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IN THIS ISSUE

EDITORIAL	1
National Self-Reliance or Dependence?	
POLITICS	2
Foreign Participation in State Enterprises:	
The Case of Abbott Laboratories (Ghana) Ltd.	
A. Radix	
THE ECONOMY	8
Animal Production in Ghana—I	
L. N. K. Ababio	
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS	10
The Russian Phenomenon	
K. A. B. Jones-Quartey	
EDUCATION	11
African Universities and the Western Tradition—II	
L. H. Ofose Appiah	
OBSERVER NOTEBOOK	14
Economic Recovery a Precondition of Civilian Rule?—A Fallacy	
Sale of State Farms	
LETTERS	15
National Self-Respect	
Around the World on the Nation's Business	
Administrative Arrogance	
Nigeria (2)	
"American Intervention"	
Crop Production in Ghana	
The Kotoka Trust Fund	
The Bawku (Kusasi) District	
COMMENTARY	20
Report on Ghana, by "The [Expert] Ugly American"	
K. B. Koto	
When the Abbot[] Came Marching In	
Kontopiaat	
BOOK REVIEW	23
Friends Not Masters: A Political Autobiography	
Reviewed by Yaw O. Safu	
DRAMA	25
The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre—In Retrospect	
Morre Bossman	

EDITORIAL

NATIONAL SELF-RELIANCE OR DEPENDENCE?

FOREIGN private participation in economic development in developing countries is, in current theories of development economics, almost regarded as axiomatic. United States and Russia—the two super-powers in the world to-day—relied heavily on foreign investment. However, the role of foreign participation was temporary, for no country can fully develop on the benevolence and goodwill of other nations.

In post-coup Ghana we are not only relying heavily on foreign investments, but seem to be doing so on the most flesh-creeping economic terms. Elsewhere in this issue are articles on the latest contract the Ghana Government has signed with an American firm, Abbott Laboratories. The terms of the contract are so inimical to the long term interests of Ghana that, on reading it, one begins to wonder whether the legal and economic advisers of the N.L.C. have the economic interests of the country at heart. Even though we hold the majority of shares in the contract, contrary to orthodox notions of business management, we have surrendered our right to control this joint enterprise to the American firm by assuring them of "complete control of the management". This is just one of the many contracts we have signed with foreign companies since the coup. The state of public knowledge about the contracts is most imperfect and inadequate.

In agriculture, we have embarked on two agricultural projects with foreign companies. The two projects involve large tracts of land—260,000 acres, all told. In view of the large tracts of land involved the public has to know something of the nature of the agreement entered into. Caution is needed in alienating land in Ghana; the alienation of land by the British colonial government in 1896 brought into being the first organised political group in this country—the Aborigines Rights Protection Society (1897). We have, furthermore, signed an agreement with Norcement to manage a cement factory at Tema. The Norcement company receives 25 per cent of the annual profits which, on present available figures, work out to about NC480,000 a year. The foreign company's contribution is just five persons to manage the factory. These five people could have been hired by the Ghana Government at a cost of less than NC48,000 per annum. The terms of these contracts, then, are so prejudicial to our national interests that a legitimate suspicion arises as to how some of the State Enterprises were disposed of. To say all this is not crudely to encourage the emergence of anti-foreign sentiments in Ghana. It is simply to raise the question as to whether those who are res-

possible for advising the N.L.C. on these contracts are so naively trusting as to believe that foreign businesses will work necessarily in our interests. All businessmen all over the world would like to get the most favourable terms whenever they contribute their capital to develop other countries. This was true of the Communist countries and Britain under the old regime and is true now of the United States. In the realm of business altruism is the ultimate in business folly. It is the duty of whoever negotiates on our behalf to protect our national interests. On the evidence available, it would not be surprising if our present negotiators are accused by a future civilian government with careless dissipation of national funds. The spirit of these contracts is clearly one of **dependence** on foreigners, but every self-respecting nation believes in **national self-reliance**, for the former policy is a policy of national suicide.

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Politics

FOREIGN PARTICIPATION IN STATE ENTERPRISES:

The Case of Abbott Laboratories (Ghana) Ltd.

By

A. Radix

EVERYONE knew at the time of the coup that one of the most vulnerable points in the country's economy was the state enterprises. Some would even say that state enterprises were the Achilles' heel of the country's economy. Few Ghanaians were disposed to dispute the thesis that we would have to call on foreign aid to save the NC80,000,000 or so that the old regime invested in these enterprises. In spite of this, many Ghanaians who are not in principle opposed to foreign private participation in state enterprises have of late been complaining more and more against what they take to be a virtual surrender of our state enterprises to foreigners. The purpose of this article is to give clinical attention to the agreement governing foreign participation in the State Pharmaceutical Corporation and, in the process, to try to find out whether there is any basis for the fears that are now so prevalent among Ghanaians.

A superficial reading of the agreement may lead one to conclude that the idea behind it is disarmingly simple and attractive. The State Pharmaceutical Corporation is being abolished. In its place a new joint company is to be formed to run the factory which will produce the pharmaceuticals that are needed in Ghana and may also be exported to other West African countries. The partners in this joint company are the government of Ghana and an American firm called Abbott Laboratories (ABBOTT). The name of this joint company is, somewhat paradoxically, Abbott Laboratories (Ghana) Ltd., although it is misleadingly referred to in the agreement as ABBOTT-GHANA. The share capital of the joint company is NC1,000,000 and of this the share of the Ghana government is 55 per cent, leaving the remaining 45 per cent to ABBOTT. In other words, the Ghana government is to contribute NC550,000 and ABBOTT NC450,000, which means that the Ghana government has a majority of the shares.

Payment of Share Capital

How are these shares to be paid? The Ghana government is to pay its share not in cash but in the form of buildings, equipment, materials etc. The direct words deserve to be quoted:—

The GOVERNMENT shall make its contribution for its issued shares as follows: the GOVERNMENT will contribute all buildings, equipment, materials, and supplies now owned by it for the purpose of pharmaceutical manufacturing, including all managerial residences and outbuildings as well as the grant of a lease on the real property on which these assets are located. **The foregoing assets shall be valued at one million New Cedis (Emphasis mine)**

ABBOTT shall pay its share of NC450,000 in one lump sum in United States dollars. However:

Such payment shall be made after formation of ABBOTT-GHANA and after all necessary documents have been formally issued including Regulations (Articles of Incorporation and By-laws), AID guarantees, and assurances by the various GOVERNMENT agencies and the Bank of Ghana.

It will be noticed that the buildings, equipment etc. that the Ghana government contributes to the Joint Company as its share "shall be valued at one million New Cedis", but that the government's share is NC550,000. What is to happen to the remaining NC450,000? According to the agreement this is to be loaned to the Joint Company at an interest rate of 6 per cent per annum. The loan, however, is to be repaid only after the tax exemption period of ten years and that too provided profits are available, although it can be repaid earlier if the Joint Company chooses to do so.

In addition to all this, the Government is to grant to the Joint Company a lease on the real property on which the factory is situated for a period of ninety-nine years and the lease may be renewed at the option of ABBOTT for another ninety-nine years. "There shall be no increase in the annual rental at any time". Yet if the lease is terminated at any time for any reason whatever, the Joint Company will be reimbursed the then current fair market value of the buildings and equipment on the real property.

Clearly the Ghana government is contributing a lot. What about ABBOTT? Permit the agreement itself to speak:

ABBOTT shall be assured of **complete control of the management** and, in order to achieve this, ABBOTT shall have a majority of the Board of Directors and the voting control of the company, including the right to appoint the Managing Director, the Chairman of the Board of Directors, and the Secretary. (Emphasis mine)

Again,

ABBOTT shall have complete responsibility and control of the operation of ABBOTT-GHANA including, but not limited to, selection and discharge of personnel, determination of products to be manufactured and sold... marketing organisation and controls, pricing of products, source of raw materials...

ABBOTT will also furnish to the Joint Company technical, consulting and management services in all imaginable areas of business and for the performance of these functions the Joint Company will have to pay all the expenses and salaries of the employees who will be nominated by ABBOTT.

Nor is this all. The government has undertaken not to grant any other company manufacturing products in Ghana similar to those of the Joint Company a status which is the same as that of the Joint Company or similar to it during the tax exemption period, that is to say, for ten years. The government has also undertaken to limit the number of import licences for the import of completely manufactured products competitive with those produced and/or marketed by the Joint Company for ten years or to impose embargoes on tariffs on such products. Furthermore, the government has agreed to "facilitate the issue of import licence to cover **finished and semi-finished products** including trade marked products under the ABBOTT GHANA label." (Emphasis mine). Lastly, the government has agreed to appoint the Joint Company the exclusive supplier of all products manufactured by it to government hospitals and agencies and the Armed Forces.

What is in a Name?

The above is a bare summary of the agreement signed on June 3, 1967. It is perhaps enough to make the eyes of any well-meaning Ghanaian boggle. Nevertheless it may not be amiss to cross a few "Ts" and dot a few "Is". What this agreement does is to hand over the State Pharmaceutical Corporation completely to Abbott Laboratories of Illinois. That is what is meant by handing over the management and technical control to them without any reservation whatever. That is what is meant by giving them the power to appoint the Chairman of the Board of Directors, a majority of the Directors, the Managing Director, and the Secretary. Is it not trying the patience of Ghanaians too much to give so much to those who have only a minority of the shares and to whom we have given a loan equivalent to their

share? The very name of the company is significant. Instead of writing into the agreement that the name of the Joint Company will be GHANA ABBOTT, since we have already built and equipped the factory, it has been agreed to call it Abbott Laboratories (Ghana) Ltd. Does this not suggest that the Joint Company is only a subsidiary of ABBOTT of Illinois? In view of the complete surrender to ABBOTT it appears that the name was accepted in a moment of "Freudian lapse" when the sub-conscious mind, tired of concealing things, blurted out the truth!

Is it necessary to grant this Company any monopoly rights, even for a day? Are we not aware of the dangers of monopoly? Why should a manufacturing firm be given the sole right to market its products? Why should the Ghana government facilitate the issue of import licences for the finished products of ABBOTT of America? Or is it being suggested that the products of Abbott Laboratories (Ghana) Ltd. will be "finished" even before they enter the country? There is very little doubt that this agreement will enable Abbott Laboratories of Illinois to gain monopolistic control of the Ghana market for its products.

