castles of Cape Coast and Elmina...was so obsessed with indecision as to where first to visit that, in his excitement, he was transfixed to his vantage ground until the full light of day broke upon him - a ghost amid the blaze of noon - indulging in (a) dance macabre, rushing hither and thither...oblivious of the presence of the populace crowding around him.

There was another view on self-government which embraced ideas from the three schools outlined above. Such was the view expressed by K.A. Gbedemah in a lecture delivered at a meeting of the Youth Conference in 1942. Advertising the forthcoming lecture, the Ashanti Pioneer of October, 28, 1942, introduced the speaker as "Accra bred, Ewe in origin, born in Nigeria". Gbedemah had set up a chocolate factory in the Gold Coast, but it had collapsed mainly because of the 1937-38 cocoa hold-up and the boycott of European goods.

Thereafter he had become a secondary-school teacher at the Accra Academy. Perhaps it was on account of all this that this 'scholarly youngman' of thirty years (in 1942) was said to be a representative of the youth of his time who was familiar with their vicissitudes and struggles.

Gbedemah delivered what appears to have been an inspiring lecture on the topic: "Whither are we drifting?", on Wednesday, November 4, 1942. On the question of self-government he said that it was much desirable, but added that the people should prepare for it by forming a political body "symbolic of the country's unity". To that end he recommended the formation (or rather the revival) of the Central National Council.<sup>1</sup> With regard to the economy he believed that the Gold Coast was wealthy enough at least to begin on the path of economic self-determination. "If it is the question of Capital", he said, "there is a lot of it locked up in the security of the bank or in the insecurity of the ground where no one but the burier knows it to be." An effective central organisation could use such 'idle' capital to start "state or people owned industrial organisations, a scheme to remove the onus from the

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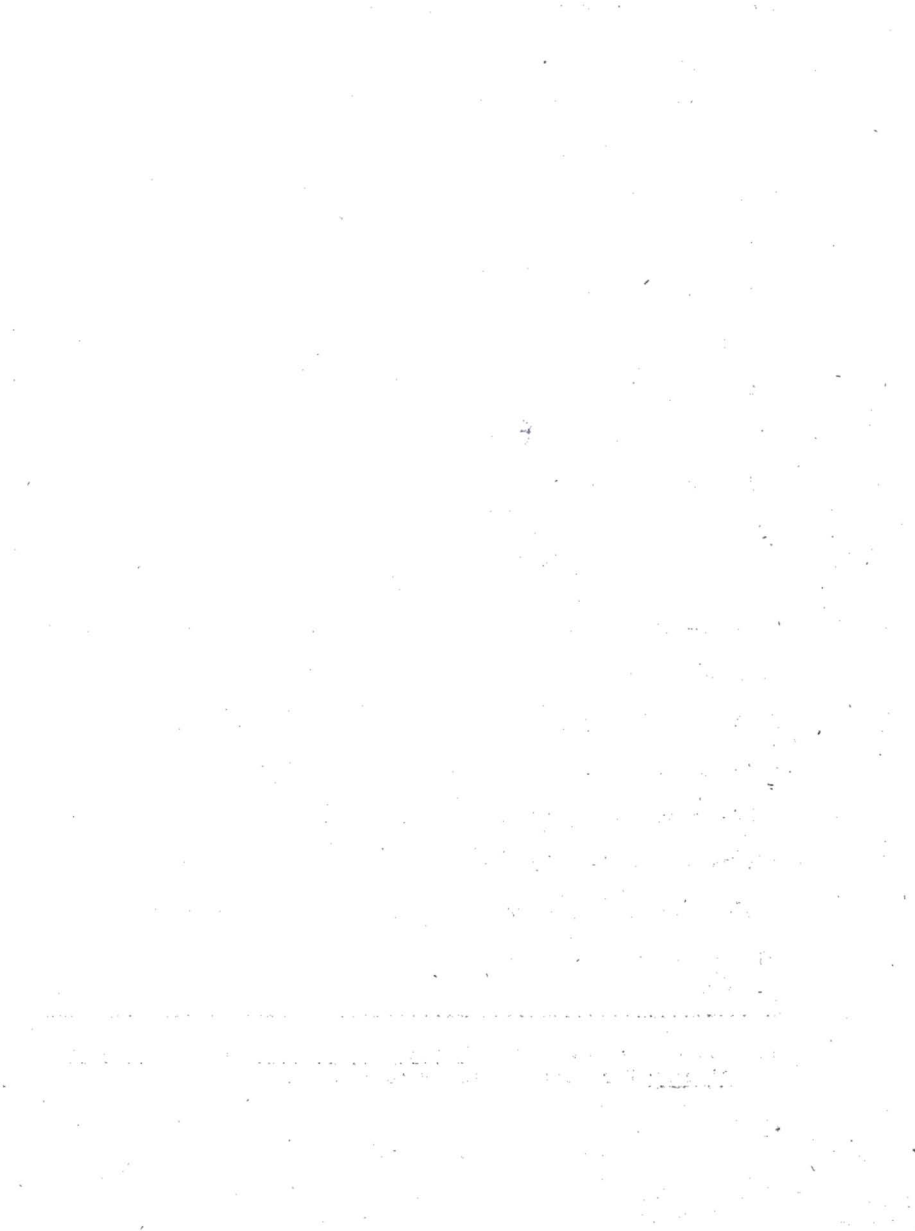
1. A body with the same name had been formed in 1934 to fight certain bills passed in that year by the Governor, Sir Shenton Thomas. See chapter 4.

energetic entrepreneur who could not succeed for lack of capital". He concluded his address by stressing that if the youth were given the chance and shown the way, the country would not fail.

The self-government debate might well have been restricted in its appeal to the general public for it tended to be done at a level which might have been beyond the comprehension of the vast majority of the educated population. Yet it was pursued with much enthusiasm and was characterised by attacks, replies, counter-attacks, explanations, expositions, etc.<sup>1</sup> Nor was the debate limited to the early Forties, although by the time of the great split in the nationalist camp in 1949 the character and context of the debate had changed. The question of priorities seems to have been dropped by then and the issue now was between the advocates of self-government now and those who advocated for self-government as soon as possible, for it seems to have been accepted as a fact that although economic freedom might be the ultimate goal of colonial peoples, yet it could not be achieved without winning self-government first. Ironically, Dr. Danquah, who had been advocating self-government now in the early Forties, was rather advocating for self-government as soon as possible in the closing years of the Forties.

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1. See the issues of the Gold Coast Observer or the Ashanti Pioneer for January and February 1944.



(b)

S O C I A L I S M

During the Forties, socialism had a tremendous appeal, especially for the younger generation of nationalists. Our next broad topic, after "the ferment of ideas", then, is socialism as the nationalists' answer to the question: What kind of socio-economic organization would be best suited to rapid progress in the Gold Coast? This widespread appeal of socialism may be accounted for by four reasons. First, these nationalists tended to feel that the hardships of the time could at least have been lessened if the Gold Coast were not a colonial society. Thus, secondly, the advocacy of socialism could be viewed in terms of a reaction against that social organization which the nationalists called "colonial imperialism". Thirdly, as we shall soon see, during and after the war, Russia, the home of socialism, became a great source of inspiration to subject peoples. Fourthly, independently both of the socio-economic hardships and Russia's appeal, socialism as a doctrine, emphasising the elimination of social inequalities (such as existed in colonial society) and thereby bringing the common man into the centre of political activity, was apt to appeal, albeit in an intellectual way, to the new generation of nationalists who had all along been at best only peripheral to the political centre.

