

NEW CRISIS IN AFRICA

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SSIX years ago 1960 was often described as 'Africa Year'. At that time one country after another was either achieving independence or had won agreement for a fixed date. Africa is now facing a crisis year. In recent months it has been the scene of several military coups. That which took place in Ghana in February was the biggest setback to the advance of the liberation struggle in that vast continent.

It is not the only setback. Together with the military coups in the Central African Republic, Dahomey, and Upper Volta, comes the retrograde decision of the 11 independent states of East and Central Africa to recognise the Congo regime of President Mobutu, with his heavy responsibility in relation to the murder of Patrice Lumumba. As if this was not enough the Kenya Government mounted a double-pronged offensive. One was to remove the socialist stalwart Oginga Odinga from leading positions in the government and in the Kenya African National Union; the other was to expel Gbenye and Kanza, the two main standard bearers of the struggle to achieve democratic rule in the Congo. Together with the repressive measures in Algeria (Ben Bella and scores of liberation fighters are still in detention) and the prolonged ban on the Communist Party of Sudan, all these measures constitute a serious counter-offensive against the advance of the African revolution.

It will take some time for the progressive forces in Ghana to regroup themselves to put an end to the military junta which has seized power. But it is a good sign that resistance is already being organised, as is made clear from the statement of the 'Committee for the Defence of the Revolution' (p. 222). However, it would be utter folly to imagine that the Ghana military coup is an isolated episode. It is the high-water mark of a determined offensive which neo-colonialism is waging in a desperate effort to hold back and destroy the most progressive forces in the African liberation movements.

The British and American press, radio and TV would have us believe that the Ghana military coup was a spontaneous revolt against Dr. Nkrumah's 'dictatorship', and a policy which brought the country to 'the verge of bankruptcy'. That Ghana was faced with serious economic problems cannot be denied. Nor can it be denied that serious blunders were made in carrying through the Seven-Year

Plan, together with the failure to apply more flexible methods to rally the masses for the achievement of its aims. But all this has nothing to do with the real causes of the military coup.

What is significant is that it was launched within a month of the completion of the £56 million Volta Dam (planned over a decade ago) and for which Ghana raised most of the funds from its own resources—hardly evidence of ‘bankruptcy’! It gave Ghana the essential means to transform its old colonial economy and to end the dangerous dependence on cocoa exports.

The real reason for the military coup was not ‘economic bankruptcy’. It was the recognition that Ghana was on the path of advance towards a balanced economy which could make a strong challenge to imperialist economic domination and the stranglehold of the capitalist world market. To put it more bluntly, Ghana was in the forefront of the struggle against the strategy of neo-colonialism, to end economic domination and all forms of pressure from imperialism. In doing so it was fulfilling the declared aims of all African liberation movements in practice, and not simply in words.

From December 1958 to March 1961, there were three all-African People’s Conferences. After 1960 there was a rapid advance in the number of African countries winning constitutional independence. Last month Lesotho (formerly Basutoland) achieved this status, and in September of this year Botswana (now Bechuanaland) will become independent. Soon there will be 38 independent African states, comprising 80 per cent of the continent and 85 per cent of its population.

This comparatively rapid process has created the illusion that this constitutes a basic advance towards liberation. True, from the strictly constitutional standpoint it is a significant change—especially if the winning of political power is used for the new stage of the liberation struggle. But unless this is done it means little from the standpoint of changing the traditional colonial economy, ending imperialist economic domination, and the pressure and plots of neo-colonialism. To achieve this involves the sharpest struggles, and these are still to come in Africa.

Dr. Nkrumah’s oft repeated warning that no independent African state can be secure until the whole of Africa wins its freedom is more than ever true today. It is one thing to win political independence north of the Limpopo, and it is another when it comes to the Portuguese colonies and white settler rule in southern Africa.

When Sir Hugh Foot (now Lord Caradon) resigned as Britain’s

representative on the United Nations Special Committee Against Colonialism, he was most forthright about the situation in Rhodesia:

There is no realisation that we are on the edge of a commotion, bloodshed and violence, not only in southern Africa, but in East and West Africa . . .
(BBC, November 10, 1962.)

Now it is Lord Caradon, spokesman of the Labour Government at the United Nations Security Council, whose policy is bound to lead to this situation.

The desperate efforts of the Wilson government to prevent any decisive action to end white settler minority rule in Rhodesia is a serious challenge to the whole of independent Africa. The farcical manoeuvres against the oil tankers at Beira during Easter weekend did nothing to stop oil getting to Rhodesia through South Africa and the Portuguese colony of Mozambique.

No wonder the military coup in Ghana was greeted with whoops of joy in British and American ruling circles—as well as in Rhodesia and South Africa. It was recognised that this had removed the main lever which could have mobilised the African states to act together, not only to end the illegal Smith regime, but to put an end to white minority rule in any form.

Even this was not sufficient. It is not difficult to recognise the hands behind the scenes at the recent conference of 11 independent states in east and central Africa. Malcolm Macdonald (son of Ramsay) was recently elevated from the post of British Commissioner in Kenya to become the British 'adviser' for east and central Africa. With the experience of all his manoeuvres to pave the way for the ill-fated Malaysia Federation he is impatient to fulfil a similar task for east and central Africa.

This is what lies behind the recognition of the Congo regime under President Mobutu, the expulsion of Gbedye and Kanza from Kenya, and the vicious campaign which led to the removal of Oginga Odinga from all key positions. It also explains the pressure to maintain the ban against the Communist Party of Sudan, and the sharpening of the anti-communist cold war campaign in Uganda.

It is as well to recall an editorial comment in *The Guardian* almost a year ago which made clear that Odinga's removal would be welcomed in the West. For 'West' read 'Britain':

As Mr. Odinga's star wanes, that of Mr. Mboya is likely to rise. From the Western standpoint he is much to be preferred; indeed he may be too Western in outlook for his own good.

(*The Guardian*, May 9, 1965.)

The third All-African People's Conference at Cairo in March 1961 (after the Congo experiences) defined the real meaning of neo-colonialism and urged the need for united action to combat this menace. Since then there has not been a single conference of the African national movements. All discussions have been confined to conferences of 'Heads of State'. *This has been the most costly blunder since 1961 of the African liberation movements.*

Even in face of the Cairo resolution against neo-colonialism the illusion still persists that constitutional independence *in itself* is sufficient. There has grown the practice of African governments ruling above the heads of the masses, and of using one-party systems to uphold and justify government decisions instead of drawing in the African mass movements to assist in moulding and carrying out agreed decisions.

The serious setback in Ghana is a lesson to all independent African states and African mass movements. Unless this lesson is taken to heart there is serious danger that the strategy of neo-colonialism will win more successes. But if early and energetic action is taken to ensure that African mass movements unite together, and are brought into closer co-operation with the decisions of independent African governments, the better the prospect of defeating neo-colonialism and quickening the pace towards all-African freedom.
