

Gold Coast Revolution Nears Its Climax

Preparing the Last Stage to Full Independence

★ By George Padmore ★

ON March 12, 1954, three years after the inauguration of the present Constitution under which the Gold Coast has been governed since 1951, the Legislative Assembly adjourned *sine die*. This marks the end of one transitional stage and the beginning of the final stage to freedom as "a sovereign and independent State within the Commonwealth."

In bidding *au revoir*, if not farewell to the retiring deputies, the Speaker, Sir Charles Emmanuel Quist, the distinguished African Elder Statesman, paid a fitting tribute to the Government.

"We have obtained in the Assembly, a Prime Minister in the person of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, a capable, energetic, sincere, and genuine statesman, who with his Cabinet containing a majority of Africans, has been mainly responsible for the progress to which I have alluded. Laws have been passed establishing Local Councils and placing Local Government on a firm basis. Social legislation has been introduced in many forms to safeguard the well-being and prosperity of the country and education has been expanded widely. Economically, we are solvent and our last Budget showed a surplus of £16 million. These are achievements of which we can rightly feel proud and which should encourage us to approach and face the future with confidence."

What is this future? But first a few words about the origin of the present Constitution.

THE COUSSEY CONSTITUTION

As a consequence of widespread riots arising from the shooting of unarmed ex-service men during a peaceful demonstration in Accra in 1948, the then Labour Government appointed a Commission of Inquiry consisting of three distinguished non-politicians, Mr. Aiken Watson, Q.C. as chairman, Professor Keith Murray of Oxford and Mr. Andrew Dalglish, the well-known authority on trade unionism. They recommended the scrapping of the existing Burns Constitution as being undemocratic and out-moded, although it had been introduced only two years previously by the first Labour Colonial Secretary, Mr. A. Creech Jones and proclaimed in Fabian circles as the most advanced constitution in the Colonial Empire.

The Commissioners also advised the British Government to appoint an all-African Constitutional Committee to draft a new Constitution under which the Gold Coast should be governed. Despite the reluctance of the Colonial Office to agree to this—for it was a revolutionary proposal—the Secretary of State for Colonies instructed the then Governor, Sir Gerald Creasy to proceed.

The Governor then packed the Committee with all kinds of reactionary middle-class lawyers, businessmen and Chiefs under the chairmanship of an African High Court Judge, Sir J. Henley Coussey. **Not one representative of the trade unions, farmers and other sections of the common people was included.**

In August, 1949, the Coussey Committee issued its report and after it was vetted by Mr. Creech Jones's principal adviser in the Colonial Office, Mr. Andrew Cohen, now Sir Andrew Cohen, Governor of Uganda, the new instrument was debated in the Legislative Council and promulgated by the Governor in 1950.

The Constitution fell short of the demands of the common people and the Convention People's Party (C.P.P.) (organised in June, 1949 to lead the struggle for "self-government now") launched a campaign of non-violent, non-co-operation. Shortly after Dr. Nkrumah, the chairman of the C.P.P. launched his Positive Action, he and several other lead-

ing members of the party were arrested on various trumped-up charges and imprisoned.

But while they were still in jail, the Governor in agreement with the moderate political leaders and the Chiefs, decided to hold the first general election. Although Dr. Nkrumah had described the Constitution as "bogus and fraudulent," he advised his supporters to contest the election so as to capture as many seats as possible. In doing so, they were motivated by the ideal of preventing the leaders of the reactionary and conservative parties who had helped to frame the Constitution from getting hold of the Government and working the Constitution in the way the British Government intended.

The C.P.P.'s overwhelming victory in February, 1951, spoilt all the plans and calculation of the Colonial Office and forced a retreat. So much so, that the present Governor, Sir Charles Arden-Clarke, was compelled to immediately free Dr. Nkrumah and his colleagues and call upon the C.P.P. leader to form the Executive Council, the main instrument of Government.

MIXED-BAG ASSEMBLY

The Coussey Constitution was so framed as to establish a mixed-bag Legislative Assembly. It consisted of 84 members of which 75 were elected, 3 ex-officio, and 6 members representing foreign interests (commerce and mining).