As we have already noted, certain individuals, like Wallace-Johnson in the Thirties, had attempted to put Russia in a favourable light in the eyes of the Gold Coast people.<sup>1</sup> Yet, until the war

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1. See chapter 6.

Russia was perhaps known to most educated Gold Coasters, if at all, only as the home of communism, an obnoxious political philosophy at that. However, during the war she suddenly emerged as a great military power whose contribution was considered to be vital in the fight for 'the freedom of the world'. At the same time her economic achievements also became well known. Russia on her part utilised this opportunity well, and further enhanced her image by vocally and consistently identifying with the aspirations and struggles of subject peoples for freedom and self-determination. All this formed the basis of admiration for Russia and her achievements which the nationalists so profusely exhibited in the Forties. As the editorial of the Ashanti Pioneer of September 16, 1944, entitled "Russianization of Europe", said:

Never in history has any brand of government achieved in a generation the economic and cultural triumphs of communism in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The military record of Russia in the greatest war of all time, against the unprovoked aggression of the greatest military machine on earth, has eclipsed every known parallel in human society.

It went on to say that a process of "Russianization of Europe" had already begun with the adoption of Russia's successful mass education methods. Consequently, the paper had no doubts at all that in post-war Europe the voice of Russia, 'the Workers' Fatherland', would command deserved respect. In another editorial (February 6, 1946) the paper referred to Russia as the 'cat-fish' of international politics; explaining that what the cat-fish does is to stir

'fish-dom' into activity, so as to avoid physical and social decay there. That, according to the paper, was exactly what Russia was doing on the international scene at the time. By her frequent criticism of "imperial colonialism", Russia was stirring the colonial powers to undertake improvements in their colonies and also to concede to the colonial peoples a measure of self-determination.

We have yet another example of admiration for Russia from the pen of 'Owen', the Literary Forum columnist of the Ashanti Pioneer. On the occasion of the twenty-seventh anniversary of the Red Army (which fell on February 23, 1945) he sang the praises of this 'offensive and defensive weapon of Russian Socialism' thus:

Tell the Red Army that our imagination falters as we try to evaluate the influence it is bound to wield when the time comes for Modern Man to explore ways and means of adjusting the political and economic balances of the post-war world. Tell the Red Army that it is the Anchor of Hope of the Exploited Masses in the possibilities of the Coming Peace for the next thousand years.

Also there was at least one aspect of Russian society which made a great impression on Dr. Danquah himself at this time. Addressing the Elliot Commission on Higher Education in West Africa in 1944, Dr. Danquah was reported to have said that the European University was built on a feudal system and was therefore unsuited to Africa.<sup>2</sup> Instead, he recommended the adoption of the Russian system and suggested

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1. Ashanti Pioneer, February 24, 1945.

2. See the African Morning Post, February 11, 1944.

that six people should be sent to study the educational system of that country. He also suggested that Russian professors should be employed to work with their British counterparts in the then proposed university for West Africa.<sup>1</sup> It was amid such general admiration for her achievements that Russia exploded and atom bomb in 1946, thus exploding also the myth of Western monopoly of it.

It would have been surprising if the transition from such profuse admiration for Russia's achievements to the recommendation of socialism as the best way of achieving rapid progress for the Gold Coast people had not been almost a logical step. On July 3, 1944, the African Morning Post noted, in its editorial entitled "Should We Have Socialism", that socialism was gaining a foothold in West Africa in proportion to the rate of acceptance of the idea that democracy and self-government alone could not eradicate the exploitation, wage disparities, poverty, mass illiteracy, and other social evils that obtained in West African society. The paper therefore recommended the encouragement of true socialism in West Africa.

In 1945, the Ashanti Pioneer, one of the most ardent advocates of socialism at the time, predicted that a clash between that doctrine and capitalism would be inevitable after the war.<sup>2</sup> It claimed that during the war socialist methods had been used in

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1. The idea of one university for the whole of British West Africa was later abandoned and universities were built separately in the colonies.

2. March 23, 1945.

organising colonial peoples, and that they would not like to revert to the capitalist system. Hence (it said, in a strange language which however did not hide the intended meaning) either capitalism should be "socialized" or, at worst "Socialism compromised, NOT Capitalized". Of course, it was not true (as was indeed shown by the paper's definition of socialism in the same editorial as a means of organizing a country's resources in such a way that they "are not controlled by a few people at the expense of the masses") that socialist methods had been used to organise, say, the Gold Coast people during the war.

However, there was a tendency to see a correlation between socialism and 'good' colonial administration. For example, the Ashanti Pioneer pointed out that as of 1945, Russia had ruled Uzbekistan for only twenty-seven years, but that during that comparatively short time, political, social and economic progress of the territory had been tremendous: Literacy had risen from seven to 98 percent, and there were four thousand schools, several technical institutes and two universities; there were also factories, irrigation schemes and twenty hydro-electric plants. All these impressive records, it emphasized, had been achieved by the application of socialism. In contrast the paper said that after many years of British rule the Gold Coast was about 95 per cent illiterate as of 1945; and there were no technical institutes and no university.

However, to water down this highly unfavourable criticism of the colonial establishment, the paper went on to say that the British were not solely to blame, and singled out as some of the impediments to development and progress the indigenous system of land tenure, the lack of national consciousness, and apathy. The paper then concluded that it would require nothing less than a revolution in political thinking in order to achieve for the Gold Coast what Russia had achieved for Uzbekistan. It suggested that some degree of interference with native customs and traditions would be necessary for development. In fact so enchanted with socialism was the Ashanti Pioneer in 1945 that it suggested that it might be the answer to a successful demobilization of the soldiers soon to return from the war.<sup>1</sup>

One way in which the belief in the efficacy of socialism as a cure for the ills of colonial society manifested itself was in a re-definition of democracy in a colonial context. Writing on the topic "Capitalism and Democracy" on August 3, 1946, the Ashanti Pioneer said:

We refuse to believe that Imperialism is compatible with Democracy. We refuse to believe that Western Imperialism can be successfully married to the natural aspirations of the Colonial Empire. We refuse to believe, for practical purposes, that Western Democracy is distinguishable from Western Imperialism. They are interchangeable terms. We refuse to believe therefore that Western Democracy is more democratic than Russian Communism.

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1. Ashanti Pioneer, September, 3 1945, editorial entitled "Socialism is the Key".

A few months earlier on, the paper had said that the end of the war should have meant the end of "Few-ocracy", that is, "government of the Few, by the Few, for the Few - otherwise known in the Western World as Democracy."<sup>1</sup> Two years later Kofi Baako (who subsequently became an important figure in Nkrumah's party and government, as well as one of the chief theoreticians of the CPP's doctrine of Nkrumaism) cynically defined democracy under colonialism as "government by the British for the people" (West African Monitor, June 25, 1948).

