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black Power

Three Books from Exile: Black Power; The Color Curtain; and White Man, Listen!

Richard Wright

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY CORNEL WEST

HARPERPERENNIAL MODERNCLASSICS

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Seven

I was at once conscious of a strange, dead quiet. The ship's diesel engines had ceased to throb; stillness gripped my narrow cabin. We had docked! I leaped out of my bunkbed and peered through the porthole and saw Africa...

I dressed hurriedly and went on deck; an African city, under a blanket of blue mist, lay spread out before me. The heat was heavy, close, wet; and the city—Takoradi—seethed with activity at even this early hour. On the wharf was a forest of derricks, cranes, sheds, machines and, as I looked closer, I could see that they were being operated by black men—a fact that must have produced pain in the heart of Dr. Malan of South Africa, for he had sworn that black men were incapable of doing these things.

I studied the swirling crowd on the docks and found it hard to distinguish men from women, for practically everyone had a richly colored cloth draped about him, and almost everyone was barefooted except the policemen who, to my horror, were dressed in dark blue wool! I wondered how they could stand it. . . .

At the breakfast table I took my farewell of Mr. Justice who was continuing the voyage to Lagos, Nigeria.

"I wonder what you're going to make out of Africa," the judge said reflectively, chewing.

"I don't expect to find too much there that's completely new," I drawled.

"Africa's strange, strange," he assured me.

"My background's rather strange too," I informed him. He laughed and shook his head.

"If you get to Nigeria, you must look me up," he said. "Don't forget me."

"I shan't forget you," I told him.

I descended to the customs shed where it was twice as hot as it had been on board. A young man approached me.

"Mr. Wright?"

"Yes."

"I'm meeting you for the Prime Minister."

world from side to side. Then I was startled by a Euroblank expanse of their mothers' backs, looking at the were awake, their wide, innocent eyes avoiding the broad ing in a pan set on the ground; she was bent at an angle of sound asleep upon her back. The babies of other women forty-five degrees in the broiling sun, her black child also cutting deeply into the flesh. Another woman was washand was anchored straight across the woman's breasts, sprawled about the woman's hips and thighs, and the tiny shed, I saw Africa for the first time with frontal vision: forehead. The cloth held the weight of the baby's body head of the baby lolled in sleep with sweat beading on its held a baby strapped to her back; the infant's legs were woman wearing a brightly colored length of cloth which me to Accra, the capital. Emerging from the customs black life was everywhere. My eyes were riveted upon a informed me that a government transport bus would take friend of Nkrumah. He guided me through customs and He was Mr. Ansah, short, black, alert, a personal

pean family threading its way through the black crowd. "They are the minority here, hunh, Mr. Ansah?" I asked

"They are the minority here, hunh, Mr. Ansah?" I asked. He roared with laughter.

"It's good *not* to be a minority for once, eh?" he asked. "I admit it," I said. "Say, how do they behave?"

"All right," he said. "It's the high officials who need watching. Individuals like these are generally polite; they have to be. They're dependent upon us, you see."

We walked past black traffic officers, black policemen, gangs of black workmen; and, in the locomotive of a train, I saw a black fireman and a black engineer. The whole of life that met the eyes was black. I turned my attention to my host.

"You're a businessman, I take it?"

"Yes. I hope you're not opposed to businessmen."

"Not if they're working for the freedom of their country," I told him.

He laughed heartily and grabbed my hand.

"Just what do you do?" I asked him.

"Timber. I cut it, dress it, draw it, and ship it to all parts of the world."

"How many men do you employ?"

"About two hundred. Say, would you mind coming with me to the store? I must do a bit of shopping...."

We entered a huge, modern store that reminded me of a unit in the American Atlantic and Pacific grocery chain; it was managed by the British but staffed with Africans. As Mr. Ansah shopped, I wandered about. I examined an enameled pot that would hold about a quart of liquid; it was priced at £1! Or \$2.80! A salesman came up to me.

"You wish to buy something, sar?"

"No; I'm just looking."

"You're American, aren't you, sar?"

"Yes; how did you know?"

"Oh, we know, sar," he said. Another salesman joined him. "What part of Africa did you come from, sar?"

I stared at him and then laughed. I felt uneasy,

"I don't know."

"Didn't your mother or grandmother ever tell you what part of Africa you came from, sar?"

I didn't answer. I stared vaguely about me. I had, in my childhood, asked my parents about it, but they had had no information, or else they hadn't wanted to speak of it. I remembered that many Africans had sold their people into slavery; it had been said that they had had no idea of the kind of slavery into which they had been selling their people, but they had sold them. . . . I suddenly didn't know what to say to the men confronting me.

"Haven't you tried to find out where in Africa you came from, sar?"

"Well," I said softly, "you know, you fellows who sold us and the white men who bought us didn't keep any records."

Silence stood between us. We avoided each other's eyes. "Are you going to stay with us, sar?"

"I'm visiting."