Financial Aspects

There is some difficulty in understanding the financial aspects of this agreement. The Ghana government has to pay its contribution (in the form of buildings, equipment etc.) without waiting for the other side to fulfil any conditions. But ABBOTT is not to make its contribution until everything is literally signed, sealed and delivered. Wherein lies equity? The forced loan—that is what it is—granted by the Ghana government is not to be repaid unless the Joint Company makes profit. It does not take an economist to know that profits are declared only after expenses have been met. So, in this particular case, the salaries, allowances and all other expenses to the personnel of ABBOTT will have to be paid—and these, according to the agreement, are determined by ABBOTT itself—and their luxury bungalows and the usual appurtenances of the American way of life paid for before profits will be declared. It is doubtful whether after all these deductions anything much will be left for the Ghana government. In any case, how will the profits, if any is realized, be shared between the partners? The agreement is meaningfully silent over this. Let it not be suggested that common-sense and usual practice dictate that they should be shared in accordance with the proportions held of the share Capital. The same common-sense and usual practice should have made the

Ghana government have a majority of the Board of Directors, nominate the Chairman of the Board etc. Let no one be surprised if the profits are shared at a ratio that is inversely proportional to the ratios of the share capital.

Valuation of Buildings

There are so many reprehensible features of this agreement that it is impossible to comment on all of them in one article. But it would be a serious omission not to comment on the valuation of the buildings, equipment etc, which the Ghana government is contributing as its share. On October 12, 1966, the cost of the buildings alone (factory block, workshop block, staff bungalows etc.) was estimated at £G686,667.* Since the construction was pre-financed by a French firm, S.E.T.O.M., the interest charges must be added to the cost—and the interest is 6 per cent per annum (since July the cost has gone up considerably, thanks to devaluation). Add to this the "equipment, materials, and supplies" which have been poured into the factory since its construction and the furnishings in the bungalows. It has not been possible to get the exact cost of these but a conservative estimate by authoritative Ghanaians put the total cost of what is being headed over to the Company at "not below £1,500,000" b.d. (i.e. before devaluation). The agreement, however, firmly declares that these assets "shall be valued at one million new cedis (NC1m.)", that is at £500,000. Less than one-third the original cost (excluding the annual interest)! The question is, how did the assets come to be so disastrously devalued? Our investigations have failed to elicit any satisfactory answer. There is need for a public statement to explain this most curious feature of the agreement. It is not a satisfactory answer to argue that through the corruption of the C.P.P. the cost of the factory was inflated. We, of course, know that this is true up to a point. The conclusion to be drawn from this, however, is not that the value of the assets of the country should therefore be arbitrarily whittled down, but that appropriate, rational method should be adopted to assess the present value of the buildings, equipment etc. Was this done or not? Who were the valuers who estimated the present value to be less than a third of the original? Or, was the new value in fact fixed arbitrarily?

Sale of State Enterprises

We now ask the most basic question, a question that touches policy on all state enterprises. Was

* FF10.918m. at an exchange rate of FF15.9 to the £G1.

it really necessary to sign this agreement handing over this state enterprise to a foreign firm? To answer this question we must know the reasons for negotiating in the first place. There are only two reasons that are usually advanced. First, we need foreign exchange. This can be dismissed out of hand in this particular case. Abbott Laboratories are bringing in no more than NC450,000 in foreign exchange. If we were interested in preserving our national property we could easily have provided this ourselves, leaving outside borrowing to cover the big debits. Secondly, we are informed, we need management. Although it is true that we need efficient management it does not follow from this that the only way to get this is to surrender an inch of Ghana's property to any foreigner. **We can hire efficient management and pay for it, just as we can hire technical men and pay for their services.** We commend to whoever is responsible for this disastrous agreement the way Ghana Airways has dealt with this aspects of its problems, imperfect though that solution is.

There are two observations on management to be made in this connexion. It is, firstly unfortunate and un-Ghanaian to pretend that there are no efficient managers in Ghana. The inefficient and corrupt political appointees of the Rogue-Dictator should be given the sack (instead of sacking the workers). The rest should be given a free hand to rationalize their businesses, in particular they should be freed from unnecessary political interference. This was how the hotels, for example, should have been handled instead of unnecessarily handing them over to another American firm. If after this there is a genuine need to inject efficient management from outside these can be hired through arrangement with international organisations (after all the State Enterprises Secretariat is doing something of this nature) or governments. This is the second observation on management. There are two clear advantages to be derived from hiring management rather than surrendering to foreign firms. In the first place we retain our freedom to safeguard our national interests within reasonable limits. Secondly, we stand to gain economically. The example of the cement factory at Tema is instructive in this regard. The Norcement which in effect is managing the factory takes 25 per cent of the profits. The factory is currently reputed to be making NC160,000 profit each month, thus giving Norcement NC40,000 each month, the equivalent of NC 480,000 per year. And all this is earned by contributing only five people to manage the factory. Supposing these five people had been

hired and each paid on the average as much as NC20,000 per annum the same efficiency would have been achieved at a cost of NC100,000 per annum and the remaining NC380,000 per annum could have been devoted to providing more employment on something equally desirable in these days of economic stringency.

Claims and Truth

To buttress the claim that new management is so badly needed that ABBOTT must take over the factory the preamble to the agreement makes a number of statements the distance between which and the truth is rather wide. It claims, for example, that the pharmaceutical manufacturing facilities "are not being operated and cannot be operated without additional contributions of", also that these facilities are "presently inoperative." The truth is that the factory was in fact making trial runs when negotiations started to hand it over, and **definite pharmaceutical materials had been produced which can be supplied to Ghana hospitals now.** Anyone who doubts this can go there and ask to be taken round (if the new managers will permit!) The preamble also claims that ABBOTT "is one of the largest producers of high quality pharmaceutical products in the world..." This is an example of what secondary school boys call "exaggeration for the sake of emphasis": here actually it is "exaggeration for the sake of impression" and no doubt our government has been taken in! There is a monthly called MIMS which sets out pharmaceuticals which are "available for prescription in general practice in Great Britain". All reputable pharmaceutical firms, including ABBOTT, are listed by this monthly. The issue for February, 1964, (it was not easy getting the most recent issues) lists only thirteen items as manufactured by ABBOTT (our counting may, of course, not be entirely accurate), and under "Anti-malarials" there is not a single mention of ABBOTT! Even more surprising is the fact that not a single one of the thirteen products listed in MIMS as produced by ABBOTT is on the list of pharmaceutical products issued by the Ministry of Health showing the products that are in usual demand in Ghana!

Political Aspects

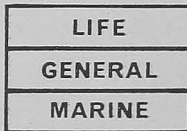
So far, nothing has been said about the specifically political aspects of this agreement, but in the end these may overshadow everything else. No Ghanaian can forget the race problem in America. Even though we do not like being

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rude to our visitors by shouting about it, we pride ourselves in this country on our non-racial approach to problems. It will be a terrible mistake for anyone to take too much for granted and to think that because no Ghanaian has been known to shout from rooftops about racialism in America we can tolerate racial insults in our own country. Those who negotiate with American firms must always remember their background. American businessmen do not train their negroes to do skilled jobs; the only negroes they know are unskilled workers, and they, of course, like them best that way. They should not be blamed if they think there are no qualified Ghanians around. They should be assured, however, that such "contradictions in terms" like highly skilled Africans are **already** in existence and that we know that there are five such people with the State Pharmaceuticals Corporation. We may add that any attempt to downgrade them will lead to trouble. Another trait in the general American character (we know literally hundreds who are exemptions but there are millions of people in America) is that they do not live among negroes with whom they have been in the same society for three hundred years and upwards. One can hardly expect them, then, to live among Africans who have hardly reached the level of the Afro-American. Already authentic information suggests that three of the Ghanaian senior staff, technically qualified people, are being asked to quit their bungalows to make way for the American managers some of whom are right now staying in the Continental rather than move to the empty bungalows. The Ghanaians, who have shared the compound for some time with Hungarians, have, we are reliably informed, refused to move, since they can see no rhyme or reason in the request. We congratulate them on their display of courage and we can assure them that when the time comes for them to be forcibly moved out we will see whether Ghanaian soldiers or policemen or American GIs or marines will move them out.

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For the purposes of this exercise, "past students of the University of Ghana" include students of the University College of the Gold Coast (1948-57) and the University College of Ghana (1957-61).

REGISTRAR

The Economy

ANIMAL PRODUCTION IN GHANA—I

By
L. N. K. Ababio

ANIMALS do not produce for man as a matter of course. Man has to provide more than their basic needs before they can produce. That is, man has to feed, house, select, breed, keep them healthy, train, and love them for maximum returns from them. Compared with game, yields from livestock are more reliable but much depends mostly on man's own efforts.

The importance of animal protein in our diet has been emphasised by Dr. F. T. Sai and many others in special studies of local conditions. The important question now is how best we can improve the animal protein situation economically in the short term and in the long run.

In the abandoned Seven Year Development Plan, it was correctly, I think, suggested to develop as priorities the production of fish, poultry including eggs, and pig because these are prolific, quick-maturing and high-yielding. Every endeavour has its problems. But if a principle is right it is imperative to follow it with conviction, dedication and honesty.

What happened to the fish? The N.L.C. Commission of Inquiry into the operations of the Fishing Corporation is still on. But certain observations are in order. The inefficiency, malpractices and dishonesty with which fish was being produced with state money for the people, left the people without the fish. Tons of fish brought in at the harbour sometimes had to be taken back and dumped into sea so that the boats crew could go about their business of catching fish. Fish consignments for the people were often diverted to neighbouring countries for illegitimate transactions. Fish which did land in the overstocked coolers at Tema was diverted from needy rural centres with empty coolers to coastal, urban centres for clandestine private deals. The small private operator with outboard motor canoe, who could have kept rural supplies going as in the times before trawlers, was almost pushed out of business on the sea and land by technically superior state corporations manned by dishonest, selfish officials.

Things should now be different. The government using public money has a duty to the people, most of whom live in the rural areas. The State Fishing Corporation should be able to catch and distribute fish more cheaply than the present private producer. The Fishing Corporation should

therefore concentrate on supplying rural areas where the nutrition of the farmer is essential for the recovery of the economy.

Poultry and pig, when properly pushed, should be able to augment fish to reduce animal protein malnutrition greatly in the short run. The main problem with these two has been the feed. This is so because poultry and pig depend mostly on small grains, notably corn, which is an important staple food for our people. Small grains therefore become periodically expensive and prohibitive as animal feed. At present, due to corn gifts from friendly countries there is an apparent boom in poultry and egg production, though not enough to improve the diet of rural peoples.