Again, the general enchantment with socialism serves as a background to the reaction of the Gold Coast press to the post-war change of government in Britain. Winston Churchill was said to have been "bowled out because he was unable to appreciate the fascination that a planned economy, on the basis of the Russian pattern, had had on the imagination of John Bull."<sup>2</sup> Thus the satisfaction in the Gold Coast over the Labour victory of 1946 which one paper called "The Grandest Hour in Modern History", was tied up with the war-time pronouncements of its leaders promising socio-economic progress in the colonies, but also with the fact that Labour was avowedly socialistic.

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1. Ashanti Pioneer, June 6, 1946 editorial entitled "Let Our People Know".

2. The Ashanti Pioneer, January 19, 1946.

Of course post-war conditions in Britain put a serious strain on how much any British government could have done for the colonies, but in the minds of the Gold Coast nationalists a socialist government in Britain meant freedom from monopoly, as well as rapid socio-economic improvements; it was also believed that 'socialist Britain' would cooperate with Russia. For the nationalists all this conduced to a possibility, almost a likelihood, that self-government would soon come to the colony. As we have suggested earlier on the subsequent deflation of such beliefs and hopes heightened anti-colonial sentiment.

It is not possible to judge from the press how well the nationalists were acquainted with socialism as a socio-politico-economic doctrine. Nor would it be fair to do so, because, for obvious reasons, newspapers are usually not the place to find profound expositions of serious political or economic doctrine. What a section of the press sought to do, and seems to have done admirably well, was to tell the people and make them believe that socialism was a method of organising society to achieve rapid socio-economic improvements, and therefore a preferable alternative to 'colonial imperialism'.

(c)

POLITICIZING THE MASSES

The advocacy for socialism was one manifestation of a general desire for change in the state of affairs in the Gold Coast. With regard to the leadership of the people this desire brought the new generation nationalists, as aspirants, into more and more open confrontation with the established leadership of chiefs and intellectuals of the old school. In fact this confrontation had been internal to nationalist politics ever since the days of the NCBWA, but its intensity had differed significantly from time to time. But now, as a point of climax in the drama, the late 1940s saw the confrontation at its most intense and most open, finally culminating in a fuller expression in the advent of the C.P.P. (Thus the CPP was in effect the meeting point of elements belonging to one side of the confrontation, but which had hitherto not been coordinated.)

The confrontation meant also that, sooner or later, the support base of nationalism would have to be widened through the formation of new political alliances. And the new-generation nationalists had nobody to whom to turn for support but the 'common' man. Consequently, the press tried to impress upon the people that progress could never be achieved without the full involvement of the masses of the people in the social, economic and political processes of the country.<sup>1</sup> Thus in 1946 the Ashanti Pioneer called for a "Working Class Moses" who would organise and emancipate the workers.<sup>2</sup>

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1. In fact, we have already noted (chapter 6) how it tried to impress upon the workers that the post-war world was essentially a worker's world.

2. February 26, 1946, editorial.

In the field of education the paper charged that "our so-called leaders...have no known programme for educating the masses" (February 17, 1947), and therefore asked for the "education of the masses, by the masses, for the masses" (June 7, 1946). According to the paper, the politicians had all the time been talking politics instead of doing it; and yet it was clearly evident that merely talking politics was not the way to achieve self-government (March 28, 1947). Doing politics meant that instead of "apologies of political institutions", as the Ashanti Pioneer referred to the existing quasi-political parties,<sup>1</sup> there should be properly organized political parties with definite programmes. This was necessary, it said, because history was replete with examples which showed beyond doubt that no people were ever treated well until they themselves had demonstrated that they were worthy of such treatment. It then went on to cite examples: the French people, it said, had caused a revolution to overthrow aristocracy as soon as they had been ready for better treatment; similarly, when the Americans had felt ready for their independence they had fought for it. And, it concluded, "Look at India, Palestine, Egypt, Indonesia!"<sup>2</sup>

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1. February 17, 1947. The bodies referred to included the JPC, the Ashanti Confederacy Council, the Youth Conference, the Mambii Party and the Rate-payers' Association (Accra), the Kotoko Society (Kumasi), and the Independent Rate-payers Party (Cape Coast).
  2. June 12, 1947, editorial.

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On the following day the paper quoted Lenin's "Long have we known how to love, it is time we began to hate", adding that the masses ought first to be educated to feel free and then "organized and led into Action." Continuing this series of 'revolutionary' editorials the Ashanti Pioneer discussed on the next day what it said to be the two ways by which colonial peoples achieved freedom. One way was for them to remain passive and wait patiently upon the colonial government to supply the initiatives and thus dictate the pace. The alternative way, more costly but shorter, was to "hate intensely the conditions of our virtual colonial slavery" and then initiate a campaign for liberating the nation "through the organization of all classes of our people for their appropriate action stations." And, of course, the paper's readers had no doubt as to which of the two methods it preferred.

Certain individuals were even more positive and more radical in their recommendations about how to achieve self-government. Writing in the West African Monitor on June 25, 1948, Kofi Baako said that Britain had refused to hear both the whisper and the talk of the Gold Coast people, adding: "Now we shall no more whisper, we shall not talk - we shall shout for our rights and see that the rights are given". This was addressed to the colonial government, but indirectly also to the old established leadership. And interpreted in terms of the latter, who believed in gradualism and not in

"shouting for our rights", the statement meant that the confrontation with the new generation was now direct. Again, writing in the same paper some months later Saldi Scheck, who subsequently became the first Organizing Secretary of the CPP, asked the colonial government to pack up and go. "We are determined to be free right now. We cannot postpone our freedom any longer", he wrote.<sup>1</sup>

The contention here is by no means that this message intended for "the masses" possibly reached every one, or even the majority, of them. On the contrary, most probably it never reached the illiterate masses, who could not share in the communication being done through the medium of the English-language press; and, indeed, full grassroots involvement had to await the platform politics of the CPP. Yet, judging from the number of people susceptible to politicization through the press, the message would appear to have been otherwise than a mere pious wish of a few discontented individuals. In a series of articles reproduced in the Daily Echo in June 1949, a Special Correspondent of the London Times, writing about the Gold Coast political scene, estimated that 20 percent of the population of some four to five million were susceptible to political ideas, and that the total circulation of the country's newspapers was about 50,000.<sup>2</sup> Considering that a single copy of

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1. August 31, 1948.

2. See the issues for June, especially June 2, 3, and 22.

a newspaper might have been read by two or more persons (even in a village or small town, all the 'scholars' might have had access to just a single copy or two), the 50,000 daily circulation figure was a very significant number. And, of course the greater proportion of the readership of the newspapers comprised the new literate, i.e. the thousands of ex-soldiers and school leavers.

(d) TOWARDS A PERMANENT SPLIT IN THE NATIONALIST CAMP

It was in the thick of this social and ideological ferment that the United Gold Coast Convention was inaugurated on August 4, 1947, as a political organization with a headquarters and a paid staff. Prominent among its founding members and leadership were Dr. J.B. Danquah and George ('Pa') Grant, a wealthy merchant. It was publicized as an organization for all, "irrespective of tribe, clan, class, creed or sex". Consequently it was intended to be 'open' enough "to ensure the speedy and complete union and concentration of all our divided forces". In preparation for the inauguration the organizers said that they were "prepared to send speakers to convenient centres at the invitation of local organized bodies".

It should be amply clear from its declared objective that the success of the UGCC depended first and foremost, if not almost entirely, on its ability to effect the "complete union...of all our divided forces".

