

VOLUME 1 CHAPTER 3**CHAPTER THREE****THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT****3.0 INTRODUCTION**

3.0.1 The events leading to the Gold Coast becoming the Independent State of Ghana on 6th March, 1957 have had a great impact on the course of the country's history and on its human rights record. Political and ideological tensions, as well as economic and social problems, that had either been ignored or poorly addressed in the Gold Coast continued to impinge on, and define, the character of the independent state of Ghana.

3.1 LEGACIES OF THE PRE-MANDATE PERIOD**3.1.1 Composition of the State of Ghana**

3.1.1.1 Ghana is an artificial political entity comprising four distinct components woven together around the time of Independence. It comprises the following: (1) the Gold Coast Colony consisting of the coastal states, Akyem Abuakwa and Akwamu, which were under British colonial rule as a result of the Bond of 1844; (2) the Kingdom of Ashanti, which was annexed by the British at the end of the Yaa Asantewaa War in 1901; (3) the Northern Territories, which comprised kingdoms that came under British influence by reason of treaties of friendship executed between the British Government and the traditional rulers via the Northern Territories Ordinance of 1901; and (4) the Trans-Volta Togoland – a British Trust Territory originally a part of the German colony that was lost to the Allies after the First World War and that was split up between Britain and France and administered under a mandate of the League of Nations. Thus, Ghana, at the time of its birth, was not a monolithic entity, and the various components had their own tensions and disagreements.

3.1.1.2 Moreover, the problem of uneven development and uneven access to power within the new political entity was one of the most serious legacies of the pre-Independence period.

3.1.2 The Issue of Trans-Volta Togoland (TVT)

3.1.2.1 In 1952, the British Government put the south-eastern part of the Colony, that had always been administered as part of the Eastern Province, together with the southern part of Trans-Volta Togoland (TVT) as one entity for administrative purposes. This arrangement was adopted in spite of the fact that the TVT, being a Trust territory, had a different legal status from the Colony. Eventually, the TVT became part of the Gold Coast upon its attainment of independence by reason of a combination of events. Political

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agitation in the Gold Coast had reached such a tempo that the British foresaw that it would soon have to grant the territory independence.

3.1.2.2 In 1954, the British Government informed the United Nations that it would not be in a position to administer the Trust Territory after the Gold Coast gained Independence. This information to the United Nations increased the pace of agitation by Ewe nationalists who had been campaigning since 1946 for the two Trust Territories of Britain and France to merge as one independent country in order to re-unite the Ewe peoples who had been split up by the Mandate of the League of Nations. They feared that the split would become permanent should separate arrangements be made for the two Trust Territories. The Togoland Congress (TC), under the leadership of S.G. Antor, had emerged to champion the cause of separation from the Gold Coast because they believed that if the British Trust Territory integrated with the Gold Coast upon independence, the French would also annex the French-speaking part, leading to a permanent split of the ethnic group. The issue was made somewhat more complicated by the fact that, whilst some of the agitators wanted the Anlo-Ewe of the south-east of the Colony to be integrated with the Trust Territories in order that all Ewes would be in one political entity, others, fearing domination of that political entity by the Anlo, wanted them to be kept out.

3.1.2.3 A further complication was that the peoples of the northern British Trust Territory preferred integration with the Gold Coast so that they could be with their kith and kin as the split had had tragic results for some of the kingdoms. For instance, the capital of the kingdom of Dagbon, Yendi, was located in the Trust Territory whilst a part of it was in the British-held Northern Territories. Other groups also had blood ties with some of the peoples of the Northern Territories and also felt a closer affinity to them than to those of the northern French Trust Territory, since the British Trust Territory had, for a long time, been administered as part of the Northern Territories.