Given day-old chicks, it takes only 3 months to produce poultry meat and some 5 months for eggs if the feed is available. The cost of feed for a dozen eggs and a pound of poultry meat is always higher than the cost of a day-old chick imported. Therefore if poultry feed is not produced locally the country may run into the false economy of importing the more expensive corn to feed the day-old chick which is cheaper to import. The point is that the breeding hen which produces the local day-old chick also needs the expensive feed!

Corn yields are admittedly low in Ghana. But not all land suitable for corn is under cultivation. Furthermore, many parts of the country produce two crops of corn in the year under rain-fed culture. The reasonable policy then should have been for the State Food Marketing Board to fix and announce attractive control wholesale price for corn for this year's local crop, as the Cocoa Marketing Board does for cocoa, and abandon any expectations of grain gifts for next year. A similar approach should be adopted for oil seeds such as groundnuts, oil palm, cotton seed, and copra for which local oil extracting factories exist. These factories for a long time have been operating 3 to 5 months in the year for lack of sufficient supplies from local sources. The point here is that the oil seed cakes also play an important part in poultry and pig rations.

It has long been demonstrated at the Legon Animal Research Farm that 10 per cent fish meal added to local oil seed cakes together with only very limited imports of mineral-vitamin supplements give excellent results. Why can't fish meal be produced from the fish dumped back into the sea? Were it not for oil seed cakes imported from Ghana and elsewhere to Britain during the second world war, their poultry industry would have collapsed; even now they depend greatly on them and we are yet to show that

we can use our own resources!

Long Term Problems

Let me now turn to the problem of producing animal protein for the country from a long term view. The long term problems of the livestock industry are related to animals with large individual yields which are, however, less prolific and slow-maturing, and have long generation intervals. These animals are the ruminants—cattle, sheep and goats. They give us meat, milk, hides and skins. Here the limiting factors are not due so much to poor stock as to dry season grazing and water shortage. This results in the animals losing about 10 per cent of their liveweight every year, which in turn prolongs their time of maturity. The animals subsist only on poor grazing which lowers their fertility, growth capacity and milk yields.

Coupled with the feed problem, endemic diseases such as trypanosomiasis carried by tsetse flies, pleuropneumonia, rinderpest and river blindness limit the distribution of livestock and man in all the natural grassland areas. Due to the diligent, unassuming hard work of the Animal Health Division, at least rinderpest and pleuropneumonia have been controlled. But, that the environment of the livestock should be improved before the genetic improvement of the animals does not seem obvious to many, including unfortunately some government officials and their transient foreign experts. Thus, now and then there appear experts and local converts who press for the large-scale importation of temperate stock to produce wool, meat, fresh milk, cheese and butter! Meanwhile, our livestock are in a predictable dynamic biological balance with their external environment, notably poor feed and diseases.

(To be continued).

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International Affairs

THE RUSSIAN PHENOMENON

By K. A. B. Jones-Quartey

IN JUST 50 years the original Bolsheviks and their successors have converted a sprawling liability of a country into one of the two most powerful states ever developed in world history. In 1917, Russia was an impoverished and brutalised peasant community of hungry, ignorant, and wretched millions, long ruled by some of the most incredible autocrats that ever lived; today, exactly 50 years later, she is a disciplined nation regularly producing scientific and technological marvels costing billions and dazzling even its only rival in the field. It was a very long way to travel in 50 years, but Russia did it.

If one asks how it was done, however, the other side of the "moon"—the "darker" side—then begins to show. The transformation of life in Russia through one of the most astonishing revolutions in human history has been achieved at incalculable human cost. Iron control over every aspect of life had reduced the people to robots of the state: the state, incarnated in the Communist Party, was, and still is, the ideal; the individual was its nameless, faceless, voiceless servant.

Terror stalked the land, as Josef Stalin, tactical successor to Lenin the strategist—who was in turn the successor of Marx the theorist—executed, exiled, or otherwise ruthlessly silenced thousands of non-conformists, suspected non-conformists, and potential non-Conformists. Life for the vast majority of the Russian people, in short, became an insipid, joyless, and brutish existence; for many it became a living death; and for some more it often and suddenly ended in a bloody, untimely grave.

Stalinist Machine

Since Stalin's death in 1953 his successors (notably Khrushchov and Kosygin) have slowly but steadily done much to change again the face of this stupendous country. The first dismantled the Stalinist machine of terror and then ever so gradually and cautiously liberalised life and politics for the people, to the degree to which they dared. Ideological commitment, hatred for capitalist exploitation, fear of internal trouble, military preparedness against the West—in particular against the arch rival and enemy, America—these and other obsessions would seem to make it unlikely that the Communists would ever abandon their Marxist, party-totalitarian system. But, compared with Stalinist Russia, the present state of affairs is considered to be paradisaical by all students of this phenomenon.

That says nothing, of course, concerning the real difficulties that face the collective leadership of modern Russia. Politically the country is peaceful, and united in the pursuit of common goals, namely, greatness and security for Mother Russia; but it is the peace and unity of totalitarianism, a system simply of applied force, and "no nonsense from you, Comrade!" (or from anybody else). This entails the maintenance of an internal security system which must be cruel in its costliness and its inhumanity at several points. In addition, the external aspects of security are even more frightening for a country facing the United States of America in political, economic, and above all, military rivalry.

Frankenstein Monster

Economically, Russia is at grips with a frankenstein monster of its own creation and logic. Her technological and scientific miracles are being achieved only by the total mobilisation of all her economic forces and resources to the promotion of these presently unproductive, non-welfare pursuits. The complex machine and machinery created for space science and space conquest seems to be in no way related to or connected with consumer production, in which area there is no comparable process of research, invention, or efficiency in operation; therefore the consumer needs of a population of some 200 million go unfulfilled, while an utterly senseless arms race against America—who is equally senseless too—robs the Russian people of their right to economic wellbeing.

Agricultural Failure

In this same connection, it should not be forgotten how Russian agricultural policy has failed consistently to meet the production targets demanded by the state and required by the people. Even the ideologically necessary system of collectivization seems to be in ruins, as farms get broken into smaller units, making large-scale mechanization operations for maximum food production less and less possible. Thus the wheat and the corn run short, and have to be supplemented with huge purchases of these basic foods from Canada and the same U.S.A. Neither Khrushchov nor his successors have been able, in short, to do much more for the peasants or the Russian civil economy than mere survival demands.

Russo-African Relations

And what about Russia and Africa? One of the major aims of communism—perhaps no greater than that of capitalism—is to capture as many spheres of influence as possible outside of her own borders, for political as well as econo-

mic advantages. And so, like the West in their own way, the Communists have spared no efforts to woo and try to win the black world over to its side. In this campaign Russia has had several advantages: there is Marxism itself, the chief source of modern political and economic ideology and radicalism. Ideology and radicalism are the twin-dynamics of leftism, which by its intellectual and revolutionary vitality is more appealing to the young, the gifted, the oppressed, the progressive, than is conservatism in all its insipid and unpromising forms.

Secondly, communism promised a release from colonialism and offered Russia as a haven from the tortures of race prejudice in the West. Thirdly, the prospect of altering the economic base of undeveloped society, such that the masses could be saved from economic exploitation, was one that had powerful appeal to the liberal instincts of many colonials yet unaffected by the attraction of class . . . All this, and more, formed the basis of the attachment which many Africans and Asiatics developed for communism, or—in the various ways in which they understood it—socialism.

Non-Communist Challenge

Well, in West Africa, at any rate, neither the communists themselves nor their converts and adherents have been able to make or get much out of the system here, and the reasons for this failure so far are not difficult to discover. Marxism carries within itself prodigious internal difficulties, and the experience of modern industrialized societies like America at the one end of capitalism and, say, Scandinavia on the other, openly challenges some of the bluest-eyed dogmas of this economic theory and weakens the cause for its votaries. Next, most of the pre-conditions for successful propagation of the theory and operation of the practice of Communism do not exist in West Africa. Thirdly, Russia and the East generally have failed to make a favourable impact here, either as political bedfellows or as trading partners, because they have been crude in the first role and disillusioning in the second . . .

But, when all is said and done, Russia still presents a massive phenomenon for wonder. Her achievements in 50 years, starting at the point she did in 1917, is evidence of the genius of a people who in every field of endeavour have made outstanding contributions to human development.

Education

AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES AND THE WESTERN TRADITION—II

By

L. H. Ofoosu Appiah

Beginnings of Higher Education

NO COMMISSIONS were appointed in West Africa to examine the question of the establishment of a university in the British territories before the Second World War. But the West African Governors asked the board of inspectors who came to Achimota College in 1938 to examine the part Achimota could play as an institution of Higher Education in West Africa. The College Council also asked it to examine certain proposals for the introduction of B.A. degree courses. The inspectors did not give much encouragement to the idea of starting university degrees in Achimota in Arts and Science because some feared a reproduction of British academic standards and attitudes, while others thought the institution would not reflect African culture and traditions. But one important reason which is still a stumbling block to adaptation was the fear among the Africans themselves that a second-rate institution would be established in the Gold Coast to prevent the best men from going to Europe. This view still persists, since there is a certain high value attached by Africans to foreign degrees, however poor the institutions awarding them may be. The report of the inspectors at Achimota and a report on Fourah Bay College were discussed in 1939 by the West African Governors' Conference, and a sub-committee was set up to plan university studies in Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast and Nigeria based on the existing Colleges. The Advisory Committee, acting on the recommendations of the sub-committee, agreed that a commission on higher education should be set up. By this time the war had taken a turn for the worse, but the British Government did not waver in its resolve that universities should be established in the Colonies.

British Colonial Initiative

All the evidence shows that, whereas in the 19th century a few African intellectuals played a part in forcing the issue of the establishment of a University in British West Africa, in the 20th century the initiative came mainly from the colonial power and individual Britons. During the Second World War a British professor of Biochemistry, Channon, wrote a memorandum for the Colonial Office on University Education in the Colonies, and his ideas were subsequently

embodied in the Asquith and Elliot Reports. It was only on the Elliot Commission that Africans served, but the ideas on university development had already been formulated by the British. The main interest of the Africans, it appears, was to get good universities in their countries, but they did not examine seriously the idea of a distinctive African university.

The main feature of university development in the former colonial territories in Africa was that they followed very closely the type of universities existing in the metropolitan countries. Those who planned universities for the colonial territories did not dream that within a decade of the establishment of the "Asquith Colleges" in Africa self-government would be a reality. The planners had envisaged a long period of controlled development of universities within their empires, and nobody really dreamed that politics would take precedence over everything else in Africa. The development of universities, especially in the former British colonies, has been influenced by the political history of the countries concerned.

