Ghana Since Independence
By H.E. MR. E. O. ASAPU-ADJAYE

The address which follows was given by the High Commissioner for Ghana at a Joint meeting of the Royal African Society and the Royal Commonwealth Society on June 5th, 1958. Mr. Brian F. Macdona, Vice-Chairman of the Council of the Royal African Society, took the chair.

I SHOULD LIKE first of all to say how greatly I appreciate this opportunity of addressing this meeting this afternoon.

I am particularly aware of the extremely valuable part which both these two institutions, perhaps more than any others in this country, have played in promoting research, knowledge and interest in African and Commonwealth affairs.

Largely, as the result of the efforts of these two societies, a great deal more about African and Commonwealth affairs is known at least in this country now, than it was two or three decades ago. This fact has made me even more alive to the honour which has been conferred on me. Furthermore, the presence of so many distinguished people here today adds yet further to this privilege.

I should also like to express my gratitude to both the Royal African and the Royal Commonwealth Society for their hospitality and for the cordial reception they have given me since I assumed office in this country.

Before going farther I would like to convey my sincere thanks to our Chairman, Mr. B. F. Macdona, for the way in which he was good enough to introduce me.

The year 1957 may well go down as the "annus mirabilis" in the history of this twentieth century. That year witnessed the birth among the Commonwealth not only of the new State of Ghana but also of the Federated States of Malaya. These events were of great historic moment. For Ghana is the first all-black African State to achieve independence within the British Commonwealth.

To the British, who were our mentors, the birth of Ghana not only fulfilled a pledge; it was also a fulfilment of the proclaimed central purpose of British colonial policy, namely to guide colonial territories to responsible self-government. And one great significance of Ghana's independence was the fact that it was achieved without bitterness or hatred.

To us Ghanaians, however, the achievement of independence is both a challenge and an opportunity. On the one hand, it is a challenge to prove to the world that the black man is capable of managing his own affairs. On the other hand, it is an opportunity to develop in full measure the "African personality" thereby contributing to the peace, happiness and prosperity of mankind. Let us examine some of the problems and difficulties which we have had to overcome.

First, there was the general unrest and unsettlement which usually follow the end of a colonial rule, and the need to provide a firm and strong...
government without infringing on the essential liberties of the individual. Secondly, there was the task of reconciling the old forms of traditional rule to modern democratic practices. Thirdly, there was the necessity not only of carrying to a successful completion the development programme, but also of promoting further measures designed to bring a richer and fuller life to the people. The Government of Ghana had to cope with all these problems amidst the blinding and searching light of world publicity—publicity that was not always favourable to Ghana. Lastly, but not the least important, there was the task of creating a new awareness of political responsibility among the masses that freedom does not mean license to do just what one pleases; but a unique privilege which affords the individual the unique opportunity of asserting not only himself, but also of promoting the interests of the Society in which he lives within the International Sphere.

In dealing with these problems, the Government of Ghana was obliged to adopt firm measures, some of which have received severe criticism from the Press. Nevertheless, the overall effect of her actions has been refreshing. The difficulties of the first few months have been overcome without great difficulty and Ghana is much quieter.

Mr. Chairman, I would like, with your permission to quote some recent excerpts from two prominent British newspapers.

Reviewing the events of the past twelve months, the Daily Mirror, which also has a subsidiary paper in Ghana, and is therefore in a good position to know what is happening there said:

"There have been dangers, set-backs and mistakes. Yet today there is more security and confidence in Ghana than for many months, and Nkrumah’s Ministry is more firmly in power.

"Independent Ghana still needs and deserves all the understanding and help it can get from the rest of the world. But it has passed its first and biggest test—the test of whether this Government of Africans by Africans would work. It is working."

Also the News Chronicle in a similar article observed as follows—"It is reassuring that there has been no flight of foreign capital. In spite of disquieting incidents and the tendency towards one-party State, the political position is far more hopeful than in white-ruled Algeria, South Africa or even Central African Federation! " "African democracy," the article concluded, "is going through a testing time, but hopes can still be high that Ghana will set great example to a watching world."

And now let us review some of the highlights of the past twelve months.

The Government of Ghana have made substantial progress towards completing the many projects which had been started during our first Development Plan and has undertaken additional works; all of which are intended to provide for our shortcomings and needs, without which our independence would not be a reality.

Particularly in the field of education, much progress has been achieved. Higher education is rapidly expanding. The University College of Ghana which was established some ten years ago is working towards a fully-fledged
University for Ghana, and we hope it will be achieved within the next few years. Considerable progress has also been made in the plan to provide permanent building for the Kumasi College of Technology and the various secondary and teacher-training institutions in the country. Perhaps, the pace of this development may be gauged by the amount of money the Government is spending on education. Out of an annual national expenditure this year of £44½ million, no less than £7 million has been earmarked for education.