What then were these divided forces needing harmonisation? What was the outlook of the Convention's leadership, and what promise did it hold for the successful achievement of the desired union? And, finally, were the divided forces such as could be harmonised at all?

The major components of the divided forces in the Gold Coast society of the 1940s which needed harmonisation in the UGCC were the familiar trio, consisting of the chiefs, the intellectuals of the old school as well as the younger intellectuals and their organizations. However, in addition to the wide gap which had always existed between the chiefs and the younger intellectuals from the days of the Congress, the usually small gap between the old school and the chiefs had widened considerably by 1947. To be sure the Gold Coast Youth Conference had attempted to do just what the Convention now sought to do. For the time being it had succeeded in bringing the chiefs and the old school intellectuals very closely together, but the war had prevented a firm consolidation of this achievement. As for the younger intellectuals some of them had completely failed to be identified with the organization. This overall situation was to worsen because certain actions of the chiefs during the Forties could win them only disaffection from the other sectors of the society, including even the old school.

The first major disagreement between the chiefs and the educated elite arose over the Native Authority (Colony) Bill of 1944. The press and the educated elite opposed the bill on the grounds that it had

invested traditional sovereignty in the British government which then conferred it on the chiefs; so that in effect with the bill the chiefs had become government officials. The chiefs, however, ignored this opposition and accepted the bill. The debate over the bill in the Legislative Council thus turned out to be between the municipal members and the chiefs, with government having a virtual holiday. During one such debate, Nana Tsibu Darku, who had succeeded Nana Ofori Atta I as the leader of the chiefs, was reported to have shown utmost contempt for the common people. Mr. Akilagpa Sawyer, municipal member for Accra, had suggested that the bill should be submitted to a select committee with instructions to reach a solution acceptable to government, chiefs and people alike. Upon this Nana Tsibu Darku was reported to have asked:

Who are the people? These people who signed the Resolutions of Cape Coast and Accra protesting against the passing of this Bill, who are they? Are they Paramount Chiefs? I speak with the support of 53 Paramount Chiefs. We may be fishermen or farmers, but we know our rights as Chiefs. The people? Who are they?

Probably what the Nana meant was that collectively all the chiefs represented all the people, so that when the chiefs had unanimously spoken, technically there could be no 'other' people to dissent. Admittedly, this view would be far-fetched, even romantic and illusory; but it is by no means an unusual abstraction which 'the representatives of the people' are unlikely to make. However, what is significant is that a section of the press and some of the intelligentsia interpreted the Nana differently, or at any rate, disagreed with this explanation.

For example, in a reaction to the statement, the Gold Coast Observer called the chiefs "conservative princes", and their action "reactionary atavism".<sup>1</sup> And in November the Ashanti Pioneer published a series of articles on the theme: "The people are the state and the state is the people", apparently in answer to the Nana's question.

The second major disagreement between the intellectuals and the chiefs was over the Burns Constitution of 1946. The educated elite were very unhappy about the Provincial Councils having to elect as many as nine provincial members to the Legislative Council; because the chiefs were by now regarded as "stooges" and "puppets" in district offices.<sup>2</sup> When the elections under the new constitution came the intellectuals had reason to say that their fears had been confirmed; for only two of their number (Dr. Danquah and the Rev. C.G. Baeta, a Presbyterian minister) were elected by the chiefs.

At this time too a rift was gradually developing between the farmers and the chiefs, who appeared to be too ready to accept government measures, especially about the controversial cocoa problem. Relations between the farmers and the chiefs worsened when in 1947 the latter proposed a scheme for the formation of a Central Farmers' Organisation, to be a medium between the farmers and the government.

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1. Ibid.

2. See the Gold Coast Observer, January 4, 1946.

A meeting of all the head farmers of the Colony, led by J.K. Ayew who had led a cocoa boycott by farmers in 1930, rejected the scheme saying that although the idea behind it might have been a good one, the chiefs had gone too far in dictating what form the union should take, as well as even providing the names of the persons to form its executive committee. It would appear that the prying nature of the chiefs' concern engendered a suspicion that government was trying to use them to kill the opposition of the farmers to its policies.

By 1946 even Dr. Danquah, who was still in the confidence of the chiefs, was not happy about their political role. In fact, in June he published an article showing his disapproval of chiefly representation in the Legislative Council.<sup>1</sup> Great indeed was his dissatisfaction with the chiefs; yet, at the same time he did not completely want to set them aside. Rather, he wished that they would voluntarily withdraw from the political forefront and operate behind the scenes through the intellectuals. Characteristically, if unrealistically, Danquah believed that the chiefs would of themselves see good enough reason to do so.

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1. See the Daily Echo, June 23, 1946.

We have already noted how the younger intellectuals had been advocating a new socio-political philosophy to be operated by a new, mass-oriented leadership. We have also seen (chapter 6) how the old established leadership tended to dissociate itself from the grievances of the Trade Union Congress and the Ex-servicemen's Union. Again, there was no consensus of outlook even among the old school (so-called partly because of their inclination to believe if for no other reason than political strategy, in the efficacy of the political leadership of the chiefs). In fact the ARPS all along regarded the UGCC as a rival movement, arguing that its formation was un-called for and that what ought to have been done should have been simply to strengthen the Society.

Indeed, in so far as it sought to unite all the divided forces in the society, the UGCC was faced with an almost impossible task from the onset. For to have identified with the younger intellectuals would have meant alienating the chiefs, on the other hand the younger intellectuals were not going to fully identify with the movement once the chiefs formed an important element. So that we get a situation whereby, ideologically, the Convention's leadership of intellectuals of the old school was lodged in between the conservatism of the chiefs and the radicalism of the new generation nationalists. Thus the UGCC may be said to have been an arrangement of convenience of a precarious kind, characterised not only by an ideological, but also an organizational, laxity reminiscent of the Gold Coast Youth Conference. Although there was no direct connection between the two movements (except in so far as Dr. Danquah was instrumental in the formation of both and some members of the latter belonged to the former), both of them derived their support from existing clubs,

societies and organizations, as well as being 'open' enough to contain conflicting forces. Also, like the Youth Conference, the Convention had adopted a join-if-you-like attitude until Nkrumah took over its organization.

It was not without great significance that a representative of the youth was reported to have warned the old school and the chiefs at the inauguration of the UGCC, that :

If you turn your back against us we shall go forward without you...you chiefs, and you our leaders; the day may come when there shall be a worker's party, but that day will only come if you let us down, turn your backs against us and fail to make this Convention work, leaving us to suffer oppression.

To be sure the Convention's leaders were not wanting in 'radical' talk indicative of a coming to grips with the mood of the times, George Grant, the Chairman, said at the inauguration;

Today we can no longer sit down and protest.  
Today we need more than a protective society.  
We need a creative society. The day of NEGATIVE PROTEST is over. The time has come now for positive action.

But taking <sup>K</sup>radical talk and taking radical action are not one and the same thing. Moreover, as a compromise movement, the Convention could at best satisfy only some of the demands of the competing parties.

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1. As quoted by the editorial of the Ashanti Pioneer, August 21, 1947.
  2. As reported by the editorial of the Ashanti Pioneer, August 11, 1947.