University Constitutions

The major issue in university development is the question of constitutions. The British provincial university type of constitution was given to all the colleges established after the Second World War, while the French gave their peculiar type of university constitution to their territories. The British type stresses academic self-government based on the establishment of a lay council and a senate or academic board, and the French type treats the university as a part of the Civil Service. It is an administrative unit which contains within it the faculty, which is the society of scholars. It is the faculty which has the freedom to decide on academic matters without interference from the Civil Servants. The Minister of Education administers the affairs of the universities in a way that would be unacceptable to those trained in British universities. For example, the Students Handbook for the University of Dakar for 1961-62 lays down conditions for matriculation under a Paris degree of 21 July 1897. The two systems work admirably in the countries of origin, but when transplanted into Africa difficulties arise.

Foreign Personnel

The lack of qualified Africans to run the universities and the civil service makes it necessary to import foreign personnel. This creates a problem, since African politicians will never be convinced that any group of men from the former colonial powers are not out to dominate them. The British system does give the Africans some

power on the lay councils, but this power cannot be effectively used because those elected to the councils are generally not conversant with academic matters, and are content to leave them to the academic men. Further, even where they can find out facts for themselves, they do not have the time or the inclination to do so. Therefore, it is easy for any unscrupulous set of foreign academics to carry out policies which may prove to be against the interest of Africans. On the senates and the academic boards which are dominated by professors, Africans are in a minority, since in the early period of the growth of the universities there were hardly any African professors. The three or four odd lecturers elected by the staff could not alter the situation much. In the French colonies also practically all the administration and the teaching were done by Frenchmen; while in the Belgian Congo the running of the University of Louvanium has all along been in the hands of Belgian academics. It is such situations which invite political interference. And the history of the University of Ghana from 1961-66 is the best example of how not to solve a knotty problem. For, until you have your own competent dons, if you use force on the foreigners, you are left with unfilled posts and lecture rooms without lecturers. This situation may not impress African politicians who can educate their children abroad, but it harms the country.

Curricula and Politicians

The question of curricula has also engaged the attention of academics as well as politicians. Those who thought about university development a quarter of a century ago entertained the hope that it would be possible to adapt the curricula to suit African conditions. The main difficulty here has been the supply of teachers who have the ability to embark on new areas of study. Since very little had been written on African history, languages, social structure, music and folklore, these subjects could not be introduced from the outset. The foreigners who started the universities could therefore give the Africans only what they themselves knew. This has been labelled cultural imperialism; and though it may be true of the French in the 1920's onward, even their philosophy of education has stressed adaptation over the years. Apart from the fact that one is not expected to teach what one does not know, it is also true that the Africans themselves are convinced that it is only when they are taught the same subjects as the foreigners that they can be accepted as first class intellectuals on the international scene. Some Africans, (notably arch-

nationalists like Nkrumah), do not even think it necessary for their children to speak their mother tongue. And it is a fact that Ghanaian languages were studied better under the British colonialists than under Nkrumah. This attitude is the result of an inferiority complex; and it breaks out in excessive praise of things African in public and a rejection of them in everyday life. The result of such an attitude is that after nearly two decades of university work we do not have many books on African languages, and undergraduate courses in these subjects are not common. To blame the imperialists for this state of affairs is an oversimplification of the problem.

The Classics and Africans

Apart from criticism of the lack of adaptation there are some foreign scholars who cannot understand why Africans should study Latin, Greek, Anglo-Saxon and Middle English. Apart from the fact that these subjects form a part of the Western tradition, there is another question: why prevent some one from studying any subject at all? Why should Africans study only modern English and French? Perhaps because these nations colonised them. It is worth remarking that when the De La Warr Commission decided against the study of Latin by East Africans the British could not imagine that within a quarter of a century Africans would be studying Russian, Polish and Chinese, and some would be battling with Modern Greek. The common belief that West African students spend too much time on the Classics is not borne out by the facts. In some countries like Ghana it arises from the fact that Ghana students for the past two decades have shown such marked incompetence in the Physical Sciences that their teachers have had to find a scapegoat. But in Nigeria, where no school taught Greek before the establishment of the University College at Ibadan in 1948, the study of the Classics has not affected the output of scientists. Unless it can be accepted by Africans that African Christian theologians when they enter universities should not know any of the languages connected with their subjects, then the contention must be dismissed. For the Arabs who conquered parts of Africa, whose language Africans are persuaded to learn today, did not ask such questions when they started to study Greek in order to know about Aristotle and Euclid. Perhaps that was possible then because they did not have any intellectual superiors to determine what they should study. Be that as it may, it is a fact that some of the best books on African culture have been written by French-speaking Africans whose

studies have been identical with those of Frenchmen, and who, like most of their English speaking counterparts, could not write their mother tongues.

Modernization and Our Universities

The relationship between African universities and the societies in which they are established has been the subject of lively debate in Africa, Europe and America. African universities, unlike European universities, were established as a result of popular demand to meet the challenge of modernisation. They grew up at a time when politics had made the outward signs of progress more important than the intellectual attainments which are associated with University men and women in Europe. The economic importance of a recent graduate in an African state has been far higher than that of his counterpart in Europe, and in most countries he has walked easily into a well-paid job by just having a degree. The result is that very few African graduates, whether in universities or in the civil service, feel the need to continue to exert themselves intellectually, especially after a post-graduate qualification has been secured. The Western tradition of learning for its own sake has not yet taken root anywhere in Africa. One main reason is that in the second half of the 20th century it has been accepted all over the world that universities have the function of supplying the manpower needs of the societies which pay for their upkeep. The stress has therefore been on quantity, and arguments have been advanced for having lower entry standards and less exacting general degrees in order to provide the teachers and administrators and technologists needed in Africa. Where a British graduate will have to take a stiff examination before entering the administrative branch of the civil service or the Foreign Service, his Ghanaian or Nigerian counterpart enters it on the strength of a degree. Where it takes the Briton twenty-five years to rise near to the top, his Ghanaian counterpart becomes a head of department ten years after taking the B.A. General degree. Since money is what most educated men are after in African states, it takes something more than mere idealism for an African scholar to pursue his studies and wait for years to achieve something solid before being appointed to a chair. And so the learning associated with a professorship in a European university is generally absent in the African setting. And this can be said not only of African scholars, but of their foreign colleagues as well. In order to establish a tradition of learning and scholarship in the African universities the res-

possible posts in the public service should be open to competitive examinations and political interference should be avoided. If this is done, the calibre of the men and women who man the civil service and the universities will be identical, and it will not be usual to find those who did badly at the universities dictating to the academic men on University Councils in matters of which they have little or no knowledge.

Secondary School Teaching

Teaching as a career should be taken more seriously, and qualifications for teaching in secondary schools should be higher than they are at present. Here we can learn from the history of the French Ecole Normale. For this institution caused a revolution in French higher education by maintaining a high standard of scholarship. For example, in 1903 in the history aggregation all the six candidates from the Ecole Normale were successful as against three out of forty from the Sorbonne and one out of thirty in the provincial universities. In the African universities diplomas in teaching are awarded, but there is not the same insistence on high academic attainments for the teacher as one finds in secondary schools in Europe and good schools in Britain. Indeed, teachers are a depressed class in some African countries like Ghana. The result is that of about 900 teachers in the Ghana secondary schools in 1966 only about 260 were Ghanaians. The problem of adaptation can never be solved where foreign teachers are in a majority in African secondary schools.

Learned Societies

Learned societies and professional associations should be taken more seriously by African university men. Academies of learning, like universities, may be started by foreigners, but unless the nationals take an active interest in their work and consider it a duty to take up the challenge and extend the frontiers of learning, these academies will become prestige societies. We may take a warning from the history of the Russian Academy which in the 18th century was an Academy of foreigners and produced only one outstanding Russian of genius, Michael Lomonossov. The French astronomer and geographer, d'Aueroche, who was a guest of the Russian Academy in 1761, wrote as follows: "The Academy of Sciences, founded by Peter the Great, is famous. Bernoulli, Delisle, Hermann and Euler brought here the fame they had garnered in their own countries. The arts, too, add their lustre. But it all fades away at once when the great men from abroad leave Russia or die". For the remaining decades

of this century African universities and learned societies will have to make a determined effort to break new ground in learning and scholarship and to depend less on foreigners. Unless this is done, the stricture on the Russian Academy will apply to the African scene, and African universities will become degree producing factories which depend on foreigners for the intellectual skill. The aim of their founders would have been defeated.

Observer Notebook

Economic Recovery a Precondition of Civilian Rule? —A Fallacy

WHEN the N.L.C. took over from the previous government, the economy of this country was almost in a total mess. In the twenty months of their rule, they have done reasonably well in an effort to repair the damage done to the economy of the country. We do not here propose to appraise the achievements of the N.L.C. (which are real) but only to comment on an assumption which has apparently underlain their endeavours.

It appears from repeated statements by the N.L.C. that they aim to effect an early economic recovery for the country. So early, indeed, do they hope to achieve this that they have seemed to be making it a pre-condition of their handover of power to a future civilian government. We cannot help thinking that they have not, perhaps gauged alrigh the enormity of the task to be accomplished. We assume, of course, that they are sincere in their regular protestations of freedom from political ambition. Accordingly, they must naturally feel that they have precious little time left to attain an objective which unfortunately seems to be receding. In the circumstance, they may well have come to spurn the philosophy of 'hasten slowly'. Herein lies a not inconsiderable danger.

Nkrumah wished to developed this country at a blinding rate and on a grandiose scale. In the event, a spate of mindless capital investment brought the country but virtual ruin. In the attempt to put things right, nothing can be easier than to hasten speedily with negative results. We would be happy to be able to believe that no such thing has happened one way or the other. But consideration of a number of major steps taken by the N.L.C. since their accession to power makes excessive optimism somewhat difficult.

Was the rapid retrenchment of 'redundant' workers matched by any profound reflection on the probable (and as it has turned out palpable)

human and social consequences? Was the expedient of devaluation weighed against the *prima facie* impressive manifold of unfavourable factors? Have the N.L.C., in point of practice, abandoned their professed welfare aims? In their understandable anxiety to create a favourable atmosphere for foreign investment and help, have they appreciated sufficiently the necessity of making our putative foreign helpers understand that Ghanaians will never accept even from benefactors (where ever they may come from) any practices likely to diminish their independence and human dignity, at any rate, in their own country? Have they always understood the implications of the agreements with foreign groups into which they have tended to enter with an alacrity not always easy to parallel? These are only a few of the questions that have been tormenting sympathetic students of the reign of the N.L.C.