The ex-officio members—the Chief Government Secretary, the Financial Secretary and the Attorney General, as well as the foreign capitalist representatives—were all appointed by the Governor. The others were selected in the following manner:—Five municipal members were elected in a single-stage election by universal adult suffrage; 33 rural members were elected in a two-stage election by adult suffrage exercised through Electoral Colleges; 19 members from the Northern Territories were elected by a special Electoral College composed of chieftain nominees; 18 members were elected by the Territorial Councils of Chiefs representing the Colony area, Ashanti and Southern Togoland under United Nations Trusteeship exercised by the United Kingdom Government.

The Speaker was elected by all members of the Assembly from among themselves or from outside the Assembly. The present Speaker was not a member of the Assembly at the time of his election, but was the President of the former Legislative Council. He was elected by unanimous vote.

The Executive Council, now called the Cabinet, consisted of 11 members. Eight of them are Africans, holding portfolios of Commerce and Industry; Labour, Mines and Co-operatives; Agriculture and Natural Resources; Education and Social Welfare; Local Government and Housing; Communications and Works; Health; and Economic Development. The three British Ministers hold the key portfolios of Defence and External Affairs; Finance and Justice.

The Constitution as originally framed made no provisions for the premiership. The Colonial Office experts never anticipated that any one party would emerge as the dominant party in the Assembly. The plan was to play one group

of leaders off against the others and for the Governor with his officials and Chiefs to hand-pick the Cabinet and set the pace. Having selected one African to lead the pack, he was to be officially described as "Leader of Government Business."

But Dr. Nkrumah refused to play the game, so Mr. James Griffiths, the Labour Colonial Secretary had to get the Constitution amended to recognise Dr. Nkrumah, Prime Minister *de jure*, in order to get his co-operation in working the Constitution smoothly. This change was instituted early in 1952.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANS

With the initiative firmly in Dr. Nkrumah's hands, backed by an overwhelming majority in both the Assembly and Cabinet, the Prime Minister immediately set out to introduce long over-due economic and social reforms outlined in the Government's Development Plan. And within the short space of three years, the C.P.P. has been able to bring about the remarkable changes referred to by the Speaker at the closing session of the Assembly. The Gold Coast financial position has never been sounder and the country is now ready to embark on the final stage to independence.

How has this come about? At every stage of the struggle, Dr. Nkrumah, who never loses personal contact with the masses, has relied upon the support of the common people. He never makes a move before consulting public opinion which the C.P.P. is constantly educating in the spirit of democratic socialism.

Having demonstrated beyond any doubt that the African given the opportunity is capable of governing himself, the Prime Minister announced in the Legislative Assembly in October, 1953, that as a result of an exchange of views with Colonial Secretary, Mr. Oliver Lyttelton, who visited the Gold Coast in the summer of that year, he proposed to present to the British Government a demand for complete self-government.

But before doing so, he invited

all members of the Territorial, Municipal and Local Government Councils, political parties, trade unions, co-operatives and farmers unions and other public bodies and prominent citizens to submit their views in writing on questions of constitutional reform.

The response was tremendous. Led by the Press, the entire country reacted enthusiastically. After all the views and suggestions were submitted and collated, the African members of the Cabinet drafted proposals which were published as an official White Paper setting out in detail the demands of the people for a new Constitution.

The draft document was then presented to the Assembly and debated. The members then endorsed a motion introduced by the Prime Minister to "authorise the Government to request that Her Majesty's Government, as soon as the necessary constitutional and administrative arrangements for independence are made, should introduce an Act of Independence into the United Kingdom Parliament declaring the Gold Coast a sovereign and independent State within the Commonwealth; and further, that this Assembly do authorise the Government to ask Her Majesty's Government, without prejudice to the above request, to amend as a matter of urgency the Gold Coast (Constitution) Order in Council 1950, in such a way as to provide inter alia that the Legislative Assembly shall be composed of members directly elected by secret ballot, and that all Members of the Cabinet shall be members of the Assembly and directly responsible to it."

While negotiations between the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Colonies were being carried out through the Governor, the Assembly approved plans for dividing the country into 104 constituencies and enacted legislation to deal with other electoral arrangements. So that by the end of the last session of the Assembly in March, the Prime Minister was able to announce that a general election will take place in the summer.



George Padmore

THE NKURUMAH CONSTITUTION

In accordance with the decision of the Assembly that all members of the new Parliament must be directly elected by secret ballot, Chiefs and representatives of foreign commercial and mining interests, as well as British official nominees of the Governor will be excluded.

The incoming Assembly will therefore consist of 104 popularly elected members, in keeping with British parliamentary practice, the leader of the party which wins the majority of seats will be called upon by the Governor to form the Government.