In the medical field too, great strides have been made. Important extensions have been completed to existing hospitals. For example, the Korle Bu hospital, the main hospital in Ghana, is being extended to make provision for a medical school to serve the new Faculty of Medicine at the University College of Ghana. No less than £2,000,000 is being spent on the new Faculty. In addition, there has been a marked increase in the number of dispensaries and clinics established in the rural areas. These extensions form important links in the plan for the control and cure of disease.

Similar progress has been made in the fields of Social Welfare and Community Development. Communications have been expanded. More houses have been built. And it is gratifying to know that a team of experts from the United Nations which visited Ghana recently commended our country on the great strides it has made in these fields. Recently, the Ghana Government, under the auspices of the Commission for Technical Co-operation in Africa south of the Sahara, has offered Scholarships and Fellowships to members of the Commission for Technical Co-operation for the study of Community Development in Ghana.

In our determination to build a modern state, we are not forgetting the past. Take the problem of chieftaincy, for example, which is the subject of much controversy. The institution is fundamental to our traditional way of life and popular Government. It is, therefore, the declared intention of the Ghana Government to preserve it in a progressive form within the modern democratic framework. Unfortunately, there has been much criticism in certain quarters about the role of chiefs in the modern state. These critics, in my view, do not sufficiently appreciate the complicated problem which the Ghana Government has inherited from British administration. Some administrative reforms which, perhaps, proved successful elsewhere, e.g., in Northern Nigeria, were applied rather uncritically to Ghana. The result was that to some people the institution of chieftaincy became unpopular and reactionary. The aim of the Ghana Government, however, is to preserve in this part of our cultural heritage all that is best and progressive.

I am sure you will agree with me that from all accounts our achievements since independence have proved beyond all doubt the justice of our claim to govern ourselves and to control our own affairs.

But our activities have not only been limited to the domestic front. In foreign affairs, Ghana has followed a policy of maintaining friendly relations with all nations irrespective of the political creed or ideology of the countries concerned. This is not a neutralist policy, as it may at first sight
appear. In fact, it means in practice our unfettered freedom of acting independently as it seems best to us at a particular time. Take, for instance, Ghana's relations with the two independent states of Israel and the United Republic of Arab States. There is the utmost cordiality between Ghana and these two States irrespective of any apparent differences existing between these two States.

We have established a shipping line with Israel and are also endeavouring to study and adopt some of Israel's techniques and methods of trade unionism. With Cairo, too, we are working in concert to develop an African personality in international affairs. I shall refer to this later on in my speech.

Members will also recall that Ghana was elected as the eighty-first Member of the United Nations within 48 hours of her independence. We were gratified by the unanimous support we received from all the members and we pledged ourselves that we would do everything in our power to further the principles of the Charter. Soon afterwards our representative took his seat in the General Assembly. Our representative, Mr. Daniel Chapman (who is also our Ambassador in Washington), is qualified to represent us, because for many years he served as an Area Specialist of the United Nations at Lake Success.

Under the guiding light of the United Nations Charter, the people of British Togoland, formerly a United Kingdom Trust Territory, attained freedom as an integral part of Ghana. The help which we received from the United Nations in assisting the people of Togoland to make their own decision in coming together with us is something which we shall never forget.

We have in the United Nations followed the policy which our Prime Minister enunciated, and have accordingly voted on the merits of individual issues, not just merely aligning ourselves with particular power blocs.

I should like also to mention briefly some instances of help which Ghana has received from the United Nations in recent years. This help has taken the form of skilled experts who have been sent to help the Ghana Government in her various development projects. Quite recently, with the help of the United Nations, the Ghana Government has been able to obtain the services of the eminent economist, Professor Arthur Lewis, who is now out in Ghana as Economic Adviser to the Government. A few months ago, the United Nations, through its specialised agency of the World Health Organisation, sent some veterinary experts to assist our Government in its fight against rinder pest and also in modern methods of cattle breeding. All these indicate the willingness of the Ghana Government to work in co-operation with other countries.

I mentioned earlier that we Ghanaians regard our independence as an opportunity to help evolve an African personality, a personality which will not only project the African viewpoint in the International Councils of the World, but which will also help in contributing a peaceful and lasting solution to the many problems besetting the world today.

I would like to explain at this stage that really there is nothing new about
this idea of an African personality. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, the focal point in the aims of all important nationalist movements in West Africa, particularly in the Gold Coast, was to find a national self, a self which would embody and express the African point of view. The idea underlay the Fanti Confederation which was formed in the middle of the nineteenth century, the Gold Coast Aborigines Rights Protection Society in the late nineteenth century, the National Congress of British West Africa in the nineteen-twenties, the Gold Coast Youth Conference in the nineteen-thirties, the United Gold Coast Convention in 1947 and the Convention People's Party formed in 1949. However, it is the present Government headed by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah to whom the credit for the realisation of this great idea should be given.