We do not have any faith in the magic potentialities of a civilian government; but if the undoubtedly sound, and recently much rehearsed, reasons for an eventual (and unprotracted) return to civilian rule should infuse the N.L.C. with a sense of urgency for the actual implementation of steps to that end, they would perhaps be enabled to proceed with a happier conscience if they could but divest themselves of the notion that they have a duty, or that it is expected of them, to usher us into an economic millennium in the meantime. We cannot suppress our anxiety at the thought that persistence in the attempt to do what no conceivable set of genuises can achieve under five years from now might eventuate in course of action whose consequences nobody can foretell with certainty.

Sale of State Farms

IT HAS been reported that a special committee is to be set up by the Ministry of Agriculture to undertake the sale of 60 state farms. An aspect of the committee's work will be to investigate allegations of improper acquisition of the lands for the farms. It is a well-known fact that a high percentage of, if not all, the lands was compulsorily acquired without any compensation. If therefore the government is no more interested in these lands, it stands to reason that they should immediately be given back to the original owners (families and individuals), who should be encouraged to form co-operatives where appropriate. For, it would be very unfair to the original owners, if having lost interest in these lands, the government should sell them to other persons. Even monetary compensation to the owners

would still be unfair, let alone asking the owners to buy back their own lands (perhaps many cannot afford to do so now) because government has sunk capital into the lands. The lands should be given back to their owners for whatever purposes they desire. If there is any agricultural policy, let the government encourage the farmers and not sell out their lands to persons yet unknown. Land questions are among those any good government has to approach with the greatest circumspection. Moreover, one is not very happy about government by committees. Witness the Ghana-Abbott agreement and the Inter-Continental deal.

Letters

National Self-respect

SIR—When the abortive coup occurred on April 17, 1967, the question which bothered many Ghanaians was whether foreign investors were going to lose confidence in us or not. It was quite instructive to observe that the main concern of most of us was that others should have confidence in us, and not that we should be the principal agents in this great exercise. It was as if our whole orientation and point of reference lay outside of our fair country; and it hardly needs mentioning that this self-distrust has been the cause of so much of our failures. And yet, however bankrupt we may be, however weak we may be, there is one source of strength which we ought to have—faith in ourselves, and this we cannot expect our friends, however generous to give us.

One of the subtle dangers inherent in the many foreign aid programmes, which seem to have become the vogue in international relations these days, is that outside aid enfeebles a people, and tends ultimately to eat away at the roots of what should be the very foundation of any nation. It is a fact that we may need help in building our nation but even more important is the fact that, in the final analysis, it is only Ghanaians who can build Ghana—if we are to retain any semblance of self-confidence in ourselves as a people. This fact is borne out by T. S. Masson's statement that, "there is no man so low down that the cure for his condition does not lie strictly within himself".

Contrary to what the "realists" tell us, it should be categorically stated that we cannot rely on help from abroad as the major instrument in the development of our nation, if we want to own our souls.

It may be that owning our souls is less important than filling our stomachs, and if that be the case then our pre-occupation with the present has detracted from the quality of our lives. Through outside aid our independence becomes a palpable myth. By independence, I do not mean mole-eyed isolation from others, I mean what Eric Williams describes as the "commencement of the great work of a search for national identity, not the consumption of the long period of satellite status under colonialism"; it is the independence which means "a new inspiration rather than an old exhaustion".

It may be a short-cut to economic and social development to receive aid, but that would mean that the burden of our development would fall on shoulders other than our own. To be frank, it is rather shameful that our development should be the result of the generosity of others. How can we call Ghana a nation of our own creation under such circumstances? Or are we happy just to admit that Ghana is the product of "international co-operation", a co-operation in which all the operating was done by others? Need we remind ourselves that our claim to independence was based on the determination to shape our destiny? This is the "new inspiration"; we cannot therefore be dependent and independent at the same time.

We seem to be in a more serious situation now than we were before independence, because we are now saddled with the myth of independence, while in actual fact our dependence has increased. Anyone in doubt should look at the number of agreements we have signed for loans; the number of expatriates teaching in our schools; the surplus food we receive from abroad etc. Did we free ourselves only to be fed and clothed by our former rulers? I wish the din of "what went wrong" and the "crimes of the former regime", however great, would give way to the silent voice of "what we should do now".

Institute of African Studies,
Legon.

Kofi Asare Opoku

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Around the World on the Nation's Business

SIR—This year, it looks as if the nation's business is being done outside the country; for, in the last few months, especially since the budget, everybody who is anybody has gone out of this country to spend some time in some other country's capital. As travellers, Ghanaian officials must currently be running close seconds to American tourists, for they are in Lagos, Nairobi, Rome, Geneva, Tel Aviv, Hamburg, Copenhagen, Montreal, Rio or New York/Washington. All of them, **without exception**, will pass through London, their second home, some time or the other during the journey; and all of them will arrive with "unaccompanied baggage."

The appointment of Civil Commissioners was widely and rightly interpreted as a move in the right direction. It was felt, firstly, to be the initial step towards civilian rule. Secondly, it gave the country an opportunity to see how Ministers of State should go about their duties—a welcome contrast to the reckless irresponsibility of the not so distant past. The calibre of the commissioners, or at least some of them, or even most of them, provided ample grounds for optimism—or so one thought. After only three months in office, however, one begins to have doubts.

One reason for doubt is that some of them appear to be bent on becoming roving, instead of civil commissioners. One hears and sees them all over the country, and it may be argued that they have to acquire first-hand experience of the problems they have to face. But why the external roving, that is, globe-trotting, as well? Today one is in Nigeria; tomorrow another is in California; and next day yet another is in Holland; and the following day still another is in London. One thing is certain: They cannot at the same time sit behind their desks in the Ministries and clear their files.

The case of the Attorney-General's office is striking. It cannot cope with its work. There are Ghanaians languishing in cells now awaiting trial for murder—and have been there for up to one year in some cases—solely because the Attorney-General's office has not found time to draw up the necessary indictments. There are others awaiting trial for possessing forbidden drugs, but, again, the same office has not been able to issue the necessary fiats. Was this the time for the Attorney-General to be travelling extensively abroad; as he was doing recently?

Next let us look at public officials generally. About ten people were officially reported to have left for the U.N. session last month. We do not know how many people in fact went to New York. But the question is, did we really need such a large delegation? Again, how many people went to Kinshasa for the O.A.U. Conference? How many are currently in New York on some official business or other? Or in Montreal, or Paris, or London? What special contribution are all these people going to make that our foreign missions in those capitals cannot handle?

The nation's officials are not showing sufficient circumspection and nationalism in succumbing to the habit of globe-trotting. They are also giving the clear impression that they themselves lack the spirit of sacrifice which they are always urging on the less fortunate citizens of this society. Our officials may not be

taking 10 per cent on contracts, as the socialists did. But they are certainly using some percentage of the public coffers on travelling! For each person who goes to London, the nation pays about £200 sterling for his return fare alone. In addition, we pay him an average of £10 sterling a day for the period he is away, the exact per diem allowance depending on rank and place. (Corresponding figures for New York are: fares, \$960; allowances, at least \$28.00 a day).

In many cases, our travelling officials will be "wined and dined", and by the time they are ready to return home, they have saved all their money, except the hotel lodging bill. Then there will be a lot of shopping. Heavy pieces of new luggage will be brought home on the journey, and many others will be brought unaccompanied. In both cases, since they are V.I.P.s the luggage won't be examined by the Customs. With devaluation for the "suffering masses", how convenient for the elite!

At a time when we are being told that there is no money, at a time when we are groaning under the yoke of devaluation, is it justified for commissioners and other officials to spend scarce resources on journeys around the world?

Can government officials resolve from now on to stay home and work a little? Yours sincerely,

Accra New Town,
Accra.

Kofi Agbozo

Administrative Arrogance

SIR—Barely a week ago my wife, B., in a most courteous manner went to the Ghana Medical School to fulfil an appointment with a learned Professor there. Much to her surprise, she was greeted by our learned Professor with bursts of "Walk out of my office; I say walk out of my office". It did not make much sense to B. so she refused to leave, whereupon our learned Professor himself left the room. B. or course, left a note expressing surprise at the incident. There was no doubt, that our Professor was angry at B. but on an issue which, though it concerned B was not her making; not personal but official and much to the hearts of those concerned.

One does not question the right of our Professor to get angry, but one would question the sense in taking an official matter, and an important issue at that which concerned the livelihood of a whole Division, as a personal one for use as a basis for insulting B so publicly.

It is important for our learned Professor to note that his behaviour could have aroused any number of reactions. But I would not lose my head so easily. It is also important to note that when you are entrusted with any governmental responsibility it is expected of you to execute it without bias, but not to regard it as a personal property.

The whole incident smacks of administrative arrogance and I hope it is not repeated,
Accra

K.M.A.

Nigeria

SIR—I am a Ghanaian living in Nigeria, but I am certainly not qualified to write about "Ghanaians in Nigeria Today". I have however been living in Ibadan for nearly two years, and I can write with some confidence on the "plight" of Ghanaians in Ibadan today. There are at least 45 Ghanaians living in Ibadan. So far as I know (and we meet each other fairly regularly), none of us have been beaten up, molested,

or detained and "squeezed" in connection with the present crisis in Nigeria. I have also been meeting some Ghanaians living in Lagos, and they have not complained of any such nasty incidents. I can hardly conclude from this that no Ghanaian in Nigeria has been molested. In the same way, I think it is unjustifiable and unfortunate for Janet Afreh-Kasaam and K. Kwabere-Abradu (L.O. Vol. II, No. 21, pp. 13-14) to conclude that Ghanaians in Nigeria are all being molested.

The impression I have gained from recent visits to Ghana is that there is a lot of wrong information about Nigeria circulating in the country. For example, very few of the people I talked to would believe that there are any Easterners or Ibos in Lagos or Ibadan. Also, most of them believed that I would most certainly be killed or harmed in some way if I went back to Nigeria. There is no doubt that there are also deficiencies and inaccuracies in some of the news items about Ghana that circulate in this country. The examples I have given are probably extreme cases. Most of this type of misinformation or conclusion can be prevented by an increase in the efficiency of our information services, but there are others that we just have to learn to live with. No country can establish a perfectly efficient information service even within its own borders. We just have to reconcile ourselves to these rather imperfect conditions. In particular, we must realise that some of the many conclusions we draw from day to day are likely to be based on wrong information. It is important that we should try to check our facts before we take action on these conclusions, especially those actions that do affect other people. The majority of people do not bother to do this for one reason or other and get involved in rather unfortunate incidents; some of these were reported in the two letters in your October 13 issue. Very often such action is taken by rather petty-minded public officers. We have this type of person in every country and these incidents do occur in every country, even in Ghana. The only solution is that there should be well-established avenues for resolving the situations that arise, quietly and without much publicity. I like to believe that the "top officer" at the Ghana High Commission in Lagos who is supposed to have told Janet Afreh-Kasaam that "we are also in the soup" did take some action.

