

Because Ghana is suffering "the growing pains that every new nation must experience," this author urges us to go along with Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah's plea: "Give us time to sort ourselves out."

Ghana: Problems and Progress

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ON MARCH 6, 1957, the spotlight of world affairs shifted to the new nation of Ghana in West Africa. More than 20 other countries had won their independence since World War II, but Ghana seemed to have a special appeal. It was not only the ninth new nation in Africa; it was the first black African country to attain its independence in this century.

Correspondents and commentators suddenly "discovered" this part of the world. They were intrigued by its assumption of the name of an empire which had been great a thousand years ago. They were impressed by its rich resources. They were struck by its colorful costumes and by its American-educated leader.

Consequently the early interpretations of Ghana were usually over-optimistic. Its prospects were emphasized; its problems deemphasized.

Two and a half years have passed since that time and the pendulum of public interpretation in the United States has swung to the other extreme. Today Ghana's problems are stressed and sometimes magnified and her progress and potentialities minimized.

It would be wiser and more charitable to

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view this new nation in terms of progress and problems and to think of Ghana as undergoing the growing pains that every new nation must experience. To understand Ghana better, it might be profitable to re-read or recall a little early American history, recognizing that we were confronted with the problem of federalism versus regionalism (a problem we have not fully solved in 175 years), that we had no strong opposition party in the early months of the Washington administration, that our government was plagued with rebellious citizens who resented and resisted the imposition of taxes and revolted in a Whiskey Rebellion, and that we passed Naturalization, Alien and Sedition Acts aimed at domestic disaffection.

In such historical perspective we might be able to identify ourselves more closely with the turmoil in Ghana and to develop more understanding of her deep-seated problems. This does not mean that we must agree with all the measures taken in Ghana since its independence. But it means that we should view its brief history as a nation in a relatively detached manner. The problems of our two nations in their early years are not identical, but there are many similarities.

Fortunately Ghana has many advantages. In the first place her population is approximately five million, an advantage for organization and administration. Her territory is also small, being about equal to the size of Oregon. Furthermore, about three-fourths of her people live within a half day's ride by bus from the capital city of Accra and no two towns are more than 400 miles apart.

Although there are deep differences in religion, Ghana does not have the problem of intense jealousies which her neighbor,

Nigeria, has. Ghana lists her population as 66 per cent followers of African religions, 30 per cent Christians, and 4 per cent Muslims. Because of her climate and history, Ghana contains few Europeans or Asians and no Europeans have been permitted to own land. This means that Ghana has been spared the problems of a country like Kenya.

In terms of transportation she has had a small harbor at Takoradi, built in 1928 and recently enlarged. And she has had a better system of roads and railroads than most new countries have had. In resources Ghana has also been blessed. First of all comes cacao which has been a big money earner since Ghana has produced a large percentage of the world's supply of this product (38 per cent in 1957). In addition to this crop, she has gold, industrial diamonds, manganese and bauxite. And timber is an additional asset.

Although the per capita annual income of \$150 seems tragically low compared with \$2000 for the United States, it is high compared to approximately \$80 for the Belgian Congo, \$60 for Uganda, and \$50 for the entire subcontinent of India and Pakistan. Furthermore there has been some education in Ghana, including Achimote College, with a practical emphasis in its curriculum. And the British left behind them the nucleus of a civil service system.

Ghana also has several outstanding leaders, including such men as Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah, Minister of Finance K. A. Gbedemah, the expert sociologist, K. A. Busia, and the head of the civil service, Robert Gardiner—all but one of them in the present government. If the good wishes of a large part of the people of Africa and many people around the world can be considered an asset, Ghana has that, too.

Progress in Ghana

At the time of independence Nkrumah asserted:

My first objective is to abolish from Ghana poverty, ignorance, and disease. We shall measure our progress by the improvement in the health of our people; by the number of children in school, and by the quality of their education; by the availability of water and electricity in our towns and villages; and by the happiness which our people take in being able to manage

their own affairs. The welfare of our people is our chief pride, and it is by this that my government will ask to be judged.

One could debate at length the objectives contained in this statement, but they are certainly among the most important goals of any regime. How then does Ghana fare by this self-imposed yardstick? Much had been done under the rule of the British to improve health conditions in Ghana, but efforts in this field have been intensified and expanded. As a result leprosy shows signs of being eliminated as a major disease in Ghana and outstanding progress has been made against yaws and malaria. Many clinics and small hospitals have been built in addition to the ultra-modern 500 bed hospital in Kumasi, with its training college on the same grounds for 300 student nurses. In order to meet the need for doctors in rural and small town areas, medical field units have been developed and several health centers have been built.