3.1.2.4 This complicated situation led the General Assembly of the United Nations to decide in December 1955, that the peoples of the Trust Territory should be given a chance in a plebiscite, to determine if they wished to be integrated with the Gold Coast upon its attainment of independence, or if they wished to remain separate until a decision was taken in respect of the French-administered part. The plebiscite was held on 9th May 1956 for the peoples of the territories to decide whether to integrate with the Gold Coast or to remain separate. An overall majority of 58% voted for integration. However, in the south where the Togoland Congress had campaigned vigorously, there was a 55% majority in favour of separation. Consequently the decision to integrate the TVT with the Gold Coast at its independence was a minority decision as far as those in the south of the Trust Territories were concerned.

3.1.2.5 The separatists were dissatisfied with the result of the plebiscite and believed that the decision in favour of integration had been procured by manipulation. Thus, at independence there was a large group of persons particularly in southern TVT who did not wish to be a part of Ghana. They did not abandon their agitation and there were many

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disturbances in 1957 soon after independence. Efforts to suppress these agitations led to repression of those political activists who still urged separation.

3.1.2.6 The Trust Territory lagged behind the Gold Coast in terms of development since the British Government did not wish to spend money on a territory it was holding in trust for the United Nations. However the South of the Trust Territory suffered less than the Northern part that had been completely neglected. The four northern districts of Kete Krachi, East Dagomba, Eastern Mamprussi and Kusasi received hardly any economic investment.

3.1.3 The Northern Territories

3.1.3.1 British colonial policy discriminated between the North and the South in terms of economic development and the provision of social amenities. As a result of this policy, the least economically-developed area was the protectorate of the Northern Territories because the Government did not wish to spend any money on infrastructure or any aspect of development unless they were certain of reaping adequate returns.

3.1.3.2 Consequently, the absence of economic opportunities coupled with extreme poverty, led the young men of the North to seek work in the South. The Northern Territories became the source of migrant labour for the mines and cocoa farms in the South, and this was encouraged by official labour recruitment policies underpinned by the belief that men from the Northern Territories were hard-working. In the words of Governor Gordon Guggisberg, “every man of the Northern Territories [was] worth his weight in gold ... for the mines, for private enterprise and for the development of those schemes the completion of which are necessary to secure progress and development”.¹

3.1.3.3 This phenomenon of southward migration had devastating consequences for social cohesion and community development for the peoples of those areas as their able-bodied young men and women abandoned their homes to seek employment, and then to reside in the South.

3.1.3.4 On account of the need to preserve the North as a reservoir of cheap and unskilled labour, a conscious policy not to encourage literacy by the provision of educational institutions evolved. There were thus very few educational institutions in the North that offered education beyond Primary School level and, consequently, very few well-educated people.

3.1.3.5 The leaders of the Northern Territories felt that it should receive special consideration in terms of development, since it had been neglected for a long time. They were also afraid of domination by the South as they had few educated elite to fill public

¹ Bening, *supra*, p183.

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service positions. Some of the chiefs also insisted that the treaties they signed with the British in the 19th century were friendship and protection treaties, and, consequently, the British had no authority to hand them over to another government without ensuring that they had extra protection under the Independence Constitution. Thus, the development of the Northern Territories and equitable treatment of persons of northern origin were issues that demanded attention at the dawn of independence.

3.1.4 Ashanti

3.1.4.1 There were mutual suspicions between Ashanti and the Colony. With her history of imperialism Ashanti was disliked by her coastal neighbours who feared domination should they be put together as one political entity. On its part, Ashanti feared domination by the Colony. In the early 1940s there were efforts at rapprochement. These mutual suspicions did not die, but were fuelled by developments a decade later, as demonstrated by the formation of the National Liberation Movement (NLM) in 1954.

3.1.4.2 The immediate impetus for the formation of the NLM was the agitation for higher prices for cocoa. As a result, the movement gained popularity in the Ashanti, Akyem Abuakwa and the Krobo areas which had large tracts of cocoa farms. The remote cause, however, was the marginalisation of the traditional ruling classes resulting from the rise of the Convention People's Party (CPP).