If we cannot use normal avenues to get wrongs of this sort redressed, there is no objection to writing to the Press. But let us not hasten to generalise or make national issues of them.

Dept. of Chemistry
University of Ibadan
Ibadan, Nigeria.

D. A. Bekeo

SIR—I am a bit surprised that you published the effusions of Mr. Atiamo Elegbo, a Radio Nigeria commentator (*Observer*, Vol. II, No. 21, pp. 21-22) without publishing simultaneously the official Ghana government reaction. What is more, his outpourings have been disowned by a Nigerian official, Chief Enahoro.

However, my main concern is the mentality behind Mr. Elegbo's statements because it is representative of his country's intelligentsia, and it is also partly responsible for the present hostilities between Nigeria and her former Eastern Region.

Ghana, he sneered, "has always envied Nigeria's

size and potentials." Gambia, he fizzled out, is "this micro state which has a population...not more than that of Lagos". Nigerians have for a long time now entertained the ridiculous belief that large size guarantees their amorphous country the status of a first-class African power. Very little, however, did they take appropriate steps to tackle the problems concomitant with their ethnic heterogeneity and immense size. Instead they sort of gloated on the fortunate accident that made the country one, while the practical test of giving meaningful expression to the geographical unity was never seriously pursued. The great ideal of a first-rate power ran into a series of conflicts with the naked realities of internal disunity and ethnic incompatibilities, which crippled attempts to pursue the ideal and culminated in the catastrophe we are witnessing today.

The rude fulminations of Mr. Elegbo and his like-minded countrymen, the civilian backbone of the Lagos regime, should not bother Ghanaians, who have been making serious and successful efforts to submerge their ethnic differences in the interest of a structural similarity which recognises and values the importance of the *we* spirit. Mr. Elegbo ought to have known that the phenomenon of "tribalism" by which a group of lecturers in a respectable Nigerian university organised and sang primitive war songs against their colleagues from a different ethnic group has never and may never be recorded even at the lower levels of modern Ghanaian society. In Nigeria it is more of the rule than the exception.

I should like to conclude by affirming that the "size" of any African country today is a political accident. It is in this sense like a symbol; and if a symbol has no practical meaning it becomes not only incomprehensible but completely valueless. So-called Nigerians ought to have learnt by now the lesson of this analogy. In the history of mankind, powerful and influential nations have emerged not as a result of sheer size or number but mainly through the abilities of their leaders to inculcate into the people, first and foremost, a spirit of togetherness—what the sociologists call *esprit de corps*. This is a pre-requisite for internal peace and harmony, profitable exploitation of "potentials" and consequently external respect and influence. Ghana has taken a long stride towards creating that *we* sentiment, and I wish her success. Nigeria, on the other hand, is yet to enter for the heats if she desires a sure place in the finals (which is however no guarantee that she will win). Will she ever?

Dept. of Sociology,
University College,
Cape Coast.

B. I. Chukwukere

"American Intervention"

SIR—May I, an expatriate who has known Ghana for the past 5 years and admired many things, express concern over one of these things I used to admire: The State Hotels Corporation in general and the Ambassador Hotel in particular.

Formerly the Ambassador Hotel, whilst always suffering from a slow terrace service, was, at least, a first class and friendly hotel by international standards. Now what is it since the so-called American Participation has occurred? It can only fairly be described as a third class bush station with lawns growing to seed and uncut; filthy floors in its barbers shop; pornography in the book kiosk; regimentation in the cuisine—"No, you can't

have a fried egg sandwich. They are not on the menu";—a service so clogged up with documentation that it takes at least 15 minutes to get one's change; not to mention enormous excavations in the entrance drive left unattended for the past 5 weeks; as well as a pile of rubbish opposite the Ballroom Entrance.

The final insult, of course, is, after one has passed the uncut lawns and the cob-web encrusted and fly-blown light fittings to arrive in the bar and be shamelessly robbed. Prices have now been advanced on all local spirits beyond reason and most pockets. A tot of local Whisky, available in the pubs at 25NP, now costs 60 NP. Admittedly the hotel tot is 25 to the bottle, whereas the pub one is 32 to the bottle. But a bottle, still sells to either hotel or pub at NC4.15. Therefore the pub is making a profit of NC3.85 per bottle, whereas the hotel makes NC10.85 per bottle. Even allowing for the bigger overheads of a hotel a certain element of profiteering might be said to appear to be present.

How can the Ghanaian directors of the State Hotels Corporation allow such an unhappy state of affairs to continue unchecked? The eventual outcome can only be to drive away all patrons save rich American tourists who blinded and bemused by the hot African sun are blissfully unconscious of dirt, untidiness and inefficiency.

Burma Camp
Accra

H. A. Lynch-Robinson
Superintendent Architect
(Armed Forces Section)
Public Works Department

Crop Production in Ghana

SIR—Mr. Doku's article on 'Crop Production in Ghana' shows that he is fairly well informed about that part of the country's agricultural research with which he deals. But his main suggestion—that research into crops could be geared to support increased production more effectively if several research units were created to deal with different groups of crops—is surely rather unimaginative. It must also be described as 'academic' when the hard facts of available money and experienced research staff are taken into account.

The truth is that one can argue the merits of quite a number of different ways of organizing the efforts of researchers in any field one chooses—and precedents for one or other viewpoint are usually not far to seek. But however research may be organized, scientists will cooperate with other scientists in different organizations, and thus "avoid duplication and ensure efficient use of personnel" as Mr. Doku urges, if the incentive to cooperate exists.

One feels, surprising though it may seem, that agricultural research scientists in Ghana lack the sense of urgency in their work which would encourage them to cooperate fully, where it is necessary to do so, in order to press through important research projects to their publication and implementation stages.

Why this should be is probably partly due to the fact that it has seldom before really mattered whether or not a piece of research resulted in a means of increasing production. Yet fortunately one discovers that agricultural scientists can feel embarrassed if asked in what way their projects might increase output, or if asked to describe precisely how their data could be effectively translated into higher yields and an increasing standard of living. In a world where serious food

shortages already exist these are inescapably valid questions, whatever one's views about the usefulness of 'pure' or 'applied' research.

So, if we must write about reorganization, would it not be sensible to try and create that sense of urgency which results in scientific cooperation and research achievement? Ways that suggest themselves are the following.

(1) Let industrial representatives (men who make chocolate and cocoa bags, spin and weave cotton, process and preserve food, etc.) have an effective voice on the Steering Committees of appropriate research institutions. This will inform the scientists what hard-headed businessmen think they should be doing.

(2) Include in the training of extension staff a course on the importance of reporting back ways in which research results fail to help them in their work. This might draw researchers' attention to some of the farmers' real needs.

(3) (The most important): Initiate more effective ways of gathering statistics on agricultural production, and modify traditional ways in government of allocating money for research, so that two things may happen:

(a) that we may see clearly what each different crop is worth (what percentage of the gross national product do the farmers who grow it actually produce?); and, from these data,

(b) that we may calculate, and spend realistically, a percentage of that worth on research and development

Might we not find, in the process, that another reason why researchers lack a sense of urgency is because they feel they have remote chances of obtaining adequate funds to solve the urgent problems that stare them accusingly in the face?

Crops Research Institute,
P.O. Box 3785,
Kumasi.

J. Brian Wills

The Kotoka Trust Fund

SIR—In May this year, the Kotoka Trust Fund was launched. The target date for donations was so short that we thought that the Trust was to be used immediately. We showed our love for Kotoka and donated more than the target of NC500,000. But since then nothing has been heard of the projects. Why?

Cwealth Hall,
Legon.

Kofi Semanya

The Bawku (Kusasi) District

SIR—I wish to comment on Segiri Dahamani's article which appeared on the 29th of September in the Legon Observer.

Segiri was not able to give the appropriate answer to Mr. A. A. Yakubu's letter. But that is not all. He is also a coward, for he gave you the wrong box number. Bawku Post Office has only 88 letter boxes but Mr. Dahamani gives his number as 108.

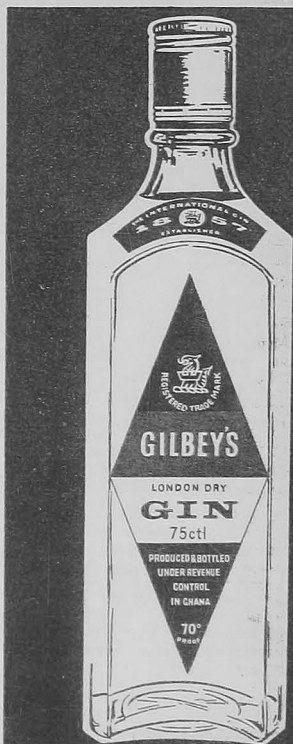
Is he denying that the Kusasis are the land owners of Bawku? If so, he should study his local history.

If the Kusasis are denied their right, they will only be denied the freedom and democracy won for this country.

P.O. Box 8
Bawku.

Anicks Dinko

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Commentary

REPORT ON GHANA, BY "THE [EXPERT] UGLY AMERICAN"

By K. B. Koto

ON BEHALF of the Government of Ghana, the National Investment Bank is to undertake a £5 million farm project with an American company. The joint enterprise, to be known as the Pioneer Farm Company, will grow corn, cowpeas, kenaf and rice on a 60,000 acre farm in the Ashanti Region. We do not know the exact extent of Ghana's share and participation in the project; but it appears that it is Ghana's responsibility to provide the land. This obligation has, apparently, been fulfilled.

It is learnt that the American company, which is to provide, among other things, the managerial and technical know-how, have proposed one Mr. Judson McManigal as the manager of the enterprise. Mr. McManigal recently visited Ghana on a study tour lasting at most two weeks. On October 19, 1967, the following report appeared in the Iowa State Daily, a University campus newspaper run by students of Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, U.S.

Iowa State Daily, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, Thursday, October 19, 1967. Vol. 97, No. 29.