There was another silence. I was somehow glad when Mr. Ansah returned. We went back to the docks. It was so hot and humid that I felt that my flesh was melting from my bones. I climbed into the government bus and shook hands with my host. The bus rolled slowly through streets clogged with black life. African cities are small and one is in the "bush"—the jungle—before one knows it. Ten minutes out of Takoradi was enough to make Africa flood upon me so quickly that my mind was a blur and could not grasp it all. Villages of thick-walled mud huts heaved into view, tantalizing my eyes for a few seconds, and then fled past, only to be replaced by others as mythical and unbelievable. Naked

black children sat or squatted upon the bare earth, playing. Black women, naked to the waist, were washing their multicolored cloths in shallow, muddy rivers. The soil was a rich red like that of Georgia or Mississippi, and, for brief moments, I could almost delude myself into thinking that I was back in the American South. Men, with their cloths tied at their hips, were cutting grass at the roadside with long cutlasses. Then I saw a crowd of naked men, women, and children bathing in a wide, muddy stream; the white lather of soap covered their bodies, and their black, wet skins glistened in the morning sun.

Then, to my right, the Atlantic burst in a wide, blue, blaze of beauty. Along this coastline Africa had been in contact with Europe for more than five hundred years. What kind of relationship had these people had with Europe that left them more or less what they were...? Travelers' accounts in 1700 tell of having seen thousands of tracks of antelope, elephants, and other wild animals in the areas through which my bus was speeding. Wild life has vanished from here now. Those not slain by hunters have been driven deeper into the unaltered...

In 1441 a Portuguese navigator, one Antonia Gonzales, launched the slave trade on these shores by kidnaping a few Africans; evidently the Christians of Portugal liked the services of those blacks, for Gonzales returned in 1442 for another shipload. Thus were inaugurated those acts of banditry which, as the decades passed, were erected into an institution that bled Africa and fattened Europe. In the beginning of the sixteenth century the slave trade took on a definite historic pattern and soon became the dominant passion of the Western world.

It had not, however, been for slaves that the Europeans had first sailed down the coast of West Africa; they'd been

established in this manner, the Portuguese, according to hisvery neighborhood through which my bus now sped. torical records, had once traded extensively for gold in the the tiny piles of gold dust.... Confidence being somewhat adequate payment for the goods; if they felt that it was not, Africans wanted the goods badly enough, they'd increase they'd retire again and the Africans would sneak up. If the then return and try to determine if the gold dust left was an piles of gold dust upon each heap. The Europeans would steal out, examine the shoddy merchandise, and place tiny and then retire a half day's march away; the Africans would a kind of coy and furtive bargaining between the predatory peans would leave heaps of cheap trinkets upon the ground Europeans and the frightened but gullible natives. . . . Eurothere had sprung up what was known as the "silent trade," rich gold dust to be found on the Guinea Coast and, in 1455, peninsula. They had become distracted by the incredibly find a route to India, seeking to determine if Africa was a trying to prove that the world was round, that they could

The kaleidoscope of sea, jungle, nudity, mud huts, and crowded market places induced in me a conflict deeper than I was aware of; a protest against what I saw seized me. As the bus rolled swiftly forward I waited irrationally for these fantastic scenes to fade; I had the foolish feeling that I had but to turn my head and I'd see the ordered, clothed streets of Paris. . . . But the string of mud villages stretched out without end. My protest was not against Africa or its people; it was directed against the unsettled feeling engendered by the strangeness of a completely different order of life. I was gazing upon a world whose laws I did not know, upon faces whose reactions were riddles to me. There was nothing here that I could predict, anticipate, or rely upon and, in spite of myself, a mild sense of anxiety began to fill me.

The bus stopped and I stared down at a bare-breasted

young girl who held a huge pan of oranges perched atop her head. She saw me studying her and she smiled shyly, obviously accepting her semi-nudity as being normal. My eyes went over the crowd and I noticed that most of the older some reaching twelve or eighteen inches (length, I was told and flapping as the women moved about—and intuitively I weight and pressure of babies sagging upon their backs and commended that went across their bosoms.

they wanted to protect themselves from slave snatching. that the Africans resorted to this mode of building when and a score of other activities took place. A compound of this nature was a variant of a stockade and it was believed and, in its enclosure, washing, cooking, mending, carpentry, dwelling unit of this sort was referred to as a compound, had a narrow opening serving both as exit and entrance. A doors fronted a wide courtyard; the fourth wall of rooms three sides of which were solid walls of clay rooms whose They were so constructed that they formed a vast rectangle, living had preordained the odd structure of the huts . . . ? the manner of living; or was it that the African manner of was the manner in which the swish hut structures ordered were cool and comfortable to sleep in. What fascinated me than seventy years, so strongly were they built, and that they had been known to withstand tropical weather for more toward a tannish yellow. I learned later that these swish huts away by the torrential tropic rains, and their color tended color; others were old, showing cracked walls half washed had been fairly recently erected and were of a reddish-brown Many of the mud huts—commonly known as swish huts straw and others were constructed of rusty corrugated tin. Some of the roofs of the huts were made of thatched

Bit by bit my eyes became accustomed to the naked bodies and I turned my attention to the massive and green land-scape, above which drifted that inevitable blue haze. I sped past plantations of banana trees, palm trees, coconut trees, orange trees, and rubber trees; then there loomed wawa trees and mahogany trees; cottonwood trees, white and tall and straight, stood like monuments amidst the green forest. Cocoa trees crowded the countryside with their red, brown, and yellow pods, then came patches of cocoa yam, cassava, and pineapple. But these plantations were like no plantations I'd ever seen before; there was no order, no fences, no vast sweeps of plowed earth such as one sees in the American Midwest—there was just a profuse welling of plants in a tangled confusion stretching everywhere, seemingly with no beginning and no end.