Furthermore, as the official representative of the Crown, the Governor will no longer preside over Cabinet meetings, and will act only on the advice of his Ministers, who will be collectively responsible to the Assembly. The Governor, however, will continue to exercise control over defence and external affairs until such time as the United Kingdom Parliament passes an Act of Independence conferring full sovereignty upon the Gold Coast. On the other hand, the portfolios of Justice and Finance now held by British officials will be transferred to African Ministers.

Apart from selecting his own Cabinet colleagues, the Prime Minister will also have the right to nominate Under-Secretaries who will be attached to each Ministry. They, unlike the Permanent Secretaries, who will continue to be civil servants, will be drawn from the Legislative Assembly.

This briefly, is the structure of the Nkrumah Constitution under which the first general election will be held on June 15. The outcome of this event will decide not only the future status of the Gold Coast, but the possibility of peaceful transformation of other African territories from dependencies to self-governing member States within the Commonwealth.

The Gold Coast represents a hope and inspiration to Africans everywhere, but has aroused alarm and despondency in certain imperialist circles in Britain and South Africa.

In a recent interview with the influential American journal, "U.S. News and World Report", Dr. Malan, that high-priest of racialism, voiced the fears haunting the South African herrenvolk.

"Democracy is a good thing, but a nation has to be educated up to it", he pontificated. "In the Gold Coast (where Britain has granted self-government) over 90 per cent of the voters are illiterate they can't read or write. If you give democracy to such people, the result must ultimately be a reversion to barbarism and chaos."

While Dr. Malan preaches hatred and contempt for coloured peoples and seeks to extend his domination over Africans by demanding the annexation of the Protectorates of Bechuanaland, Basutoland and Swaziland, his contemporary, Dr. Nkrumah, proclaims his faith in the Brotherhood of Man. On his release from prison in 1951, the Gold Coast leader let it be known that he will not tolerate racialism in his country.

"I came out of gaol into the Assembly without the slightest feeling of bitterness to Britain. I stand for no racialism, no discrimination against any race or any individual, but I am unalterably opposed to Imperialism in any form."

PLOT MISCARRIED

Despite the fact that within the short period of three years the Gold Coast people have travelled fast and far along the road to complete self-government, the struggle is not yet over. Final victory has yet to be won.

Already attempts are being made by the forces of conservatism and reaction operating inside and outside the Gold Coast to discredit the Prime Minister and his Government.

Recently, a leading Chief by the name of Braimah, who, although not a member of the C.P.P. was included in the Cabinet by Dr. Nkrumah as a gesture of friendship and solidarity with the Chiefs of the Northern Territories who selected Braimah to the Assembly, resigned after having confessed to the Governor of accepting bribes. He then proceeded to accuse the Prime Minister of having received the gift of a Cadillac motor car and £40,000 from a Syrian contractor for a road contract for which the man was only to be paid £10,000 for his services by the Government.

This fantastic allegation was not only repudiated by Dr. Nkrumah, but the British Solicitor-General who conducted the proceeding before the Commission of Inquiry appointed by the Governor, declared that there was no evidence to support Chief Braimah's allegations.

However, even before the findings of the Commission had been made public, the Chief having failed to discredit the Prime Minister, joined forces with other opponents of the C.P.P. to organise a separatist, tribalist organisation called the Northern People's Party to break up the unity of the Gold Coast.

The Chief is said to have been encouraged in this "Pakistan" manoeuvre by certain British officials serving in the Northern Territories, where the majority of the natives are Muslims.

THE PARTY SYSTEM

Commenting upon the exploitation of the religious sentiments of the people for political ends, the Prime Minister has stated that: "The Party system has come to stay. It is only through the Party System that Parliamentary Democracy can be maintained. But the C.P.P. in accordance with progres-

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OPERATION 104!



THE coming General Election in the Gold Coast will be an event of tremendous importance. Should the party of Kwame Nkrumah (whose photo appears here)—the Convention Peoples' Party—win it will be an inspiration to colonial peoples everywhere to intensify their own struggles for self-government.

It is necessary, however, in view of the Tory intervention in British Guiana, for the British Labour Movement to be on guard against Tory tricks.

There is tremendous enthusiasm in the Gold Coast and confidence that the C.P.P.'s election slogan "104—Freedom" will be realised, that is, Nkrumah's supporters will win all the seats!