Improvement has come, too, in providing pure water in rural areas by an active movement to increase the number of "bore holes". Doctors are still very scarce and are concentrated in the larger centers, but Ghana is assisting young men to study at home and abroad by helping them with scholarships.

No one who visits Ghana can help but be impressed with the gains in education. In recent years there has been an increase in literacy from about 10 or 15 per cent to 30 or 35 per cent. Some of this has come through an intensive campaign against adult illiteracy; some of it by doubling the number of teachers available to handle the tripling of the number of children in elementary schools.

Two institutions of higher learning started by the British have been completed or expanded—the University College of Ghana near Accra and the College of Technology at Kumasi. Whether the type of education at the University College is suitable for the present needs of Ghana is open to serious debate and whether the policy of keeping the standards so high that it is not filled at present with students is dubious, but it is a beautiful, modern complex of buildings, with some remarkable facilities and some excellent teaching.

The work of the Vernacular Literature

Bureau is especially outstanding. This bureau is entrusted with the task of providing materials for new adult literates and it is forging ahead with publications in six dialects as well as in English, a really formidable task.

Ghana has made more progress in public library work than any of the new nations this writer visited in a recent nine-months trip in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. It is justly proud of its new libraries in Accra and Kumasi as well as those in smaller centers. And it has made a start on bookmobiles—an innovation not duplicated in other new nations.

Considerable enthusiasm has been engendered for a new type of practical education through the Builders' Brigades. In them youths with a limited education learn useful skills while working on the construction of roads, schools and water systems. The nearest approach to this type of education in the United States was the Civilian Conservation Corps of New Deal days.

Some steps have also been taken to improve housing conditions in the larger towns, although so far this has been limited largely to homes for middle class or upper middle class persons. Encouragement to home builders has been launched through the establishment of the Ghana Building Society, comparable to a Home Owners Loan Society in the United States.

A great deal needs to be done in Ghana to improve the status of agriculture, but in one respect Ghana has done a superb job. There has been a nation-wide campaign to stop the inroads of the disastrous swollen-shoot disease which threatened for a time to wipe out this profitable farm product. Every agency of society was used to educate the farmers on the steps that had to be taken, with tribal chiefs and government officials, school teachers and radio announcers, as well as many others, combining their efforts. This campaign has not been entirely successful and the work is not completed, but already it has showed what can be done when every agency of society combines to promote a needed national reform.

Improvements have also been made in the transportation and communication facilities of Ghana. Hundreds of miles of roads have been built or improved and scores of bridges

constructed, including a giant span over the Volta River at Adomi. But most impressive is the new port at Tema, 16 to 18 miles from Accra, which is being built to supplement the harbor at Takoradi, to provide facilities nearer to the capital, and to feed into the ambitious plans for the Volta River project. Ghana now has its own Ghana Airways and in conjunction with Israel has established the Black Star Line for sea transport.

Every new nation is determined to set up new factories because heretofore each one had to rely largely on products made in the "mother" country and shipped to the colony at a greatly increased cost to the consumers. So Ghana, like other countries, is building new industries, such as a biscuit factory at Kumasi and a match factory at Kade, with aid from the Industrial Development Corporation. In these and other ways the new government has built on the work of the British before they left Ghana officially and the results have gone far in helping Nkrumah to keep his promise to move toward the goals quoted earlier in this article.

The Volta River Project

The most ambitious plan for Ghana, however, is the Volta River project. Long a dream or a plan on paper, it now looks as if it would be realized. In April, 1959, the Kaiser Industries Corporation presented a plan to the government of Ghana whereby the estimated costs would be whittled down from \$900 million to \$600 million and the time involved in the construction of this multi-purpose project would be reduced from eight to five years.

Eventually this project would serve several purposes. It would dam the Volta River and provide power for a smelting plant, for other new industries, and for homes over a large part of Ghana. The smelting plant would transform the bauxite of Ghana into aluminum, providing her with income equivalent to that now derived from cacao. The lake formed by the 230 foot dam 60 miles northeast of Accra would also stimulate a new fishing industry and augment the protein-shy diet of Ghana. Eventually the water might also be used to irrigate some of the rich soil nearby, thus adding to the croplands of the nation.

Ghana should be able to provide some of

the funds for this giant development scheme. The rest will have to come from sources such as private firms abroad, from foreign aid sources, from private investors, and from government and U.N. loan funds.

Aside from its economic importance, this project has tremendous psychological and political implications. Psychologically the new nations consider the building of such a giant project a sign of their coming of age and being able to vie with the more industrialized nations. Politically Nkrumah and his party have made much of this project and have been disappointed if not embarrassed by the fact that it has not materialized. Undoubtedly they have been aware of the history of Nasser and the Aswan dam and have realized that there are great hazards to a new government in such an ambitious undertaking.