sex was so blatantly prevalent that it drove all sexuality out; bearing of the people! Sex per se was absent in what I saw; I was amazed at the utter asexuality of the mood and the behind closed doors. Yet, as I stared out of the bus window, the indulgence of society, to deal with nudity, and then only undertakers—were permitted, by the tolerance of the state or men of undoubtedly professional stamp-doctors, artists, of the kind that Mr. Justice liked to haunt . . . ; and only tine rendezvous of lovers, in art galleries, or in the bordels macies of marriage, in expensive nightclubs, in the clandesonly under special and determined conditions: in the intimy instincts had been conditioned, nude bodies were seen of the reality of a dream, for, in the Western world where Such uninhibitedness of living seemed to me to partake dently. What innocence of instincts! What unabashed pride! black people and they returned my gaze calmly and confiwe slowed for a crossroads, I stared again at the half-nude hour later, roared into another batch of mud villages. As The bus rocked on through thick jungle; then, half an

that is, it eliminated all of that evidence of sublimated and projected sexual symbolization with which Western men are habitually prone to decorate their environment in depicting to themselves the reality of the hidden bodies of their women. The hair of the women was plainly done, wrapped tightly in black strings and tied in plaited rows close to the skull; no rouge or powder showed on any woman's cheeks; of gold, they were painted; and, save for a few tiny earrings of gold, they were bare of ornamentation of every kind.

Undoubtedly these people had, through experiences that had constituted a kind of trial and error, and in response to needs that were alien and obscure to me, chosen some aspect of their lives other than sex upon which to concentrate their passions, and what that other aspect was and it was something that I did not know, nor could I guess Or was sex being deliberately brought into the open...? Or had it risen out of the vicissitudes of natural catastrophes? And, again, faced with the absolute otherness and inaccessibility of this new world, I was prey to a vague sense could not shake off....

Fishing villages, quaint and bleak in the blinding sun, flashed by, then came Elmina, Cape Coast, Anomabu, historic Gold Coast place names that stirred me to a memory of dark and bloody events of long ago. The road twisted through plantation and forest and jungle and again, to my right, the green waves of the Atlantic leaped wild and free, rocks of the far-flung shore, and I knew that it was across those stretches of barren beach that hundreds of thousands of black men, women, and children had been marched,

shackled and chained, down to the waiting ships to be carted across the ocean to be slaves in the New World....

The bus stopped in a tiny village and I clambered down to stretch my legs; three or four Africans followed me, then the Europeans got off.... I strode around the market place and finally halted before a young woman who sat cross-legged and who was nude to the waist. Balanced on her head was a huge tray of peeled coconuts.

"I want to buy a coconut," I told her.

The flesh of her cheeks had been slashed by double marks in two places: tribal marks.... Though scarring the cheeks was being done less and less, it still occurred among the more backward elements of the population. In the old days all babies were thus marked at birth for purposes of identification, and some of the tribal marks were truly intricate; indeed, there were times when I had the impression that some delicate cobweb was covering a person's face, so many crossing lines traversed the jaws and cheeks, reaching from the temple to the chin, from the nostrils to the ears.

The young woman to whom I had spoken burst into embarrassed laughter, turned and beckoned to a girl friend, mumbled something to her in her tribal tongue, and pointed to me. Her friend sauntered over slowly, lifting her cloth and covering her breasts; she evidently knew something of Western ways....

"You wanna buy?" she asked me, smiling.

"A coconut," I said.

She translated for her friend who, taking a coconut from her tray, whacked a hole in it with one deft stroke of her cutlass, and handed it to me, still giggling. I paid her and she tossed my coin upon the tray and, without looking, her fingers fished around on the tray and found my change. I stood to one side and drank the coconut milk, studying her. Her eyes were sloe-shaped; her feet were large and splayed,

the soles coarsened by earth and rain and rocks. The skin of her arms held a slightly ashened hue. When she became aware of my gaze, she burst again into laughter, hiding her face. The Europeans standing nearby turned to look at me and the girl, and I wondered what they were thinking....

black bodies to the masonry were still intact. ment. The iron rings and chains which had fastened their bought, or stolen slaves had been kept for overseas shipand they also contained deep dungeons in which kidnaped, pots, barracks, military command headquarters, arsenals, ries these dominating structures had served as storage degold and slaves made them a prey to be feared. For centuother European imperialist rivals whose jealous hunger for raids of the hostile and desperate natives, but also those of and they had been designed not only to ward off attacks and ago by the Portuguese, the Dutch, the Danes, and the Swedes countryside. These forts and castles had been built centuries the misty expanse of the Atlantic and the tropically green emplacements that still pointed commandingly toward both castles and forts, their lofty ramparts holding decaying gun and fronting both the sea and the jungle, were huge white mercial centers. Now and then, looming up from the beach, En route again, we sped through several thriving com-

How had the Europeans gotten a toehold upon this shore? Had they sneaked in? Had the naïve natives invited them in? Or had they fought their way forward in bloody battles? It was none of these; it had been through guile . . .; a guile which enthroned distrust as a cardinal element in the African attitude toward Europe, a distrust that lives on in the African heart until this day.