In April this year, as is now history, representatives of the eight Independent African States for the first time met at a conference in Accra. The purpose of this historic conference was to forge closer links of friendship, brotherhood and co-operation among the various participating countries. As one who was privileged to attend this conference, I have no doubt at all that the conference achieved the purpose for which it was convened.

I have endeavoured in this brief talk to tell you about our achievements during the past twelve months. We have travelled a long way, but there is still far to go. Nevertheless, I think we can be justly proud of the achievements of the first year of our independence as a Sovereign State.

Discussion

A MEMBER, who requested further information concerning labour questions, referred to recent newspaper reports of the Government's proposals for a formal, legal recognition of a limited number of trade unions, and asked whether this would conflict in any way with the Conventions of the International Labour Office. He suggested that any undue limitation might amount to discrimination.

MR. ASAFU-ADJAYE replied that the question was receiving consideration. The policy of the Government was to foster trade unionism, but they did not want to have too many small unions; they would prefer them to co-operate and unite in large groups. It was much easier to deal with a larger group than with many small groups. The Government would not, however, act in any way that would prejudice the rights and liberties of trade unions.

A MEMBER expressed disappointment that there had been no reference whatever to the part played by the Commonwealth. Speaking as a Canadian, he said, Canada had itself played some small part in helping Ghana in the past year or so. Canadians believed that the Commonwealth was today an extremely important factor in world affairs. It would, therefore, be a good thing if the High Commissioner would say something about Ghana's attitude to the Commonwealth. He had referred to the part played by the United Nations and by Cairo. Surely, other parts had been played also, and members would like to hear something about them.

MR. ASAFU-ADJAYE replied that it was not his wish to appear invidious and make only one or two selections. He had, however, recently addressed other bodies, when he had attempted to place on record Ghana's gratitude for being in the Commonwealth and the reasons why it was in the Commonwealth. Having already spoken of this, he did not wish to repeat it today.

A MEMBER, who said he had been impressed by the speaker's figures concerning education, pointed out that about one-sixth of the total Budget of the country was being spent on education. No doubt Ghana wished to maintain a balance between higher education, to train more people to run the country, and education at the lower level so that the masses should become universally educated to a normal world level.
In which direction, however, was there the greater concentration?

MR. ASAFU-ADJAYE replied that Ghana was concentrating on both levels. The emphasis, however, was laid on the primary institutions. It was considered that by developing the primary institutions to a high degree, it would be possible to feed the higher institutions of learning. At present, education in the primary schools was free up to a certain standard and the Government hoped that if finances permitted, they might be able to make it free throughout all the primary stages.

A MEMBER invited His Excellency to add to his remarks concerning the position of the chiefs and, in particular, to say how their powers were to be reduced if, in fact, they were to be reduced.

MR. ASAFU-ADJAYE replied that the present trend of the Government was to get every local community well represented in the local councils of each area, and the chief of an area was identified with the local council in that he was its president. Judicial powers had been given to the courts established under the supervision or guidance of the local councils. The chiefs became traditional heads of the people. Their tendency was not to mix themselves up with the day-to-day routine of the country, but by virtue of their position as presidents of the various councils they were able to put forward their views for consideration by the democratically elected bodies.

A MEMBER, who described himself as a Member of the Opposition in Ghana, complimented the High Commissioner on speaking so well and explained that at home Mr. Asafu-Adjaye was a brilliant barrister who had on occasions defended incorrigible criminals and conducted their defence extremely well, sometimes succeeding in getting them off. It was fitting that the High Commissioner had made a brilliant speech because not only members of the Government, but members of the Opposition in Ghana had the task of presenting their country to the outside world.

He wondered, however, whether the High Commissioner and the Government of Ghana realised that occasionally the speeches of responsible Ministers, who did not speak in exactly the same way as the High Commissioner, tended to frighten people. No matter what the intentions of the Government might be, speeches of some of the individual Government members were apt to terrify people of the Government's intentions. One man, in fact, had gone so far as to say that one word by a certain Minister in the present Government cost the country £1 million a day.

MR. MACDONALD suggested that it was hardly fair to put a question of that nature to the accredited representative in Britain of the Ghana Government. A much better answer could be obtained across the floor of the Chamber in Accra than in London.

MR. ASAFU-ADJAYE said that he was grateful that the question had been raised, because it might help to clear the atmosphere. Everybody knew the old phrase, "to err is human". If one or two individual Ministers on their own made a slip and made such utterances, which perhaps did not do much credit to the country, it did not necessarily follow that their statements were pronouncements by the Government. They were merely the individual views of the Minister concerned.