In this discussion of progress and problems, the Volta River project has been placed intentionally between the sections on progress and problems. Within a few months it may be moved into the progress column; today it is in suspension between the two.

Problems in Ghana

Despite this formidable list of accomplishments, Ghana is faced with a long list of problems. One of the most basic of these is the need for drastic changes in agriculture. At present Ghana is largely dependent upon one crop—cacao, which is grown by 300,000 farmers on small plots of ground. The cacao trees need to be improved and planted in plantations where they can be raised scientifically. Agriculture needs to be diversified, with more attention to rice and fodder crops, coconuts, oil palms, rubber, tobacco, rice, cola nuts, cotton, sugar, sorghum and corn. Poultry farming and some truck farming need to be encouraged. Thousands of acres of valuable forests are being exhausted and timber experts predict that it will take 40 years to develop adequate timber reserves. There are also thousands of acres of land which need to be irrigated if Ghana is to produce all that she needs and can develop.

Closely allied with these problems is the need for change in land tenure and in farming methods. Such change will be difficult to bring about because of tradition and the power of tribal chiefs. Change is needed in

order to carry out plans for industrialization, for without change men will not be freed for work in the new factories Ghana needs and intends to build.

Fortunately for Ghana her economic adviser, Professor Arthur Lewis, a West Indian on leave from the University of Manchester, is just as concerned about agriculture as about industrialization, a point of view which is unfortunately not held by all economic advisers to economically underdeveloped countries.

Every new nation is looking for capital these days and Ghana is plagued with this problem, too. She vies with other countries for capital investment and she has to prove to the world that she is stable economically and politically to attract such risk capital. Inside her own country she has to combat the age-old feeling that land is the only safe investment.

Despite tremendous progress in health, housing, and education, Ghana has a long way to go in each of these fields. Among other problems she must cope with the diversity of languages and the lack of any national language except English. Eventually Ghana may have to settle for English, as India and Pakistan have done for the foreseeable future at least.

But the major current problem of the new government is that of combining political stability with freedom. On that question the record so far is not too good. The reasons for trouble are not difficult to understand; the methods for solving these troubles are difficult to discover.

One problem is that Ghana now is independent and the millenium that some people expected has not arrived. All factions could unite in the fight against the British and for independence; now they have begun to splinter into small factions. Another difficulty is that the various sections of Ghana have little in common. There is no common history, no common language, no special feeling of belonging together.

Then there is a strong economic factor that causes dissension. Farmers resent the fact that they are compelled to cut their trees to prevent the swollen-shoot disease and they also resent the fact that the marketing-board controls prices and collects rather large sums for a stabilization fund to protect

prices in case of a collapse of prices on the world market.

This resentment is coupled with a growing feeling of regionalism, especially in the Ashanti territory. In this region where most of the cacao is grown, the farmers belong to the largest and most powerful Ghanaian tribe, the Ashanti, numbering over 900,000 persons. At the head of this group is the Asantehene, whose "stool" or symbol of power is supposed to have come from heaven.

There is also a feeling of regionalism in the Northern Territories whose people are largely Muslim and who feel that not enough of the funds of the Ghana government are being used to improve conditions in their underdeveloped part of the country.

Closely allied with this spirit of regionalism is the power of the tribal chiefs. Some of them are modern in their thinking and ways of living, but for the most part they represent the *status quo* and Nkrumah and his followers are determined to undermine their power and speed their decline.

Then there is a group of middle class opposition leaders. Some of them are sincerely disturbed over the tremendous power of Nkrumah and the Convention People's Party. Others are men who are embittered over the fact that Nkrumah and the younger leaders of the independence movement broke away from their established group and gained the credit for independence. Unfortunately for Ghana the leader of the opposition, Professor K. A. Busia, is not a skilled politician with wide appeal to the masses. If he were, he could perform an important role in Ghana.

That there have been strong measures by the present government against the opposition cannot be denied. The government has deported individuals who opposed it, changed the Constitution so that it can be amended by a simple majority and without reference to the regions, abolished the Regional Assemblies, and passed a Preventive Detention Act which has given the government the right to arrest and imprison for five years without trial any person viewed by the Cabinet as dangerous to the security of the country.

The trend in Ghana in the direction of a one-party nation or of "guided democracy"

seems to be similar to a trend in other new nations like Burma, Indonesia, Pakistan and the Sudan. It raises the basic question as to how fast such countries can move towards the type of democracy in West European countries—or whether they should try to move in that direction in view of local questions. That is a question on which the most astute political scientists cannot agree.