The Portuguese set the pattern in 1481. John II, upon ascending the throne, organized a huge fleet for the purpose of establishing a European settlement upon the coast where it had been said that gold was an article of household use

among the infidel natives. Historical records relate that the expedition carried "500 soldiers and officers and 100 masons and other workers"; they carried enough stones, cut, prepared, and ready to be fitted into place for the hurried building of a fort; also on board was ammunition, food, and a priest.... The idea had been, by ruse or force, to erect a fort strong enough to repel rival imperialist attacks and, at the same time, to compel the respect and obedience of the natives. The Portuguese strategy was to ask the natives to grant them the right to build a church in order that they might confer upon them the blessings of Jesus Christ; the force was to be held in reserve in case the natives refused to accept such blessings....

Anchoring off Elmina in 1482, the expedition's commander, one Don Diego d'Azambuja, sought an audience with the native chief, using a Portuguese who had learned the tribal language as his interpreter. Concealing their arms beneath their imposing and gaudy clothing, they presented the chief with a sugared demand to establish a Christian church on the coast, extolling the benefits of heart and spirit that would ensue from such an institution.

The natives and the chief had but a hazy conception of Europe, but they were practical enough to doubt the word of men who came thousands of miles in ships to erect domiciles in their land; being naïve, they guessed erroneously that the white men had been driven forcibly out of their country, had been reduced to living in their ships, and now wanted to take their tribal lands for themselves. The Africans, mystical and fanatical lovers of their ancestral soil, could not conceive of people voluntarily leaving their homes and families and traveling vast distarfces merely for the sake of trade. A tragic misconception! Four hundred and thirtyone years ago, the first African to leave a record of protest, diplomatic yet charged with anxiety, spoke as follows:

between us ..." (A History of the Gold Coast, by W. Walton Claridge, vol. 1). desire of seeing each other occasionally will preserve peace erto done, allowing your ships to come and go as usual; the nations should continue on the same footing they have hithevitably bring on disputes; and it is far preferable that both try. The passions that are common to us all will therefore inprocure any of the luxuries that abound in their own counthe hardships of this climate; nor would they here be able to made day and night, can never bring themselves to endure own account seems to have descended from the God who such eminence, conducted by a commander who from his allowed to build houses, and to continue among us. Men of difference. A great number richly dressed are anxious to be complete their lading, and return. Now I remark a strange continue in this country, were never happy until they could the commodities they received; and so far from wishing to erto been only meanly attired, were easily contented with difference in the appearance of his subjects; they have hiththeir vessels. But never until this day did I observe such a constant exertions to procure an immediate lading for strictness of my dealing with the Portuguese, and by my me. His friendship I have long endeavored to merit by the master, the chief of Portugal, has this day conferred upon "I'm not insensible to the high honor which your great

But the Portuguese had long before made up their minds that it was well worth their while to risk the terrible climate, and, pretending to be spokesmen of the Gentle Jesus, they hankered not for peace, but for victory. Rebuffed, they soon resorted to threats, which caused the African chief to give an uneasy consent. But, next morning, as the Portuguese workmen were frantically hoisting the prepared stones into place, the natives of Elmina attacked them, wounding many of their men. D'Azambuja altered his tactics and rained pres-

ents and bribes upon the natives, offering profuse apologies. Despite this, the construction of the fort was pushed night and day and, in less than a month, a tower had been built against which the natives were helpless. The Portuguese flag was hoisted and a mass was said....

The European campaign against the mainland of Africa, buttressed by a mixture of religious ideology and a lust for gold, had begun in earnest; there had been no declaration of war; there had been no publicly declared aims save those of soul-saving, which even the Portuguese didn't believe, and, as time passed, European governments per se were not even involved in these calculated assaults, for it was the right, endorsed by no less than the Pope, of any individual merchant, criminal, or adventurer to buy a ship, rig it out, muster a crew, and set sail for Africa and try his luck.

resistance and into the trade in black slaves and yellow gold. the papal bull and pushed their way past bloody Portuguese the psychological intimidations of Catholicism, disregarded of Portuguese construction, for others were definitely unsea-Africa until 1500 when other European nations, overcoming mation relating to Portuguese activities on the coast of West worthy.... There followed a partial "blackout" of all inforto venture into West African waters in any other than a ship assured the world that no one ought to be foolhardy enough rose four times a year and made the seas impassable; and he ans; he caused rumors to be circulated that terrible storms coast of West Africa were cannibals and would eat Europenew possession by spreading the word that the natives of the mizing the loot to be had, and extolling the opportunities for Christian service, John II proceeded at once to safeguard his Fortified with the authority of a papal bull, publicly mini-

For 150 years there followed a period of free-for-all warfare among the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French, the English, the Swedes, the Germans and the African natives....

> and attack each other in Africa, even though both of them were under attack by the hated Portuguese. were at war with each other in Europe, would turn suddenly and the French, hearing that their respective home countries peace with each other. Hence, on many occasions the English last only so long as the two respective home countries were at could drive them out of West Africa, but such alliances could the Portuguese, hoping that, with such a common front, they the English and the French formed uneasy alliances against looted the countryside of goats, sheep, and fowl. Sometimes to comply, they too burned and destroyed native villages and from trading with the Portuguese, and when the Africans failed direct representations to the Africans, trying to dissuade them keeping a wary eye out for the Portuguese. The English made ing in and out of the coastal native settlements, trading and meted out. The French, being less strong at sea, were also dodgand burn African villages, and in time even worse reprisals were power, an injunction which the Africans, of course, resented. tuguese forbade the Africans to trade with any other European The Portuguese penalty for violating their wishes was to raze Relying mainly upon the authority of their firepower, the Por-

Toward the end of the sixteenth century the Dutch made a bid to share in the rich spoils by making an alliance with native tribes and arming them with guns (much to the fury of the Portuguese who loved the advantage of gunpowder over spears!) and urging them to fight against the Portuguese whom they had grown to hate. Meanwhile, Portugal became diverted by her rich colonies in the New World and allowed her forts to fall into disrepair and to become undermanned. In 1637 the Dutch made a determined assault upon the Portuguese fort at Elmina and captured it, and five years later they had driven the Portuguese, after 160 years of occupation, out of West Africa altogether.