The statements made by the Government regarding policy or any official matters did not really scare people out of the country or scare capital away. The Government had made it quite clear that in dealing with outside people, they would abide by the traditions of fair play and justice. People could be assured that when capital was poured into the country, there need be no apprehension that an autocratic form of government might emerge which would confiscate or reduce the value of capital. The Government intended to invite outside capital into the country, and it was their declared policy that anybody who put capital into the country would not regret it.

A MEMBER asked the position regarding the Volta project.

MR. ASAFU-ADJAYE replied that the Volta project was still under consideration. The immediate need was for capital. At present, the scheme would cost a little over £300 million, which was a great sum of money. The Government, therefore, had to find persons and countries who were interested and they hoped that by getting in touch with countries and individuals they might be able to raise the capital that was necessary for the project.

A MEMBER asked why the name "Ghana" was chosen and what was its meaning.

MR. ASAFU-ADJAYE replied that people in Ghana had read in history of an empire known as the Ghana Empire, consisting of persons of very dark hue, and it was their belief that the people in the country now known as Ghana migrated there from the ancient Ghana. Having obtained independence, the people of Ghana felt that it would be a source of inspiration to adopt the name of the ancient Empire, and accordingly they had done so.
A MEMBER asked what social integration was taking place between South and North, whether anything was being done to foster the tourist trade and whether there was a football league. At the time of his last visit to Ghana, he had objected strongly to the use of the word "bush-man".

MR. ASAFU-ADJAYE replied that the word "bush-man" was no longer known in Ghana. No Ghanaian would refer to any other Ghanaian, in any part of the country, as a bush-man. The tourist trade was one of the schemes that the Government had in mind, and they had recently announced their intention of fostering it. It was the Government's intention to invite people to come to Ghana and see not only the towns, but the country, and hotels were contemplated in various places for the comfort of visitors.

Ghana had developed football, and there were big soccer matches between different parts of the country. There were matches between Western and Eastern teams, as well as between teams from the North and the South. The spirit of sportsmanship had been greatly developed, and football was one of the sports that people in Ghana admired.

A MEMBER asked how the construction of the harbour near Accra was progressing.

MR. ASAFU-ADJAYE replied that in a year or two's time the first ships should be berthing at Tema, which would be one of the most progressive harbours of which the country could boast, 18 miles from Accra. It was not possible to give an exact forecast, but within a period of two or three years the big ocean liners should be using the port.

A MEMBER asked what was the reason for Ghana's success in avoiding an administrative hiatus. When he and Mr. Asafu-Adjaye were Ministers together, they were anxious that there should be no general exodus of British officers before there were African officers to take their place. In the scheme that was evolved for British officers on independence, it was sought to include inducements to entice them to stay long enough for Africanisation to proceed. Had that scheme been successful, and would the administrative machine be available for carrying out the many excellent plans of which His Excellency had spoken today?

MR. ASAFU-ADJAYE, in reply, hoped that the Administration would be able to carry out the plans that the Cabinet at the time had envisaged. There had been an exodus of non-Ghanaian officers, but recently the Government had announced the need to get some of the expatriate officers to remain and help the country to plan and carry out the new developments. To this end, a scheme had been put forward to the effect that officers serving at a certain date, either in April or in May, 1958, who had taken their compensation and who wished to remain, would be absorbed on certain terms by the Government, who were willing for those who wished to stay to continue on prescribed terms.

Possibly the scope would have to be widened to embrace some of the excellent men who had left, but Ghana was working hard towards Africanisation and hoped that the young Africans or Ghanaians who were taking on the job would be able to play their part. They could not, however, play a greater part than human endurance would allow.

A MEMBER asked for information about the military forces of the Government and, in particular, whether the military or air forces were commanded by white British officers, and was there integration of people from different parts of the country?

MR. ASAFU-ADJAYE replied that people from all parts of the country joined the military forces. There was no stipulation that people from a certain area should join the same regiment. They all joined together in the Ghana Regiment. There were still some British officers. A number of Ghanaians had taken responsible positions, but the more experienced officers would continue to be needed for a time to help to run the various sections of the forces.

The High Commissioner was asked the percentages of the Christian and Muslim population and to what extent religious bodies still controlled the primary schools.

MR. ASAFU-ADJAYE replied that although he could not give the figures off hand, the Christian population was the greater. The Muslim community was, however, growing, and it was doing so to a greater extent in the hinterland than along the coastal area. All the schools had now been taken over by the local authorities. In some areas, missionaries were running them on behalf of the local authorities.

MR. MACDONA, in closing the meeting, thanked the High Commissioner for the admirable manner in which he had covered the whole field of Ghana's progress in the last 15 months. It was understood that towards the end of next year, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh were to visit Ghana. As a result, a great deal more would be learned about Ghana from the Press, from photographs and from films. It was hoped that following this event, Mr. Asafu-Adjaye or his successor would give another talk to bring members or e more up to date with the progress that Ghana was making.