Chief of African Tribe rents Land for Farm to ISU Alumnus

Ghana, a country in Africa the size of Minnesota, has been chosen by an Iowa State alumnus as the site for a 60,000 acre farm. The farm is an investment established to "produce food at a profit," according to Judson McManigal, a 1955 farm operations graduate.

McManigal is the spokesman for a group of investors who plan to use the farm to grow corn, rice, cow peas or other crops. McManigal said the farm is being rented to them by chief of the Ashanti tribe for 30 cents an acre per year and is leased for fifty years.

7.7 Million People

Ghana imports 80 percent of its food for its 7.7 million people. Most of the country is forests and the land is not easily cultivated, McManigal said. For this reason, he is at Iowa State to seek information from the various agriculture departments on the best means to overcome the problems of growing crops. Food is a big problem in Ghana, McManigal related. He said the main staple is corn supplemented with fruit and cassava, a fruit from which the juice has been squeezed leaving it moist and crumbly.

Mammy-traders

It is hoped the farm will produce about 48 bushels of corn per acre each year. Corn sells for from \$3.10 to \$11.25 a bushel in Ghana. The corn is bought by "mammy-traders" women who truck the grain into town and then sell it in small quantities. McManigal commented that "we are afraid we may do some damage to the country" because the only source of protein for the people are the bugs and worms in

the corn which are ground up with the kernels. McManigal said they plan to destroy the worms that would injure their crop.

Local people will be hired to work on the farm which McManigal will manage. Only a small portion of the land will be planted the first year at a initial cost of \$3 million. McManigal explained that all the machinery, fertilizer, and other products necessary for beginning the project must be imported from the United States. The seed corn will be obtained from the Rockefeller Foundation in South America, since this is the only place the white corn is grown. McManigal said the people of Ghana are particular about the type of corn they eat.

Women Traders

McManigal said the women of the country do all the trading and the men don't do much of the work at all.

The death rate in the bush country is 70 percent and 30 percent in the towns. Part of this is due to the extremely dirty conditions of Ghana, according to McManigal. He said the towns have open sewers and are generally dirty.

The government is trying to help the people, but the people seem to be apathetic and do not make much of an effort to help themselves, McManigal said.

This kind of distortion is not unusual in the U.S.; the newspapers, books, films and T.V. are full of it, and the average American believes every word of it. However, we would be failing in our duty to the Ghanaian tax-payer, whose money and land resources are being committed to a project he has not been informed about, if we ignored this report. Mr. McManigal has distorted facts willfully and has grossly misrepresented Ghana to his company and the American public.

He says that "Ghana imports 80 percent of its food for its . . . people." This is incorrect, as the following table, adapted from the *Economic Survey*, 1964 (Govt. of Ghana), shows:—

Composition of Expenditure on Food for 1955 and for 1960 to 1964—

Year	Food Local	Food Imported	Food Total	Food Imp. as % of Total
		£ M.		
1955	113	13	126	10%
1960	144	20	164	12%
1961	169	25	194	13%
1962	188	26	214	12%
1963	226	23	249	9%
1964	264	26	290	9%

These figures show, in a particular year, how much we spent on food, and, of this, how much was produced locally and how much was imported. Thus, in 1964, Ghanaian households spent £290 m. on food, of which £264m. was produced locally and £26m. was imported. That is to say, only 9 per cent of our food requirement was im-

ported. It can be seen that imported food constitutes between 9 and 13 per cent of our food requirement, and not 80 per cent, as McManigal asserts.

Secondly, McManigal states that "corn sells for \$3.10 to \$11.25 a bushel" [One bushel of corn weighs 56 lbs.]. In Ghanaian terms this means corn sells for NC12 to NC46 (or £6 to £23) a bag of 220 lbs. He also says that "corn is the main staple, supplemented by fruit and cassava, a fruit [sic] from which the juice has been squeezed."

Cassava, of course, is not a fruit. It is a plant with tuberous roots, that is to say, a "root" crop. Also, although the price of corn does show a wide seasonal fluctuation, the range of the price is not £6 to £23; it is somewhere between £1/10/- to £6, with an occasional "high" of £8 (as in 1965). The average, however, is around £3, and Mr. McManigal may be pardoned for his ignorance. But when he goes on to say that his group are afraid lest they do some damage to this country's people 'because the only source of protein for the people are the bugs and worms in the corn . . . ' that is going a bit far. Such malice is undeserving of an "expert". The Stanford Food Research Institute, Cornell, and the F.A.O. can be usefully consulted for dietary information in Ghana (Ababio's article on livestock production in Ghana in this issue is also recommended).

Again, McManigal states that "the death rate is 70 per cent in the rural areas, and 30 per cent in the towns". Now, nowhere in the world where there is no plague can one find such a phenomenon. The real surprise here is that the undergraduates of a first-class University like the I.S.U. should publish such evidence of illiteracy.

Finally, McManigal states that in Ghana men don't work, and despite the (desperate efforts of the Government, we are lazy and apathetic. Well, that's his opinion, but how pathetic!

It is surprising—or is it?—that foreigners who come here as "experts" are found so often to lack respect for facts, and, instead, extol intellectual dishonesty. In his enthusiasm to raise funds, Mr. McManigal finds it convenient to distort facts beyond reasonable limits to win sympathy in America. But perhaps this is all he is really capable of, since his intellectual background is so inadequate for Mr. McManigal is only a "farm operations graduate", that is to say, a holder of a certificate (not an academic degree) in practical, non-academic, non-professional, non-technical training in farming. One can only hope that the consultants of the departments of agriculture to whom McManigal will talk will not rush his information into the computer machines for

ready-made answers to our agricultural problems.

One last word. From the account above, it is clear that Mr. McManigal is a charlatan and a malicious bigot. Must Ghana insist on having him back in this country at all cost?

WHEN THE ABBOT(T) CAME MARCHING IN

By

Kontopiaat

THERE has been a great deal of argument of late as to whether certain categories of persons should be disqualified and/or disfranchised or not. I have at long last made up my mind on this controversy. At least one category of such persons should be all those who have signed or are still signing contracts that have been or will be deemed by me to be inimical to the interest of the country. I consider the Ghana-Abbott agreement a classic example of such a contract. Therefore, I here and now call for the disqualification and disfranchisement—if not the trial for criminal negligence—of all the civil servants, commissioners, members of the so-called Negotiating Committee and of course members of the N.L.C. and indeed any Tom, Dick, Harry and Harriet, including even messengers, who had anything whatsoever to do with the signing of that contract!

The trouble with the role that I have assigned myself here is that copies of these contracts are not so easy to come by. My scouts have still been quarrying in vain for copies of the contracts between say the Government and the Inter-Continental Hotels and the Government and some foreign company about, of all things, how to fish an activity in which the Fante and the Ga (the latter have of late abandoned fishing for boxing) in particular and the coastal peoples of Ghana in general, had been the acknowledged specialist all along the West coast from time immemorial indeed long before any European ever set foot here. Just visit Monrovia and Freetown or Pope and you will see these great Ghanaian fishing experts. But I am deviating. To come back to the point, to facilitate my work, I do here and now call on the N.L.C. to publish all the contracts they have signed with foreign companies, and incidentally also the terms which governed the sale of the former state-owned corporations.

I have stated that I consider the Abbott agreement inimical to the interests of this country and for the sake of brevity I will confine myself on to its most obnoxious aspects to prove my point. First, though the Abbott Laboratories is contributing only 45 per cent, repeat in words forty-fi

percent, of the total capital and the Government of Ghana, the remaining 55 percent, under Clause 1 (page 2) of the contract, it is **Abbott** and not, repeat **not**, the Ghana Government that, in the very words of the contract, "shall be assured of **complete** control of the management and, in order to achieve this, Abbott shall have a majority of the Board of Directors and the voting control of the Company including the **right to appoint** the Managing Director, the Chairman of the Board of Directors, and the Secretary". Moreover, in Clause 5 (page 3) it is Abbott (and note not Abbott-Ghana) that shall "have complete responsibility and control of the operation of Abbott-Ghana **including, but not limited** to selection and discharge of personnel . . . contracts for legal, accounting and auditing services, and other functions related to the ordinary business of pharmaceutical manufacturing"!

Secondly, in Article 3 of the contract, the total assets of the Government's pharmaceutical manufacturing facilities including all buildings, equipment, materials, supplies and all managerial residences and outbuildings etc. have been valued at NC1,000,000.00! I have gone round the site and have seen all the buildings, residences etc., and I here and now challenge the value of the assets agreed upon by the Government and Abbott. In any case, were these assets really valued? When did this take place and where is the certificate of valuation? All investigations conducted so far have revealed that no such valuation did take place and that the figure was arbitrarily and whimsically fixed.

But what is particularly infuriating and humiliating is that whilst no proper valuation appears to have taken place should the lease be terminated **'any time for any reason whatsoever'**:

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Abbott will be reimbursed the then 'current fair market value of the buildings and equipment of the real property'. At any time for any reason whatsoever!! If this is not a sell-out, as one of the Dailies has put it, I am yet to see one!

Thirdly, though from all investigations, the Government bought the land on which the property stands for a sum of NC24,000.00 and though we are reliably informed that the owners of the property have in fact still not been paid, yet in Clause 4 of the Contract (page 2), this real property is to be leased to the Abbott-Ghana for "a period of ninety-nine years at an annual rental of NC1.00 (one new cedi) subject to renewal at the option of Abbott for an additional ninety-nine years". And as if to drive the point home, the following sentence adds "There shall be no increase in the annual rental at any time". This clause is really tantamount to selling our soul for a mess of pottage. One would have thought Ghana-Abbott or Abbott-Ghana is a profit making business concern and not a philanthropic organisation.

There are a number of points I have not touched upon here. For instance what is the extent of the experience of the Abbott Laboratories in the manufacturing of tropical pharmaceutical products? But I think I have brought out enough to support my claim that the contract is inimical to the interests of Ghana. Why then did our negotiators decide to sell us down the drain? Were they taken in by the name of the Company they were dealing with and therefore accepted all their terms as the gospel or monkish truth? Or were they blindfolded by the NC450,000.00 cheque in sacred U.S. dollars that was blandished before them and later incorporated in Article 2 of the Contract? Or were they being simply negligent and irresponsible or were they feathering their own nests? Monks and abbots were indeed capable of performing all sorts of tricks and wonders. But I thought this was true only of the medieval times and the period before the Lutheran Reformation. But apparently, I am mistaken.