The Dutch victory on the Guinea Coast went unchal-

lenged for but a short time, for, in 1657, the Swedes built a fort at Cape Coast, which fell to the Danes soon afterward; after changing hands several times, the fort at Cape Coast fell to the English for keeps in 1664. The war between the English and the Dutch changed but little the *status quo* regarding the forts, and when peace came in 1667, the situation was about what it had been before the shooting started. Then, in 1655, the Germans horned in, building two forts at Sekondi and Axim.

In 1693 the natives around Accra attacked the Danes in their strongly fortified Castle Christianborg and defeated them through trickery and captured the castle, but, a year later, they sold it back to the Danes! From 1694 onwards the Dutch power began to decline slowly under the constant attack of native tribesmen, and, since most of the European interlopers were fighting each other in other parts of the world, forts changed hands only to be given back to their original owners when peace came about at spots far from Africa. When England, therefore, lost her American colonies, she was too weak, in 1785, to contest the Dutch ownership of forts in West Africa.

Eight

hough the distance from Takoradi to Accra was but 170 miles, it took us all of eight hours to make the journey; it was nearing six o'clock when Accra loomed through the sunset on the horizon.

A smiling but somewhat reserved mulatto woman who spoke clipped and careful English—she was the Prime Minister's secretary—was on hand at the bus station to meet me. The Prime Minister, she told me, was in the Northern Territories on an urgent political mission.

"What is the political situation?" I asked her.
"You'll see," she said cryptically, lifting her brows.
She drove me in her English car across Accra, and I could hear the faint sounds of drums beating in the distance, the vibrations coming to my ears like the valved growl of a crouching beast.

"What are those drums?"

"You'll find out," she said, laughing.

"I feel strange; I see and hear so much that I don't under-

"It'll take you a few days to get into it," she said.

cians had sensed that the most dangerous thing that they the masses of tribal voters who had endowed them with could do was to draw a class line between themselves and of state policy), aloof and remote. But the African politias the British had always preferred to remain (as a matter arate them from the common people and to keep them, that they suspected that the bungalows were bait to sepastonishment, in the neighborhoods of their constituents. Their refusal to accept this British graciousness indicated for a modern domicile, and had remained, much to British refuse to live in the bungalows, had stifled their natural yen distrust of Europeans, had had the unheard-of temerity to tion. But the wily black ministers, full of an old-fashioned from prison where they had been serving terms for sediministers, many of whom had only recently been released ish authorities for the creature comforts of the new African bungalows, I was told, had been built expressly by the Britthe heat and humidity were more bearable. These beautiful bungalows situated atop a chain of low-lying hills where In the sun's dying light we came to a group of modernistic

I thanked the young lady, bade her good night, and went to my room which had a screened-in balcony from which I

could see the swarming, far-off, faint yellow lights of Accra twinkling in the valley below.

"Massa!"

I turned and saw a steward, dressed in white, black of face, barefooted, his lips hanging open expectantly. "What is it?"

"Massa want chop?"

"What?"

"Chop? Hot chop? Cold chop?"

I hadn't understood anything; it was my first experience with pidgin English and I shook my head and confessed:

"I don't understand."

"Chop, Massa." He went through the motions of eating, carrying his hand to his mouth and chewing vigorously.
"Dinner?"

"Yasa, Massa. When you want."

When I entered the huge dining room I saw three black boys dressed in white standing at attention. I learned later that one was the cook, one was the steward, and the other was the steward's assistant; in addition there were a gardener, a laundryman, a night watchman (commonly known as "t'ief" man), a man who did the shopping, and an Englishwoman who acted as overseer.

As I sat at the table, my three men disappeared, their coarse-soled feet swishing over the highly polished wooden floor. I sighed. This was Africa too. These servants seemed to know their business; they had, no doubt, been trained in their duties by a tradition left here for a hundred years by English housewives. But that pidgin English! I shuddered. I resented it and I vowed that I'd never speak it.... I started; the steward was at my elbow, holding a platter of fried fish; he'd come so silently upon me that I was nonplused.

Early next morning I found a taxi at the roadside and went into the city. I got out at the post office. There were no

sidewalks; one walked at the edge of a drainage ditch made of concrete in which urine ran. A stench pervaded the sunlit air. Barefooted men dressed in cloths whose colors were a mixture of red, green, yellow, blue, brown, and purple stood idling about. Most of the women not only carried the inevitable baby strapped to their backs, but also a burden on street corner and paused; coming toward me was a woman nursing a baby that was still strapped to her back; the baby's given the child the long, fleshy, tubelike teat and it was suckbother to give the baby the teat in front of them, but simply toss it over the shoulder to the child on their back. . . .)

The women's carriage was remarkably graceful; they walked as straight as ramrods, with a slow, slinging motion, moving their legs from their hips, their feet just managing to skim over the earth. When they glanced about they never jarred or jolted the huge burdens they had on their heads, and their eyes held a calm, proud look. In the physical behavior of both men and women there were no wasted motions; they seem to move in a manner that conserved their energies in the awful heat.