Thus, while the UGCC brought conflicting forces into dangerous juxtaposition it failed to harmonise them, partly because of the very nature of the conflicting forces. Indeed, it required no less than such a movement to be able to contain such conflicting personalities as Danquah and Nkrumah for as long as it did. Dr. Danquah does not lend himself to simple characterisation; however, vis-a-vis Nkrumah, who was clearly a non-traditionalist, a revolutionary and a supreme believer in man's responsiveness to effective organization and mass psychology, Dr. Danquah may be described as a traditionalist and a gradualist-evolutionist, as well as a supreme believer in the rationality of man and his preparedness, almost readiness, to use it in all cases.

We do not intend to detail the inner struggle which took place within the ranks of the UGCC leadership during the period when Nkrumah was its General Secretary, because it has been well done elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Suffice it to say that after considerable 'in-fighting' Danquah (representing the old school) and Nkrumah (representing the younger intellectuals) finally parted ways in June 1949, when Nkrumah broke away to form the C.P.P. What we wish to indicate here is the apparent change of outlook of the UGCC after the break.

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1. See Dennis Austin, either op. cit., chapter 2, especially pp.73-86; or "The Working Committee of the UGCC", Journal of African History, 11, 2, 1961.

This change may be said to have begun from September 2, 1949, when M.K. Apaloo read a 1000-word 'Declaration of Policy of the UGCC' at a meeting in Kumasi. He said that the Convention's policy was based on democratic socialism and its objective was to build a welfare state, which he defined as "a state in which the wealth and the means of production are utilised for the welfare of the people". Such a society, he said, would guarantee:

the minimum of the means of tolerable civilized standard of living for every person who is willing to contribute to the national welfare; the maximum distribution of private enterprise and ownership of property, alongside the highest attainment of personal liberty.

In an article written after the Kumasi meeting Dr. Danquah (in language hitherto associated with the younger intellectuals) said that through a process of dominating and exploiting the resources and the men of the colonies the 'imperialists' had brought about such social and economic conditions as necessitated a takeover of political initiative by the Gold Coast people. Notably, the vague demand for 'self-government at the earliest possible time' had changed to a specific demand for 'self-government this year'. He wrote:

This year the Imperial Power must...be obliged to yield up self-government to the people and their Chiefs, in the cool calculated English fashion of give and take.<sup>2</sup>

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1. See the Daily Echo, September 7, 1949.
  2. Ibid. See the article by Dr. Danquah entitled "PLAN TWO Goes into Full Operation".

He said that the UGCC would demonstrate that they "meant business" when they talked about independence.

We plan in 1949 our Political Policy to achieve for this Ghana a democratic socialism in which the welfare of all, upon an equality of opportunity, shall be the welfare of the State, or of the Government of the State.<sup>1</sup>

This new leash of 'radical' talk was in part an attempt to meet Nkrumah's new party on its own grounds. However, by the end of 1949 keen political observers knew that Nkrumah had secured a firmer hold on a greater number of people than the Convention. A London Times analysis of the political situation, quoted by the Daily Echo on September 24, 1949, noted, perhaps not without exaggeration, that:

Mr. Kwame Nkrumah...has a strong hold at the moment on the rank and file in the big towns where unemployment prevails...he is trying to enlist trade union forces in the political enterprise.

It was reported in the same issue of the paper that Nkrumah had formed a new group called the Gold Coast (later Ghana) Peoples' Representative Assembly with himself as the Organizing Secretary. He had invited the following organizations to be the sponsors of the Assembly: the Gold Coast Meslem Association, the Ex-servicemen's Union, the TUC, the CPP, the United Togoland Farmers Association, the Togoland Youth Association, the Ashanti Youth Association, the Northern Territories Youth Association, and others. Commenting on the Assembly,

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1. Idem.

the paper said in its editorial that it embraced the largest influential group that had ever been brought together, adding that with it Nkrumah had clearly beaten his political rivals.

Nkrumah's popularity depended on a multiple number of factors, including the following: his organizational ability; his identification with the politically underprivileged and discontented groups like the TUC and the Ex-servicemen; the appeal of his youthful personality and humble origins (e.g. he had no chiefly connection and no wealth); his lack of long association with the old leadership against whom opposition had been building up over the years; his ability to discern the mood of the people and feed them accordingly with what they wanted to hear; and his concern not to harmonise any conflicting forces, but simply to push and sell a political ideology and a style of political agitation. But perhaps the real link in the chain of factors was the Accra Evening News, "Nkrumah's pipe organ", as the Statesman called it.<sup>1</sup> Kwame Nkrumah built the paper, and the paper in turn built up Kwame Nkrumah.

True, much of what the paper said had already been said many times before by many nationalists. What was new about the paper was the consistency, persistency and loudness with which it hammered in the few themes to which it had completely dedicated itself. Ideologically the paper was one big effort to disparage the colonial government and the old school. Its editorial policy may be said to have been two-fold, namely, "eternal hostility to Imperialism", and

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1. December 23, 1949, p.3.

to sell Nkrumah to the people as the only man capable of delivering them from the colonial status; everything was geared to achieving this twin-aim. Incessantly it decried imperialism, colonialism, suppression, exploitation and mismanagement, and paraded Nkrumah's opponents as traitors to their country. It exploited the failings of the immediate past, reversing in the process some of the favourably accepted ideas about it, and connecting the old school with the government and therefore with the unpalatable ones. Everybody knew that the recent war which had brought untold hardships on all, was fought against fascism. The Accra Evening News now told the people that "BRITISH Imperialism in Colonial Africa has a striking resemblance to fascism".<sup>1</sup> The recent war which had been proclaimed to be "Hitler's war against the freedom of the world"<sup>2</sup> was now said to have been not a universal war but simply a "white man's war".<sup>3</sup> Again, hitherto it had been said that colonial Africans had fought in the war because of their courage and their belief in freedom. Not so, according to this paper: rather, they had been "dragged innocently" into it. Moreover, said the paper, the colonial peoples had been deceived and fooled by Britain; for although they had been made to understand that after the war they would become respectable people within the British Commonwealth, the truth was that there had been no gains to them: "Nothing but intensified, though concealed, Suppression and Oppression."<sup>4</sup>

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1. June 1, 1949.

2. African Morning Post, July 25, 1942.

3. Accra Evening News, June 1, 1949.

4. Idem.

To be sure, the Statesman tried to do for Danquah and the UGCC what the Accra Evening News was doing for Nkrumah and the CPP. The paper's competent and scholarly columns put across the case of the UGCC very well. But unlike the Accra Evening News, its appeal was to reason, and in a scholarly way it demolished the theories put forward by the CPP, trying to prove in the process that Nkrumah and his colleagues were at best second-rate intellectuals. It is doubtful whether most of the newly literate who cared to read the Statesman at all could have understood most of what that paper said; but perhaps it was unable to achieve for the UGCC as big a following as did the Accra Evening News for the CPP mainly because rational arguments represented a misplaced emphasis in view of the peculiar circumstances of the time.

The Accra Evening News appears to have been so successful in its aims that Nkrumah had been widely accepted as the "Apostle of Ghana Freedom"<sup>1</sup> even before the split occurred. So that within six months from its formal inauguration on Sunday, 12 June 1949, the CPP had become strong enough openly to confront the chiefs, the traditional repository and citadel of political power in the Gold Coast, as evidenced by Nkrumah's statement that "[for] those of our Chiefs who join forces with imperialists...there shall come a time when they will run away fast and leave their sandals behind them".<sup>2</sup>

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1. Reference to the Gold Coast as Ghana in the late Forties was rampant.