3.1.4.3 The chiefs were also suspicious of the centralist policies of the CPP and feared marginalisation in the governance of the country. The NLM's proposal of a federal form of government was a reaction to the highly centralized form of government that they feared would lead to dictatorship from Accra.

3.1.4.4 The pitched battles fought in Kumasi between the NLM and the CPP, as well as the political murders committed by both sides, showed the ugly face of partisan politics, and generated in many people fear or disdain for partisan politics. By the time the NLM problem was resolved by the amendment of the proposed Independence Constitution to provide for Regional Assemblies, a lot of harm had been done.

3.1.5 Conclusion

3.1.5.1 Thus, among the legacies Ghana inherited at the time of its birth as an independent country were the following:

1. ethnic animosities and resentments occasioned by a history of antagonism produced by inter-ethnic wars and imperialism;
2. uneven economic and social development between the North and South and between the colonial holdings and the Trust Territory;
3. fears of cultural domination;

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4. the integration into a common political entity of persons who wished to belong elsewhere or who wished for a different form of government; and
5. the emergence of a landless urban poor occasioned by urbanization; and antagonistic political leaders.

3.1.6 These legacies of the pre-independence period have significantly affected the course of Ghana's development in all spheres of life, including, most especially, its governance and human rights record.

3.2 Formation Of Political Parties In The Gold Coast**3.2.1 The United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC)**

3.2.1.1 At the end of the Second World War the war veterans who had gone to fight in other lands for freedom on behalf of the colonial power returned home with ideas about the quality of life that they ought to have. However, they were not trained in civil life with appropriate income-earning skills to achieve that standard, nor were they given any financial package to ease their transition into civil life. Their return, coupled with the rapid urbanisation and expansion of social amenities and infrastructure in the urban areas, produced a class of politically-conscious young men and women who began to appreciate the anti-colonial posture of the intelligentsia.

3.2.1.2 It was in the midst of all this social ferment that the first mass party, The United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), was formed at Saltpond in August 1947 under the chairmanship and financial sponsorship of George Grant, better known as Paa Grant, a wealthy businessman. With its slogan of "Self-Government within the shortest possible time", the UGCC quickly attracted a large following, particularly among the educated persons, chiefs and farmers. The speed with which the party gained numbers made its proper organization somewhat difficult for the leaders who were mostly professionals and therefore only part-time politicians. A member of the UGCC Executive, Ernest Ako Adjei, proposed the employment of an energetic young man he had met in England, Kwame Nkrumah, as General Secretary to do the work of political mobilization full time. Paa Grant paid the £100 passage for the return of Nkrumah to the Gold Coast.

3.2.1.3 The young Nkrumah arrived at the end of 1947 and soon got down to work establishing structures through which the party could function effectively. In February 1948, barely two months after he took office, Kwame Nkrumah and five leaders of the UGCC – Edward Akufo-Addo, Emmanuel Obetsebi Lamptey, William Ofori-Atta, Ernest Ako Adjei and Dr. Joseph Boakye Danquah – were arrested because they were blamed for the rioting and looting that occurred as a result of the killing of some ex-servicemen who were on a protest march. At the Osu crossroads, they were fired at when they ignored an order to halt. Three ex-servicemen, Sergeant Adjetey, Corporal Attipoe and Private Odartey Lamptey, were killed and many others injured. This incident sparked off

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riots and looting of European and Syrian/Lebanese owned stores in many of the towns in the Gold Coast. By the end of the day the death toll had reached 29 with 237 injured and property damage to the tune of sterling £2 million had occurred. Although it was not the UGCC that had organized the march, political responsibility for what had happened was laid at the door of the Party.