In front of the Indian, Syrian, and European stores African women sat before wooden boxes heaped high with red peppers, oranges, plantains, cigarettes, cakes of soap cut into tiny bits, okra, tomatoes, peeled coconuts, small heaps of matches, cans of tinned milk, etc. Men from the North-piled with cheap mirrors, shoestrings, flashlights, combs, of Hollywood movie stars.... I was astonished to find that their wares on their heads either in calabashes or brass pans

larly known as "mammies." that is, above the heads of the street women who were popupens, pencils, paper—and all of this was but "one flight up," meat, yams, bananas, salt, sugar, plantains, cigarettes, ink, a small dry-goods store; one could buy fish, eggs, chickens, of colored cloth from a woman the top of whose head was forty cakes perched atop her skull; one could buy lengths another woman sold soap from a stack which held at least layers of them stored in a brass pan that was borne aloft; yet and steamed and seasoned with pepper-from a woman head; one could buy baby bonnets from a woman who had who balanced an enormous, steaming calabash upon her called kenke--a kind of crushed corn that had been cooked screened-in, upon her cranium; one could buy a concoction One could buy bread from a little girl who carried a big box, capital that made the Africans sell like this on the streets? that had been polished until they glittered. Was it a lack of

place in line and, when her turn came, filled her tub, went a water into the drainage ditch, went to the hydrant, took her girl who had been bathing got out of the tub, dumped the damned up the stream in his cupped palms and drank. The a sip of water from the stream, rinsed his mouth, spat, then and bathing herself in full view. A tiny girl squatted over a drainage ditch, urinating. A man went to the hydrant, took girl, twelve or thirteen, was nude and standing in a small tub over a basin assiduously doing the family wash. Still another strides. A girl, a cloth fastened about her middle, was bent ancing tins holding ten or more gallons of water upon their tiny heads and walking off toward their homes with careful water. Boys and girls of eight or nine years of age were baltubs, gasoline tins, buckets, pans, anything that could hold of men, women, and children were gathered. They had small tersection where, around an outdoor water hydrant, a knot The sun was killing. I sought shade at another street in-

few feet away and dashed the entire contents of the tub over her head, rinsing the soapsuds from her body. She looked down at her gleaming, wet skin, her face holding a concerntrated and critical expression. Taking her place in line mincing off, presumably toward home. . . . A woman came reading a boy and girl by their hands; she carried a big galshe proceeded to bathe the children with a bar of laundry them rudely, jerking them this way and that, while she plied string of white and blue beads about her hips and a red cloth to the beads, front and back. The boy wore nothing.

Over and above supplying needed water, these outdoor hydrants are really social clubs; it is here that the gossip of the quarter is spread and exchanged, where tall tales get embellished, where marriages, deaths, and births are announced. Sometimes fights take place, or romances are started. Sundry bargains and swappings are struck over petty can be witnessed in all of its innocence as it clusters about an outdoor hydrant.

(The crowds about the hydrants swell or diminish according to the time of day: there is an early morning crowd of men, women, and children; then a lull comes; toward noon the hydrant is patronized mostly by women who cook or the hydrant is completely deserted. Toward four o'clock the crowds collect again and they last until well into the night. Sleepy-eyed child filling a huge pail with water and walking slowly homeward....)

Beggars were in thick evidence, their black, gnarled hands outstretched and their high-pitched voices singing out:

"Penny, Massa! Penny, Massa!"

state of pity based upon dread. I don't know.... disguise, such sights might impel donations, might induce a that a beggar might be some distant relative in reincarnated Perhaps for an African temperament conditioned to a belief sibilities, for I was moved not to compassion, but to revulsion. they had, they had surely overdone it in terms of Western senthey were professional beggars, if they had deliberately deformed themselves to make these heart-wracking appeals? If with cloths draped modestly over their loins. I wondered if hot sun—all of them were men and they sat nude to the waist suspended from a skinny neck and gleaming blackly in the wetly, palsied palms extended and waiting, a mammoth wen blackened sticks, blind men whose empty eye-sockets yawned ken so that jagged ends of the healed bones jutted out like them. Monstrously swollen legs, running sores, limbs bro-So deformed were some that it was painful to look at

I wanted to push on and look more, but the sun was too much. I spent the afternoon fretting; I was impatient to see more of this Africa. My bungalow was clean, quiet, mosquito-proof, but it had not been for that I'd come to Africa. Already my mind was casting about for other accommodations. I stood on my balcony and saw clouds of black buzzards circling slowly in the hazy blue sky. In the distance I caught a glimpse of the cloudy, grayish Atlantic.

Night fell and suddenly out of the blue velvet dark came the sound of African crickets that was like an air-raid siren. Frog belches exploded. A soft, feathery thud, like that of a bird, struck the window screen. Reluctantly, I climbed into bed....

Next morning a phone call came from the Prime Minister's office; I was told that at four o'clock I'd be picked up by the Prime Minister's car and that I'd see "something."

And at four o'clock a sleek car entered the driveway. A uniformed chauffeur stepped out and saluted me; I climbed into the back seat. As we went through the city black faces jerked around, recognizing the car. We came to the Prime Minister's residence and pulled into a driveway. I got out ered in the back faces smiled at me. A few policemen hovered in the background. I was led forward into a red, two-story brick dwelling that looked remarkably like a colonial mansion in Georgia or Mississippi. I followed my guide upstairs, down a hallway, and into a living room.