Wholesale Arrests in B. Guiana

Reported by Janet Jagan

Georgetown, B.G., April 11, 1954

SINCE the arrest of Dr. Cheddi Jagan on April 3rd, there have been over seventy arrests on various charges including disorderly behaviour, illegal procession and unlawful assembly.

Crowds outside the Magistrate's Court on the first day of the trials were dispersed and twenty persons arrested. Police broke up a women's protest march before Government House and several persons who participated in this protest march were arrested. On April 7th, the Police used tear gas in and about the Party's Headquarters. The office which was raided twice daily up to this time, and had everything carried away was closed down by the orders of

the Commissioner of Police. Armed Police still guard the office 24 hours daily.

Police closed down the Arcade Printery which does work for the Party and also prints the "Thunder" for twenty-four hours keeping it under armed guard. Later the printery was re-opened but police still guard it, and the printer has been warned not to do any printing for the Party. The authorities have not yet given any definite orders concerning the Party's paper "Thunder". Printing has been held up. "Thunder" was to come out for the first time on April 10th. The printer, however was warned not to continue with the printing.

A shop owned by former Assembly woman Jessie Burnham was closed down on April 7th with armed police guarding. It was reopened again on the 9th.

On April 9th, the Party opened another headquarters in the Albouystown district of the city. This is still open, but was raided on the 10th and posters removed.

Police have raided the New Amsterdam and Rose Hall Branch offices of the P.P.P., the home of former Assembly woman, Jane Gav, and the offices of the Guiana Industrial Workers' Union.

Prison was refused for Dr. Jagan and five others when they appeared before the Magistrate on April

6th, charged with holding an illegal procession. Dr. Jagan and others were arrested twenty minutes after they were released on bail on the 5th as thousands of cheering people followed them from the court. Dr. Jagan representing himself protested against the filthy conditions of the cell in which he and fifteen others were placed. The cell measured 10 ft. by 12 ft. The Magistrate remanded them to Georgetown Prison where they are now held.

L. F. S. Burnham who received Restriction Orders on the 6th from the Governor has refused to obey the section requiring him to report to the Police station twice weekly.

On Friday night (April 9th) the Governor proclaimed Georgetown and its environs.

BUFFALOES MAY NOT LOOK AT A QUEEN

A petition signed by over forty peasants in the Dambulla area of Ceylon, has been sent to the Lanka Samasamaja Party—the Ceylon Socialist Party.

The petition states that cattle belonging to the peasants were driven into the forest or impounded by the Village Headmen in preparation for the Queen's visit. Buffaloes that wallowed in the mud in the drains alongside the Matale-Dambulla road are to be denied the privilege of sleeping there until the Queen leaves the island. There was no request for co-operation from the owners of the cattle.

A cat can look at a king but a buffalo cannot look at a queen.

Socialist Outlook

59 FLEET STREET, E.C.4.

Editor: John Lawrence

Gold Coast Revolution

(from p. 2)

sive forms of government everywhere, is opposed to the formation of political parties on a basis of **racialism, tribalism and religion**, and will make use of every legitimate means to combat it. In our country, with its tradition of religious tolerance and respect for all faiths, it is highly undesirable that a religious association or denomination should take on itself the character of a political party. If it does so, the public are liable to associate its religious tenets, be they Christian or Muslim, with its political aims, and to withhold from such a religious movement the tolerance which is given to purely religious sects."

The election will be hard fought. For in addition to the newly formed Northern People's Party with its Islamic appeal, there is the fanatical Muslim Party led by the best known Gold Coast Communist, Mr. Bankole Renner; the United Gold Coast Convention led by Dr. J. B. Danquah, the doyen of African politicians; the Ghana Congress Party led by Dr. A. K. Busia, lecturer in Sociology at the University College; the National Democratic Party led by Barrister Ollennu; the Ghana Nationalist Party, led by Barrister, Obetsebi Lamptey; the Ghana Action Party, led by Dr. Ansah Koi, a medical practitioner.

All the parties are mobilising their resources to win as many seats as possible. The opposition parties are even planning to form a "united front" against the C.P.P. But there is no doubt that Dr. Nkrumah will again be returned to office. His party has already won the majority of seats in the three recent municipal elections for the Accra, Kumasi and Takoradi-Sekondi Town Councils.

June 15, will be an historic day in the Gold Coast bloodless revolution.