3.2.1.4 The six leaders (or ‘Big Six’) of the UGCC were arrested and sent to prisons across the country. After their release, Nkrumah set out to organize in earnest. He linked up with political youth groups and formed the Committee on Youth Organisation (CYO). He also established a Newspaper the *Evening News* which he used to great advantage. Conflict over strategy soon developed between him and other leaders of the UGCC. They began to feel that Nkrumah was promoting himself and his personal agenda at the expense of the party that employed him, and he began to feel that they were not ready for his style of organization.

3.2.1.5 A break became inevitable, and on 12th June 1949 Nkrumah broke away from the UGCC and formed the Convention People’s Party (CPP), taking with him most of the young people he had so successfully mobilised. The period thereafter heralded the nurturing of bad blood between the leaders of the two parties. Attacks in the *Evening News* on the leaders of the UGCC, especially on Dr. Danquah, as well as a whispering campaign of bribe-taking and allegations of other dubious activities made against the leadership of the UGCC, did a lot to embitter the relationships.

3.2.2 The Convention People’s Party (CPP)

3.2.2.1 The CPP under the leadership of Nkrumah grew from strength to strength. During the time when he ran the UGCC, he discovered some very energetic and good organizers who left with him to form the new party. Komla Agbeli Gbedemah and Kojo Botsio were two of these young men who came to be recognized for their organizational abilities as they recruited many other young people to join the fold. Indeed the CPP was virtually a youth movement at its inception, and it had the energy and strategy to match.

3.2.2.2 It adopted the slogan “Self-Government Now” (“S.G. Now”) and this resonated with the youth. In January 1950, the CPP organized an action of civil disobedience, termed “Positive Action”, consisting of boycotts, strikes and sit-downs, in order to compel the colonial government to grant immediate self-government. Although planned as a non-violent action, it eventually turned violent and the leadership of the CPP was arrested and imprisoned.

3.2.2.3 Whilst in prison, Nkrumah’s party won a majority of seats in the 1951 elections held under the 1951 Constitution (Coussey Constitution). Being the leader of the party that had won majority seats in the elections, he was released from prison to head the government under the title of “Leader of Government Business”. The CPP successfully maintained its leadership in the politics of the country, winning majority votes in both the

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1954 and 1956 elections. Ghana attained independence on 6th March, 1957 under its leadership, after a bitter struggle with some of its opponents.

3.2.3 The Ghana Congress Party (GCP)

3.2.3.1 The remnants of the UGCC suffered other crises as most of its youth had broken away to join the CPP. In 1951, it merged with another party, the National Democratic Party, formed under the leadership of Nii Amaah Ollennu, a barrister. The merged parties came to be known as the Ghana Congress Party with Saki Scheck as the General Secretary.

3.2.3.2 The Ghana Congress Party was bedevilled by a leadership struggle between Nii Amaah Ollennu and Dr. Danquah. Ollennu eventually left politics and joined the bench. The next stage of the leadership struggle took place between Dr. Kofi Abrefa Busia and Emmanuel Obetsebi-Lampsey. Eventually the party broke up into two when Obetsebi-Lampsey broke away and formed the Nationalist Party. This break greatly reduced the strength of the GCP. In the 1954 elections Dr Busia was the only one to win a seat on the ticket of the GCP. The Nationalist Party achieved little prominence as it never really attracted a following outside Accra.

3.2.4 Northern Peoples' Party (NPP)

3.2.4.1 Chief Simon Diedong Dombo formed the Northern Peoples' Party (NPP) in 1954. This party quickly attracted a large following from among the traditional rulers and it won 12 seats in the 1954 elections. Considering that it had not been formed for very long before the elections took place, it was a remarkable feat. It also showed how attached the people of the North were to their traditional leaders.

3.2.5 The Anlo Youth Organisation

3.2.5.1 The Anlo Youth Organisation was formed by Modesto Apaloo. It operated in the south-eastern corner of the Gold Coast where the Anlo are located. It also won one seat in the 1954 elections.