In international affairs Ghana has already assumed a significant role. Nkrumah has so far been able to deal on friendly terms with Israel and with Egypt or the United Arab Republic, a remarkable feat. He has also given strong leadership to the movement for independence throughout the continent of Africa. And by his trips in recent months to India, Canada, the United States and England, he has kept himself in the world spotlight and strengthened his ties with these powers.

The two most important events, however, in foreign affairs have been the formation of the federation of Ghana and Guinea and the holding of the All-African People's Conference in Accra. We shall therefore devote some space to each of these major events.

The first step towards what might someday become a federation of West African states was taken in November, 1958, when Ghana and Guinea joined in a loose confederation. This move came immediately after the vote of Guinea on the de Gaulle referendum, in which that small nation was the only area to vote itself out of the French community.

In November, Sekou Touré, Prime Minister of Guinea, travelled to Accra where he and Nkrumah issued a joint statement in which they declared that their action constituted "the nucleus of a union of West African states." They promised at that time to harmonize their defense, foreign and economic affairs, and to write a constitution for the new confederation. Ghana also promised a loan of \$28.2 million to Guinea.

Up until April, 1959, there had been little action following up the original statement regarding union of these two countries. Ministers were exchanged and a part of the loan was given to Guinea, but little else was done. Then, in April, 1959, Nkrumah went to Guinea for a state visit of three weeks where he was received with a 21 gun salute,

ordinarily reserved for heads of state which in the case of Ghana still meant Queen Elizabeth II.

Just what will emerge from Nkrumah's visit is not yet clear as this article is being written. Some observers feel that the union will remain a very loose one. They point out that Sekou Touré is not a passive puppet and will not play second fiddle to Nkrumah. They further assert that Touré has been much more favorable to the U.S.S.R., pointing out that he has accepted a shipment of arms from Czechoslovakia and has channeled one-third of the exports of Guinea to eastern Europe. And they point to the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds of Guinea and Ghana, the former with its French ties and language and the latter with its British background and English language.

Federation is in the air and it is doubtful if Nkrumah will let an opportunity like this pass by without making full use of it in his drive for a West African Federation. Certainly this union of Guinea and Ghana has already had a tremendous psychological impact and has enhanced the reputation of Nkrumah and of Ghana.

Perhaps the most significant event in Ghana since independence was the convening of the All-African People's Conference in Accra in December, 1958. This was the first such conference to be held in Africa and Ghana was appropriately selected as the site for it. Meeting under a giant banner which called for "Hands Off Africa: Africa Must Be Free," 300 delegates from 28 nations and territories and scores of organizations wrestled with such common problems as colonialism, economic assistance, violent versus non-violent methods to achieve independence.

Behind the scenes, in committee sessions, and on the floor of the conference participants and observers noted many significant aspects of the conference. One was the challenge by Nkrumah and other leaders in West and East Africa to the leadership of Nasser and the United Arab Republic. Another was the note of rebuff to the Soviets and possibly to the Egyptians in Nkrumah's opening address to the delegates:

Do not let us forget that colonialism and im-

perialism may come to us yet in a different guise, not necessarily from Europe.

A third was the pressure to urge non-violent means of attaining objectives rather than violent methods.

At the close of the conference resolutions were adopted¹ calling for universal adult direct suffrage, the dissolving of the Central African Federation, the condemnation of all discriminatory laws and practices, the granting of independence to South West Africa, the rejection of the Portuguese claim that their colonies constitute a part of metropolitan Portugal, the labelling of Nato and several other organizations as new forms of colonialism, the abolition or adjustment of arbitrary frontiers drawn up by the colonial powers, the denouncement of tribalism and religious separatism as obstacles to African unity and rapid liberation, and the eventual use of economic sanctions and a labor boycott of the Union of South Africa if it persisted in its policies of racial discrimination.

France was called upon to withdraw her troops from Algeria, to recognize the principle of independence, and to enter into negotiations with the Algerian National Liberation Front. A compromise statement on the methods to be encouraged in combating colonialism, the abolition or adjustment of those who used non-violent methods and condemning the labeling of persons who resorted to violence as criminals.

Strong support was given to the formation of a commonwealth of free African states and a small secretariat was established in Accra. Nkrumah and Tom Mboya, as host and chairman of the conference respectively, were the outstanding figures, but some opposition to Nkrumah's leadership in Africa was expressed, especially by Chief Enahoro of Western Nigeria, who urged careful consideration and wide consultation before any federations were formed.

Nkrumah once quoted Burke when referring to Ghana: "We are on a conspicuous stage and the world marks our demeanor." Ghana is in such a position and the world is watching. But as we watch we might well bear in mind another quotation from Nkrumah when he pleaded with reporters in London, saying, "Give us time to sort ourselves out." Every new nation needs such time and Ghana is no exception.

¹ For the texts of these resolutions see pages 41-46 of this issue.