2. Accra Evening News, January 5, 1950.

It must be added that the popularity of the new movement became widespread both in the urban and rural areas. For example, the Ashantehene's own words to a gathering of all political bodies in the Kumasi area requested by the Kumasi Divisional Council on 30 December 1949, attested to the CPP's strength in Ashanti at the time.

He said:

Mr. Kwame Nkrumah is now your lord. You serve and worship him as if this nation is now under Nzima. Remember that the only nation that has withstood the Asanti's is the British nation. The Ashanti nation shall be wiped out before we serve the Nzimas.

But of course there is no better testimony of the CPP's strength and popularity than the results of the first general elections in the country in 1951, when it won an overwhelming majority of the contested seats, capturing all the five municipal seats and 29 out of the 33 rural seats. With the elections came responsible internal government, with the CPP forming the first African government. The colony had thus begun on its last stage of constitutional development towards complete independence, which was achieved on 6 March 1957, under the leadership of the CPP.

CHAPTER 8

C O N C L U S I O N S

(a) PHASES OF NATIONALIST DEVELOPMENT

We have been concerned in this study mainly with those influences on the evolution of nationalist ideology in the Gold Coast which could be said to have been internal to the nationalist movement itself; i.e. with the in-fighting between the nationalists themselves and between their groups, the factors which conditioned it, and the trends and patterns that resulted from it. In sum the essence or rationale of nationalist activity, especially by the 'radicals', was the rejection of colonial paternalism in social, political and economic matters, the necessary concomitant of that rejection being the play for self-determination and self-assertion in these matters. The underlying belief seems to have been that self-determination would almost inevitably lead to a higher standard of living for the generality of the people.

The period of nationalist activity covered in this study falls into two broad phases and brings us to the threshold of modern Ghanaian nationalism proper. Although necessarily related (for they were simply aspects of a single search), these phases however possess characteristics which distinguish them from one another. The first phase may be said to have come up to about the end of World War 1. During this period self-government, in the sense of Dominion status,

did not often enter into the calculations of the nationalists: for the notion of John Bull and the Union Jack as models or symbols of liberty, freedom, equality, right and justice were, except in isolated cases, hardly questioned or doubted. Indeed, many a nationalist felt that if only 'mother' Britain would accord her colonials the respectability they deserved as matured sons and daughters, by giving them a meaningful participation in their own government, all would be well under the cool and calm of the colonial umbrella.<sup>1</sup> And the nationalists took it upon themselves to demonstrate the basis of this respectability precisely because theories about the supremacy of the white race (very much in vogue in the nineteenth century) had depicted the African as sub-human by nature. Thus Mensah Sarbah, for example, announced his aim for writing the Fanti National Constitution (1895) to be to "demonstrate ... the existence of an African state" (Preface VIII). The first phase of nationalist activity was therefore a kind of renaissance in the true sense of a (re) discovery of the past.

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1. In its editorial on 30th June, 1906 (entitled "Our National Crisis"), the Gold Coast Leader, one of the staunchest nationalist papers of its time (1902-1930), expressed this idea thus: "We repeat that we could not sever our connection from Great Britain if we would; We would not, if we could. In all the criticism that we make on public affairs; in all the reforms that we seek; in all the expression that we give to the grievances of the people; let friend and foe understand once and for all, that we are animated by a conviction that the Gold Coast, in the near future, is going to become a great nation, a valuable link in the Imperial chain, and that the only obstacle in the way is the stupid policy of ignoring the sons of the soil, and treating them as if they were of no account in the development and advancement of their dear fatherland".

Indigenous social, cultural and political institutions were emphasised, so that nationalist activity at the time wore a close identification with chieftaincy as the totem or repository of traditionalism; and for the nationalists the most grievous crime committed by the colonial establishment was its supersession of the traditional jurisdiction of the chiefs, as vividly manifested in the controversy over the control of land.

A struggle for leadership is likely to occur in any movement comprising peoples; yet, except during the period immediately preceding the formation of the NCBWA, the first phase of nationalist activity was free from the large-scale in-fighting that came to characterize the later phase. In fact, this was a period of a wide degree of consensus among the nationalists, thus producing a cohesion between chief and intellectual in common opposition to the colonial government. But then this was the period when the nationalist movement was at its most elitist, comprising the chiefs, the (wealthy) merchants and the educated class, dominated by the lawyer-nationalist whose special importance derived from the constitutional nature of nationalist agitation, and also from the fact that he was about the best educated citizen then. The search for respectability has never been lost sight of in the history of nationalism, even if it was overshadowed in emphasis in the later phase.

The second phase began in the circumstances and conditions of the aftermath of World War I. As the Gold Coast Leader said on 5 January

1963: "Our experiences during the last few years, especially since the war, have convinced us that even under the Union Jack right and justice have to be seized by violence, so to speak". The new ideas and methods of agitation found expression in the NCBWA. The bases both of colonial rule and of chiefly authority now came to be questioned, and in the process the in-fighting among the nationalists began, ultimately resulting in a division of the intellectuals into pro- and anti-chief intellectuals. Mutual suspicion arose between chief and intellectual, and the chief was thereby driven into a readiness to ally with the colonial authority which at least gave the appearance of not wanting to tamper with the former's traditional status. The disruption in the nationalist camp brought the younger intellectuals into the forefront of nationalist politics, and with them came a new wave of radicalism.<sup>1</sup>

It was this new wave of radicalism that Wallace Johnson tried to focus and crystallize and inject new life and new tactics into. He was cut short. But the sort of human material required for the successful

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1. An interesting aspect of the new radicalism was the expression of unfavourable comment on well-known personalities who had previously been generally adored. For example, "our own Aggrey" was now said to have indulged in "dreams which may not mature till the millennium" (see editorial, Gold Coast Leader, June 15, 1929), and Ghandi's methods of agitation were said to be unsuitable to Gold Coast politics (see Gold Coast Times, May 10 - 17, 1930).

play of this kind of nationalist politics was increasing year by year as a result of increasing educational opportunities. The new literates sought outlets for their energies through social and literary organisations whose activities showed that their outlook was divergent from that of the old school nationalists. In fact the rapid spread of education meant that recruitment into the younger intellectual group was increasing rapidly throughout the Thirties and Forties to the disadvantage of the old school.<sup>1</sup> Again the social upheaval of the 1940s and the resultant widespread disaffection, plus the ferment of ideas, sharpened the conflict between the existing nationalist groups, as well as introducing new interest groups like the TUC and the ex-Soldiers, with well articulated grievances. Such indeed was the malleability of the (human) material when Nkrumah arrived on the scene with a "borrowed ... hammer from Moscow" that the moulding exercise was much facilitated.

Looking back from the vantage point of today the implications of this trend of affairs for the later development of nationalism may appear to be clear-cut. Thus, writing about the events following upon the Burns Constitution, Stewart Easton has said that

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1. According to Rosalind Ainslie, the number of elementary school leavers increased from 15,000 in 1902 to 65,000 in 1935. See her book, The Press in Africa, Victor Gollancz, 1966, page .