3.2.6 The Moslem Association Party (MAP)

3.2.6.1 The Moslem Association Party was an Islam-based party. Its leadership and followers were drawn largely from the immigrant group of Muslims from neighbouring West African countries. The ranks of its leadership were decimated by a policy of deportations soon after independence. What was left of it teamed up with other political parties and groups to form the United Party.

VOLUME 1 CHAPTER 3**3.2.7 The *Ga Shifimo Kpee* (Ga Standfast Association)**

3.2.7.1 The *Ga Shifimo Kpee* was born in Accra in 1954. Its birth was a reaction to social and economic developments occasioned by the status of Accra as the capital of the Gold Coast. As a result of the effect of rapid urbanization and the need to provide social services in the national capital of Accra, large tracts of Ga land were acquired by the government for public purposes. The people rendered homeless by the 1939 earthquake in Accra had still not been properly resettled. In addition, there was an influx of people from other parts of the country into Accra, thus putting pressure on the rest of the land. This created a measure of landlessness among the Ga people. They also felt that in consequence of too many “foreigners” in Accra, they were being swamped as their cultural influence was being diminished in their own homeland; their very existence as a people was being threatened. With the slogans “Ga mei shikpon, Ga mei anoni” (Ga lands are for Ga people) and “Gboi mli ngbe wo” (Foreigners are killing us) they sought to draw attention to their plight.

3.2.7.2 Although the Association had a large following, there were two main groups within the Association, the “Zenith Seven” and the “Tokyo Joes” made up mostly of young men who often engaged in acts of violence. These acts of violence brought them into direct conflict with the government of the CPP.

3.2.7.3 Eventually, the *Ga Shifimo Kpee* joined other political groups to form the United Party. Despite the merger, it was believed that members of the Association continued to carry out acts of violence. It was eventually dealt a death-blow by the mass detention of its members when the Preventive Detention Act (PDA) was passed in 1958.

3.2.7.4 Thus, at independence there was one strong party – the CPP – and several others of varying strengths, all of whom were in a relationship of antagonism against the ruling party. All these parties merged to form the United Party when, in 1957, the government passed the Avoidance of Discrimination Act. This Act prohibited the existence of any political grouping that was based on ethnic or religious affiliation.

3.3 The Army, the Police Force and Prisons Department

3.3.1 One of the legacies of the British colonial Government was the Security Services comprising the Army, the Police Force and the Prisons Department. The Police Force was the first to be formed as the Gold Coast Constabulary, then the Prisons Department. The Army was formed after World War II.

3.3.2 The Police Force was made up of British officers with the Gold Coasters and other Africans as senior non-commissioned officers. The mass of the junior ranks were recruited originally from Northern Nigeria and from parts of the Northern Territories. They were part of the colonial machinery, often used to suppress civil disorder, and were usually associated with the use of brute force in the maintenance of civil order. They

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were never seen as an institution for the protection of the public. At Independence, the Ghanaian senior officers were few, and they had all risen through the ranks.

3.3.3 The Prisons Department was also carved out of the Gold Coast Constabulary and its principal function was to keep prisoners in secure custody. It was made up mostly of illiterates and Middle School Leavers, and they were known as Warders. It was separated from the Police Service in 1920, and, after Independence, was re-named the Ghana Prisons Service.

3.3.4 The Military on its part was born out of the Gold Coast Regiment of the Royal West African Frontier Force that had been very effective in World War II. Its officer corps, however, remained European and it was modelled on the British army. At Independence, the highest-ranking Ghanaian officer was a Major, and he had risen through the ranks.

3.3.5 In consequence of the fact that the officer corps was almost exclusively British, they enjoyed the privileged lifestyle of British colonial officers. Thus developed a culture of privilege that was eventually enjoyed by the Ghanaian officers. The other ranks, on their part, were filled by local people with minimum education and few entitlements of privilege; their culture was undoubtedly “African”. In consequence of this, there was great social distance between the officers and other ranks, and this was to become a source of strife decades later.