The Prime Minister, dressed in a smock, was standing in the middle of the floor.

"Welcome!" he said.

"I'm glad to see you and your people," I told him. "How are you?"

"Fine, but panting to see your party and your comrades."

He laughed. He presented me to a series of his friends whose strange names I did not recall, then we sat down.

"I want to take you on a quick tour of the city," he told me.

"I'm truly honored."

"Nothing has been prepared. I want you to see how these people respond to our appeals—"

"What's going to happen in July?" I asked, referring to the coming meeting of the Legislative Assembly.

The Prime Minister threw back his head and laughed. I got used, in time, to that African laughter. It was not caused by mirth; it was a way of indicating that, though they were not going to take you into their confidence, their attitude was not based upon anything hostile.

"You are direct," he said.

"Why not?" I asked.

"You'll have to wait and see," he told me.

tion darted. His questions and answers were simple and to preoccupations as he would jerk his head when his attenmotions were almost deliberate and at times his face seemed slow restlessness, betraying a contained tension. His bodily a thick growth of crinkly hair and his hands moved with almost frightened eyes, a set of full, soft lips. His head held concerns pointing toward a fondly sought goal.... whose consciousness was anchored in concrete, practical permitted to pass his lips; he was the full-blown politician the point; I felt that he had much more on his mind than he like a blank mask. One could almost feel the force of his jet black in color; he had a longish face, a pair of brooding, I studied Nkrumah; he was fairly slightly built, a smooth

ducted in tribal language; when it was over, he announced: "Let's go!" His colleagues drew him into a discussion that was con-

cyclists raced their engines to a deafening roar; then they waved his hand to signal that all was ready. The motorpulled slowly into the street, leading the way. The Prime let, stood lined up near their machines. The Prime Minister into the street where his motorcycle escort, dressed in scar posed of hand-picked militants and faithfuls of the Con-Minister's car, with the Prime Minister seated on my right vention People's Party. He led the way and I followed down His personal bodyguard stood at attention; it was com-

fronting forward—a kind of half-Nazi salute—they shouted upward with their elbows at the level of their hips, palms fronted the car. Others rushed pellmell out of shacks, then women, and children abandoned what they were doing and people on both sides of the street and, spontaneously, men, The drone of the motorcycles attracted the attention of faces breaking into wide, glad smiles and, lifting their hands The sun was still shining as we moved slowly forward

> pounded of passion, exhortation, and contained joy: a greeting to the Prime Minister in a tone of voice com-

"Free—doom! Free—dooooom!"

shouting: faces. We reached a wide roadway and the crowds swirled, Ahead of the car the sides of the streets turned black with

"Free—dooom! Free—dooom!"

"Kwame! Kwame!" They shouted his name.

"Fight! Fight!"

"Akwaba! Akwaba!" ("Welcome! Welcome!")

turned their salute. Minister, smiling, laughing, lifted his right hand as he refaces whose trust tugged at the heart. The crowds grew thicker. The shouting sounded like a cataract. The Prime The road turned into a black river of eager, hopeful, glad

turned to me and said: The road led into a slum area, and the Prime Minister

you to see all we have, the good and the bad." "This is James Town. I want you to see this too. . . . I want

dren who chanted: slowly through nostalgic crowds of men, women, and chil-The narrow streets filled quickly and the car plowed

"Free—dooooom!"

tremblingly from side to side, making the fingers vibrate. the arm still and shook the palm of the hand nervously and to the entire Gold Coast; it consisted of lifting the hand, but, instead of waving the hand as one did in the West, one held quivering gesture of welcome which seemed to be common "Free—dooooom!" Many of the women waved their hands in that strange,

the white faces of friends screwed up in disgust and distaste had in Chicago, New York, London, Paris, Rome, Buenos Aires about freedom, and I could picture again in my mind My mind flew back to the many conversations that I'd

at me across a dinner table: again in my memory the tersely deprecating question shot when the word "freedom" was mentioned, and I could hear

"Freedom? What do you mean, freedom?"

right to recall them if they failed in their promises. At a time the right to elect men of his choice to public office, and the an African had no doubts about the meaning of the word dom that they wanted and were willing to die for.... change their minds about the concrete nature of the freeit; they might be cowed by guns and planes, but they'd not had no doubt, and no threats could intimidate them about right to shape their own destiny as they wished. Of that they the word "freedom," these people knew that it meant the when the Western world grew embarrassed at the sound of to physical movement, the right to make known his views, "freedom." It meant the right to public assembly, the right But here in Africa "freedom" was more than a word;

motorcycles and the Prime Minister's car, chanted The crowds, milling in and out of the space between the

"Free-dooooom!"

them, to execute the mandate of national liberation that this man in power, had given him the right to speak for own will in their own land. And they had melted their triba to be free of an alien flag, wanted the sovereignty of their still mainly tribal, though 90 per cent illiterate, they wanted demanding an end to their centuries-old thralldom. Though they'd galvanized into a whole that was 4,000,000 strong, they had placed in his hands; and, because he'd said he'd try, organization. The women who danced and shouted were tribalism and twentieth-century forms of political mass differences into an instrument to form a bridge between washerwomen, cooks, housewives, etc. The passionate loyalty of this shouting crowd had put

"Free—dooom! Free—dooom!" rang deafeningly in my ears.