The special interest of the sequel to the Burns constitution ... lies in its classical archetypal form. Looking back ... we find it difficult to see how the sequel could have been other than it was, provided the figure of destiny, in this case Kwame Nkrumah, was present to fulfil the role of the hero in the tragi-comedy about to be played.

We may ask: why was it that neither Danquah nor the chiefs seemed to have realised this? Part of the answer is that social events tend to hide their future implications away from their human contemporaries, especially those who are the actors. And, after all, irrespective of the increasing numbers of the new literates, did the chiefs not feel secure (indeed were they not secure) in their leadership, so long as the colonial machinery remained? Similarly, vis-a-vis the new literates, was Danquah and the old school intellectuals not justified in feeling secure in their partnership with the chiefs? But this is only part of the answer. A large chunk of it still lies to be unravelled from the individual personalities of the nationalist drama. We shall be concerned here with only one such personality - Dr. J.B. Danquah - and in a very brief way. (It is, however, the view of this writer that until detailed biographical studies have been done about such of our nationalist figures as Mensah Sarbah, Attoh-Ahuma, Casely Hayford, Ofori Atta I, Kobina Sekyi, Dr. Danquah, etc., our knowledge of our nationalist history will remain sketchy).

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1. Stewart C. Easton, The Twilight of European Colonization, Methuen, 1961, page .

Dr. Danquah was a prolific writer and a good speaker; and one could use his writings and speeches to look at him from different viewpoints; as a conservative or a radical; as a man who genuinely believed in partnership with the chiefs, or an opportunist who flirted both with the colonial establishment and with the chiefs as a matter of political expediency. Taken together to form a total view of the man, these various aspects of him perhaps conduce to the verdict 'inconsistent'. If so, Danquah was consistent in his inconsistency! I find this to be as intriguing as it is remarkable, and I wish to indicate what appears to me to be at least a partial explanation of why the man acted the way he did.

The first thing that we have to realise is that both as a man and as a nationalist Danquah was, outstandingly, a character astride two worlds - the traditional and the Western. By birth he belonged to a chiefly family, before going abroad to study he had worked as secretary to the Abukwa stool, and as a scholar he researched deeply into Akan tradition. On the other hand, by his high Western educational attainments, he belonged to the educated elite, which, in fact, he led after 1938. Secondly, he performed very well in both worlds. In fact, his policy of rapprochement between chief and intellectual was no more than bringing together his two feet, hitherto wide apart. But such dualism could hardly have been free from contradiction, especially under conditions where consistency of purpose was never a strong point of

colonial policy. Nor was Danquah the only nationalist caught in the spokes of this duality. As a matter of fact, all those nationalists who took both worlds seriously and tried assiduously to compromise traditionalism and modernity exhibited this dualism, albeit in varying degrees. Herbert Macauley, perhaps as Europeanized as an African could be, and yet the leading nationalist of the Nigeria of his time, tempered his trenchant attacks on the colonial establishment with declarations of unflinching loyalty to the British Crown. Africanus Horton accepted European standards as the yardstick for assessing African advance, but at the same time argued for African self-reliance and a measure of divorce from Europe. Kobina Sekyi was a traditionalist-cum-modernist. Casely Hayford fought the Provincial Council system at its inception only to embrace it later on. Indeed, only those were free from this dualism who were prepared to damn the old Africa and build in its place a New Africa, irrespective of the consequences - the Azikiwes, the Wallace Johnsons and the Nkrumahs.

Dr. Danquah took the two worlds of colonial society seriously. And so it was that after years of political tutelage under his brother (Ofori Atta I) he turned round to quarrel with him; so it was that only a year after he had said that the Gold Coast was not ripe for dominion status he demanded the same status for the territory; so it was that a man who was said to be far ahead of his time in the early Forties because he asked for 'self-government now', was regarded as a drag on the colony's progress to self-rule towards the end of the decade;

so it was that, sponsored by the chiefs, he accepted office under the Burns Constitution, but turned back to lash at both the Constitution and the chiefs; - many more examples could be cited. But so it was, too, that, as a reader said in a letter to the Statesman of 9 December, 1949: "Perhaps no public man anywhere in the world, in his service to his country, has been subjected to so much public insults and abuses (sic) from his own people as Dr. J.B. Danquah." He might as well have added: 'from colonial officials too'. Danquah's dualism saddled him with entanglements which proved to be politically inexpedient in the circumstances of the post-war Gold Coast society. Moreover, superimposed on this dualism was also an idealism of a philosophical kind, an idealism which made him substitute altruism, goodwill and good intentions, and rationality, for political strategy. If to the scholar (who has a tendency to look for the logically neat, even in human personalities) Danquah is an enigmatic character, it is because of all the nationalists he was perhaps the truest product of the contradictions and the contortions which formed the confluence of traditionalism and Westernism.

(b) THE SUCCESS OF THE CPP

We have suggested that the conditions of the social upheaval in Gold Coast society of the 1940s make it largely true to say of Kwame Nkrumah that "the master arrived when the student was ready". And there is much truth in the contention that Nkrumah was pushed to the break with the UGCC by people like Dzenkle Dzewu, Kofi Baako,

K.A. Gbedemah and Saki Scheck.<sup>1</sup> But although Nkrumah might have ridden on the wings of popular discontent, that does not detract from his political ingenuity; for political ingenuity, in this particular respect, consists precisely in the ability to isolate interest groups and use them to advantage.

Until Nkrumah became the secretary of the UGCC he was virtually unknown in the Gold Coast, except perhaps as the "Special Correspondent of the African Press Agency, London", in which capacity he made occasional appearances in the local press. This meant that unlike Danquah, whose long association with the nationalist movement had encumbered and fettered him with the old methodology of nationalist agitation, Nkrumah, the new man, was thereby free to break new ground. In this wise he found the application of methods of mass mobilization very useful in rallying the people for political action. The old-school nationalists were elitist, even aristocratic, in outlook, but they were no imperialist stooges. Neither would it be meaningful to account for Nkrumah's success in terms of his being uninhibited by value commitments. The appeal and success of the CPP, as against the UGCC, lay more in its populism, in its complete distrust of the sincerity of Britain to effect those changes deemed necessary, and in its organizational methods, rather than in the contents of its demands.

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1. George Grant said about Nkrumah: "I regret that Mr. Nkrumah was forced by certain elements to resign" (Daily Echo, August 17, 1949, p.1). Those elements were both within and outside the leadership of the UGCC.

(c) EXTERNAL FACTORS

Throughout the history of Gold Coast nationalism external influences have been at work, and although they do not form our basic concern in this study we must write briefly about them. Usually, it is meant by external influences those that operate from outside the country. However, we shall include among them here those influences which operated from within the Gold Coast itself but which were not indigenous in origin.