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Book Review

FRIENDS NOT MASTERS: A POLITICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

(By Mohammad Ayub Khan, President of Pakistan. Published by the Pakistan Branch of O.U.P.)

Reviewed by

Yaw O. Saffu

TO Ghanaians, especially, this book should be of topical interest. It is, in parts, a defence of the 1958 military take-over in Pakistan, written nine years after the event, by the General who claimed to recognise the General Will of the Pakistani people, and gave it an expression, in that military intervention in politics. The book tells, necessarily from the point of view of the man whose career was most advanced by the coup, of the chaotic economic and political conditions on the eve of the coup, of the gigantic problems that faced the New Men on the Morning After, and of the measures which were proffered as solutions.

Some of the specific problems with which the Author deals at length are not generally seen to be relevant to our own condition: problems like the Refugees, 9 million or so Muslims who found themselves on the wrong side of the Partition line, and moved to the right side; the land problem, the need for land-reforms to eliminate absentee landlordism and promote social justice for the small peasant. But most of the Post-Coup problems of Pakistan which occupy the Author are expectedly similar to our own: problems like drafting a new Constitution, problems about disfranchisement, on which subject the Pakistanis have two Acts, Public and Representative offices Disqualification Act (1949) and Elective Bodies (Disqualification) Ordinance (1959), and the general problems of the transition from military to a civilian regime.

The Author's observations on some of these problems are interesting. For example: "I did not have any doubt that the army would be destroyed if it got mixed up in running the civil administration or too involved with the economic, social and political affairs of the country." (p.77) Again: "Having suffered through the perfidy of the so-called political parties, I was hoping that we would be able to run our politics without the party system. Therefore the Constitution was so framed that, in theory, it would function with or without political parties. After the introduction of the Constitution, I soon came to realize that one could not do without political parties. Within the legislature the members could only be organized on the basis of party rule and discipline.

Outside, there had to be an organization to maintain contact with the people". (p. 221) Finally: "Our people are good, I knew, but they are simple-hearted, hence gullible, and they can be easily misled." (p. 217)

Earlier chapters tell us something about the problems of organizing an army on insufficient resources, human as well as financial; about squabbles and ambitions in the higher echelons of the Army; about tension between the Eastern and the Western halves of Pakistan. All this is interesting, if rather sketchy. But, to me, the most interesting evidence he provides at this stage, and which he confirms later on, is how the military in the Indian sub-Continent was no more above politics and no more imbued with a sense of national unity than anybody else.

More than a quarter of the book is devoted to Foreign Policy. And there is, expectedly, good, orthodox Pakistani line on the most worrying relations of all: Indo-Pakistani relations. India emerges as the linchpin on which the wheel of Pakistan's foreign relations revolves. When this wheel revolves full circle, with regards to China and the West, it is India's changing fortunes with these, her attack by China, and the military aid to her from the West that this attack prompted, that are called in to explain.

Occasionally, on Indo-Pakistani relations, the Author's emotions seem to get the better of his judgement. For instance: "The colossal problem of refugee rehabilitation was created by India to cripple our economy". (p. 115) And, sometimes, somewhat disingenuous, or simply very weak, arguments betray the forces of his Opponents' charges, as when, for instance, he denies that he is a dictator: "After all, there always has to be someone finally in charge whatever the system, be it parliamentary or presidential, or monarchy or a dictatorship. There are many to assist, but, in the final analysis, one man has to take the final decision" (p. 218).

In addition to these strictly political Chapters, there is the usual biographical stuff: he is 60; his father was Major; he went to the famous Muslim University at Aligarh but left for Sandhurst in 1926 without having obtained a degree. At Sandhurst the Authorities broke their tradition and made him a Corporal—but without responsibility (there were "strapontins protocorlaires" even in those days); he graduated 60th, out of 123. He rose rapidly to the rank of Commander-in-Chief in 1951.

The peculiar way in which this book was written does not seem to have had any detrimental effect on its readability. According to the Author,

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the broad outlines of the book were defined, then friends were invited to put questions on the theme of the different Chapters, and the book emerged substantially out of those tape-recorded question and answer sessions. Normally, one would expect a very disjointed and incoherent journalistic piece of writing to come out of such an unusual procedure. Possibly, the only traces which the book bears of its peculiar origin are its crispness, terseness and the fast pace of the narrative. These qualities are not necessarily drawbacks for autobiographies. On the contrary: there is little tedium and boredom.

Drama

THE ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATRE—in retrospect

By
Morre Bossman

THE Alvin Ailey was undoubtedly one of the best visiting groups to have performed here in Ghana, if not actually the best. Although Ghanaian theatre audiences are not over critical they have, nevertheless, out of past experience developed some degree of scepticism in regard to the performer, whether Government sponsored or not, who finds himself in this part of the world. This, while not saying much for ourselves, is all too much of a reality, for quite often performances fall below standard. The artistes, particularly if they have been touring for some time, are sometimes too tired by the time they get here; or the sudden change in climate affects them adversely; or sometime quite simply they are not of the higher grades in their own professional field. So that the best these performances achieve is the impression of good-will they create—in itself a very good and welcome thing, but strictly speaking not the objective of the professional theatre.

The visit of the Alvin Ailey therefore was practically a refreshing gust of wind sweeping through the annals of Ghanaian theatre.

Dancers they were; and dancing they gave us. It is true reactions among the audiences varied. This was probably due to the diversity of expectation, in spite of all the advance publicity—the T.V. films were a good appetizer, but the TV screen has never been the best medium for presenting dances—and many people did not quite know what to expect. Some considering that the company is an American negro company seemed to have expected the very obvious

'Negroisms'—the gaudy, superficial, 'fast' display. Others too, having had experiences of the exquisite stylizations of the Martha Graham, Katherin Dunham type of establishment, expected something in that vein. Still more, perhaps with the much-sung African origins of jazz in mind, had expected a strong African element, while the 'classical school' inevitably could not overlook the concept of orthodox ballet. The company, however, revealed itself to be quite individual in defying any tendency to stereotype. They were quite simply what they said they are: 'American Dance' theatre. They have taken their inspiration from elements of American culture, not surprisingly with the emphasis on the Negro aspect. However one felt, a similarly inspired director, whether negro or not, could also have created a similar repertoire—though this is not meant to detract in any way from the negro commitment. It is significant that the music, again mostly taken from traditional and contemporary jazz, also included the Bachianas Brasileiras by Villa-Lobos, the Brazilian composer; while there was one dancer among the troupe who looked white, whether she was in fact or not! To sum up, whatever the commitment,—Mr. Ailey himself has declared "I want to create for the world the exuberance of the Negro American's music and dance..."—still the net result is an expression of true art in its creative talent and universal appeal.

One of the most striking features was the remarkable degree of competence of the dancers all the more impressive considering they had been travelling for the past four or five weeks—obviously they did not take their training lightly. While the dancing in its forms was not classical ballet, yet in terms of body control and flexibility, they were in every way as disciplined. An interesting sideline in regard to this was a comment overhead on the Radio. Apparently an impression exists among some Ghanaians that the African (or Negro) is incapable of the high degree of body flexibility found among dancers. The commentator therefore was pointing out that the Ailey dancers were a practical proof of the fallacy of this impression! The truth of course is simply the question of training which should be started in infancy if one wanted to create a dancer in the serious, professional sense. Most Ghanaians do not get this idea until well into their teens which of course is too late for that purpose. The ballet schools being run by some well known Accra ladies therefore are most necessary and welcome additions to the Accra

scene. Who can tell what glorious dancers might emerge from them in some 12 or 15 years time! However all this is by the way.

Another strong, and the most exciting impression of the Alvin Ailey was the unique nature of the dancing and choreography. While building on the rigorous body discipline of the classical ballet, there was nothing of the orthodox in their movements or poses. To most people, this exploitation of the potentialities of the body in movement and rhythm came as a revelation—the undulating, the snap friezes which dissolved into bounding and unexpected twists were quite profound. In the words of a critic "... it should not be missed by anyone interested in the possibilities of Modern Dance..." One found here the despairing heartbreak in the aimless, purposeless restlessness of the women in *House of the Rising Sun* from *Blues Suite*; or the gamine exuberance of the little boy in the *Road of the Phoebe Show*. In *Revelations*, the tableaux with the arms reaching to heaven, weaving, dissolving into the wings of a wounded bird were an insight into suffering of the American negroes which produced the *Spirituals*. *Take Me to the Water* with its writhing frenzied novices was an interlude of inspired, or induced joy! The company claimed to have no stars, yet no one could deny that Judith Jameson, tall and gawky-looking had a special quality which seemed to transform her with a lyrical interplay of long arms, legs, and that expressive tragic face over it all.

Finally to round up on the excellence of this creative company, one should not forget to mention the lighting, the costumes and the make up which were all most fitting—if the second mentioned were a little travel-soiled. The make-up particularly was all the more remarkable—endowing the girls with huge eyes sparkling like gems, revealed next day without make-up to be quite ordinary like yours and mine!

It was a pity that the enjoyment of too many people was spoiled by the very, very poor seating arrangements. This is not to mention the disappointed ones who, not knowing that tickets were sold out turned up hopefully and queued for nearly an hour before being told there were no tickets! Why were the performances not held at the State House auditorium, one wonders. Surely this was one instance when some sensible, worth-while use could have been made of that white elephant. In the first place so many more people could have had the chance of seeing

this great show; and certainly all would have seen it in comfort.

The Alvin Ailey Dance Company is resident at the Clarke Centre for the Performing Arts in New York. One must express an appreciation for all the inspiration and talent which has made its formation possible, the encouragement and the assistance which keeps it in existence; and not least the foresight which made it possible for us here to participate in it, if all too briefly.

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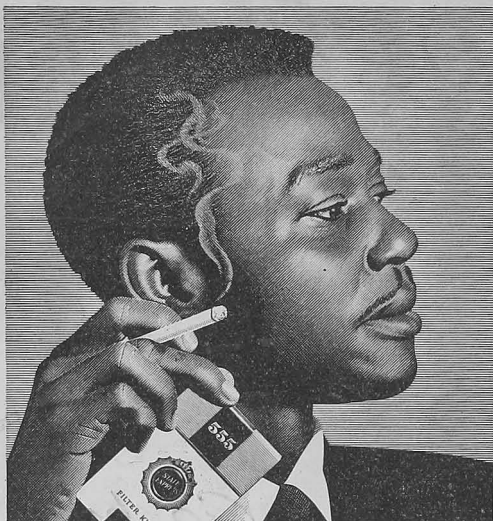
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