The first body of such influences may be grouped under the head, 'Western education'. This gave to the nationalists the English language as a common transtribal medium of communication; which in turn made possible the English-language press as a suitable vehicle of nationalist ideas. Western education also introduced the nationalists to such (Western) ideas as democracy, popular franchise, and 'no taxation without representation', which concepts they then threw back in the faces of colonial officials. Again, Western education produced what has been called the African middle class, composed mainly of the intelligentsia and the merchants, who formed the backbone of the new nationalism.<sup>1</sup>

We may also mention under this broad head the coming of cash economy, wage labour, commerce and commercial mining. Introduced into

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1. See, e.g. Martin Kilson, Jr., "Nationalism and Social Classes in British West Africa", Immanuel Wallerstein (Ed.), Social Change: the Colonial Situation, John Wiley and Sons, Inc, 1966, pp.533-550.

a predominantly subsistence (farming) economy, these new activities represented the beginnings of the movement from that economy to a money economy, from a rural to an urban (industrial) economy. This process has been accompanied by large scale movements of people from the rural areas into the towns, followed by the formation of non-tribal associations like the TUC, based largely on economic interests; and these have accelerated the spread of nationalism during periods of socio-economic hardships, like the World War II days.

The second body of influences has come in the form of a 'back to Africa' ideological inspiration from what the native press preferred to call 'the exiled African' in America and the West Indies.<sup>1</sup> We have already noted the influence of Blyden on nationalists like Casely Hayford. Marcus Garvey's ideas dominated the West Africa of the 1920s, and his paper, the Negro World, is known to have been widely read and discussed by West African nationalists. In an even more concrete way Du Bois made an impact on the nationalists through the pan-African movement, Nkrumah having been an active participant in the 1945 Manchester Conference. And before he finally came down to Ghana in 1959 George Padmore had been writing to the press since the 1930s expounding ideas about socialism.

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1. See George Shepperson, "Notes on Negro American Influences on the Emergence of African Nationalism", Journal of African History, Vol.1, No.2, 1960, pp.299-312.

Finally, a body of external influences came with the two World Wars, especially the Second - ideas about liberty, justice, common humanity, self-determination, etc. These ideas came to a people who had been ripened for a nationalist revolution by a long history of sustained nationalist agitation and large-scale socio-economic hardships. Truly did a correspondent of the Gold Coast Observer say in September, 1944:

Let no one make the sad mistake to imagine that the Gold Coast youth today listen to the B.B.C. or read from the foreign and local newspapers without meditating seriously upon the many problems facing them and the country.

Moreover, the nationalists believed that their aspirations and struggle for self-government were endorsed by the Atlantic Charter, the UN and Russia.

(d) THE PRESS

Having read this work through, the reader can only be reminded that the indigenous press has played an enviable role in the development of Gold Coast nationalism. For the idea of the native press as the champion of the peoples' interests and rights is as old as that press itself; Throughout its history, from the 1850s, the native press has been characterised by a strong determination not to compromise the peoples' interests, "regardless of the frowns of King or Kaiser"! It has acted as a check on the 'lawless propensities of officials'

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1. Gold Coast Times, March 28, 1874.

decrying abuses and pointing out ways to reform and improvement.<sup>1</sup> Colonial officials worried about what the native press said and, at one time or another, sought by legislation or emergency powers to place limits on what it could say.

As the most important single factor for social, political and economic education, and as the only medium outside the Legislative Council available to the nationalists for expressing disapproval and discontent, the press (this 'fourth and only estate') felt that it had a duty toward the progress of the country. This was the only justification why the nationalists clung so tenaciously to the press, an estate which in those days hardly brought in any monetary returns from its limited and circumscribed circulation, was produced under unimaginable financial and technical strains, as well as being characterised by a fluctuating, even episodic, and unpredictable life span. Increasingly, the indigenous press came under the control of the politically-minded new generation of nationalist-intellectuals, so that it became a tremendous influence in preparing the Gold Coast peoples for a revolution against colonialism.

(e) THE ROOTS OF RADICAL NATIONALISM

The relative neglect of the period 1930-1945 by writers on Gold

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1. In this it was not always fore-sighted. For example, it criticised Guggisberg's economic measures, including the Takoradi harbour, as wasteful and unnecessary.

Coast nationalism has unwittingly engendered the idea that apart from the activities of the Youth Conference the period was more or less a holiday for nationalist activity. It was not. Rather it was an important period in the history of the development of nationalism, a period during which the foundations of the ideological ferment and the patterns of conflict which burst so forcefully upon the political scene in the latter half of the 'forties began to crystallize. Moreover, it is these emerging patterns that make it meaningful at all to refer to the events of World War II as a catalyst; for, after all, a catalyst only speeds up an on-going process but does not originate one itself. Thus an understanding of the forces and trends shaping up during the period throws more light on the events of the post-War years, making them appear less sudden than they would otherwise seem, as well as cautioning against the tendency to over-emphasize (and make a fetish of) the soldierly element in the rise of radical nationalism. Again, if the Gold Coast possessed in 1946 "an air of confidence and stability" it was in reality a false appearance, a make-belief, bolstered by superficial analysis and a curious logic which colonial officials were apt to employ. From a constitutional point of view the Burns Constitution of 1946 conceded much to the people. Accordingly, the chiefs applauded it and the old school intelligentsia did the same, at least for the time being. The usual conclusion was then reached that therefore the country as a whole was happy. This logic was as dangerous as it was curious: for the happiness of a society is a

function of the harmony of its sectional interest groups, and in 1946 those groups were not just the chiefs and the old school intelligentsia, but also the younger intellectuals of the press, the TUC, the Ex-Servicemen, the farmers, etc. And some of these might have cared little about constitutional development.

The great divide which occurred in the nationalist movement in mid-1949 may be said to represent the end of proto-modern nationalist activity and the rise of modern nationalism proper. By shifting the focus of nationalist politics from the Joint Provincial Council of Chiefs, the events subsequent to the break led to a displacement of the peoples' loyalties from their traditional ethnic bases (which the chiefs represented) and began the period of re-alignment of the loyalties to a new, central, focal point, the party. This was accompanied by a decline in the influence which the chief, qua chief, had traditionally wielded in politics at the centre.

#### (f) LEGACIES OF PROTO-MODERN NATIONALISM

The style and temper of proto-modern nationalist politics has left legacies which impinge on the style of politics today. First, the lack of synthesis between traditional (ascribed) and secular (acquired) legitimacy makes the question of the role which chiefs should play in modern politics a moot one even today. Secondly, although for some time Nkrumah seemed to have altered the elitist nature of the leadership of

the nationalist movement, this proved to have been only temporary.

In the early Fifties Nkrumah needed the masses for his political leadership and he used them accordingly. But once independence had been won, and once he began to feel secure in his leadership, he seemed to have decided that the partnership of the masses must end. Thus the nationalist movement once again assumed an elitist nature, finally culminating in one man rule.

Thirdly, although it should be no justification for what Nkrumah did, bearing in mind that the Gold Coast arrived at independence with less than a decade of legitimate opposition, it may be said that perhaps Nkrumah's treatment of the opposition was not without precedent or parallel in the nationalist history. For our nationalist history has never tolerated the contemporaneous existence of viable rival movements. The NCBWA captured the ARPS. The Guggisberg Constitution was deliberately constructed to kill the NCBWA. The brain behind the Youth League was expelled. The Youth Conference amalgamated all clubs, societies and unions; and the UGCC aimed to do the same thing. If Nkrumah's suppression was much more severe and his methods differed, part of the reason was that he had the control of the means of coercion in his hands. Perhaps what this indicates is that if the concept of opposition as a legitimate instrument of democracy is to be institutionalized in Ghanaian society, the (political) leadership should comprise men whose belief in it is so strong as to make them wish consciously to dedicate themselves to its cultivation.

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