unheard of for people to sing and shout and dance like this. and frightened people. Under the British it would have been like this was impossible?" he told me. "These were a cowed "Would you believe that four years ago a demonstration "They believe in you," I said to the Prime Minister.

black leaders and the British that they were afraid to act." and nobody. They'd been browbeaten so long by both the the mood of these people was terrible. They trusted nothing ··· We changed all that. When I came from London in 1948,

to your efforts to organize your people?" I asked Nkrumah. "The missionaries," he said without hesitation. "Who were the first in the Gold Coast to offer opposition

had been named John Evangelist, Trinity, Bartholomew, John Baptist, and Jesus.... ish trinkets for gold dust and slaves, and some of those ships had sent ships to the Gold Coast to engage in trading Britto 1592, the merchants of England, all staunch Christians, early days of the Gold Coast and I recalled that, from 1553 My mind raced back to my reading of the history of the

ing industrial system, and there was no reason why industrialization and nationalism could not, for a time, coexist, is one of the necessary but transitional forms of an expandpast five hundred years history has shown that nationalism come to terms with a rising nationalism. Indeed, during the mutually enriching each other. If they had to, the industrial and mercantile interests could test opposition was, in my opinion, as it should have been. That the missionaries should have been the first to mani-

ightened the men of God more than this wild and liquid pature and felt an understandable panic at the emergence of ttitudes, values, and definitions. And what could have ing new institutions for the people, but also new emotional sweeping nationalism that was bent not only upon creat-Religious interests, however, were jealous by their very

emotion that Nkrumah had channeled into a new political party? Religion needed all the emotion of a community allied to its own ends, and when a rival appeal was made for the loyalty of that emotion, religious people must needs be opposed, even if the counterappeal of religion meant a decrease in the basic welfare of the people. Mass nationalist movements were, indeed, a new kind of religion. They were politics *plus!*

"I want to see your party and how it works," I said to the Prime Minister.

He nodded but did not answer.

"Free—dooom! Free—doooom!"

The roar came from all sides. Gratitude showed in the eyes of those black faces for the man who had taken their hand and told them that they had no need to fear the British, that they could laugh, sing, work, hope, and fight again.

I was astonished to see women, stripped to the waist, their elongated breasts flopping wildly, do a sort of weaving, circular motion with their bodies, a kind of queer shuffling dance which expressed their joy in a quiet, physical manner. It was as if they were talking with the movements of their legs, arms, necks, and torsos; as if words were no longer adequate as a means of communication; as if sounds could no longer approximate their feelings; as if only the total movement of their entire bodies could indicate in some measure their acquiescence, their surrender, their approval.

And then I remembered: I'd seen these same snakelike, veering dances before.... Where? Oh, God, yes; in America, in storefront churches, in Holy Roller Tabernacles, in God's Temples, in unpainted wooden prayer-meeting houses on the plantations of the Deep South.... And here I was seeing it all again against a background of a surging nationalistic political movement! How could that be?

When I'd come to Africa, I didn't know what I'd find,

what I'd see; the only prepossession I'd had was that I'd doubted that I'd be able to walk into the African's cultural house and feel at home and know my way around. Yet, what I'd was now looking at in this powerfully improvised dance of these women, I'd seen before in America! How was that possible? And, what was more, this African dance today was as astonishing and dumfounding to me as it had been when I'd seen it in America.

Never in my life had I been able to dance more than a few elementary steps, and the carrying of even the simplest tune had always been beyond me. So, what had bewildered me about Negro dance expression in the United States now bewildered me in the same way in Africa.

I'd long contended that the American Negro, because of what he had undergone in the United States, had been basically altered, that his consciousness had been filled with a new content, that "racial" qualities were but myths of prejudiced minds. Then, if that were true, how could I account for what I now saw? And what I now saw was an exact duplicate of what I'd seen for so many long years in the United States.

I did not find an answer to that question that afternoon as I stared out of the window of the Prime Minister's car. But the question was lodged firmly in my mind, enthroned there so strongly that it would never leave until I had, at least to my satisfaction, solved the riddle of why black people were the imposition of alien cultures, such basic and fundamental patterns of behavior and response.

We rode on through the cheering throngs. Whenever the ear slowed, the black faces, laughing and excited, with heads thrown back, with white teeth showing, would press close to "Free—doooom!"

environment, but I had never been able to! part. I had wanted to, because it had always been a part of my things predated any desire, conscious or unconscious, on my say that I'd inhibited myself, for my inability to do these simple or condemnation; there was no joy or sorrow; I was just stu-I was frankly stunned at what I saw; there was no rejection rode. The crowds surged, danced, sang, and shouted, but I after I penetrated deep into the African jungle. . . . On we or sing? The answers to those questions did not come until hands and feet, all my life, failed to keep time? It was useless to I'd tried to sing, as a child, I'd not been able to? Why had my Had I denied all this in me? If so, then why was it that when dancing, singing, gliding with my hips to express my joy . . .? pefied. Was it possible that I was looking at myself laughing, was thinking of my mother, of my father, of my brother. . . . of it when I saw it in America? Why could I not feel this? lem. How much am I a part of this? How much was I part Why that peculiar, awkward restraint when I tried to dance But my emotions were preoccupied with another prob-

"What do you think?" the Prime Minister asked

"It's most impressive," I said.

"They're an unspoiled, a spiritually virgin people," he said.
We came at last to a block of cement houses; from win-

dows and doorways black faces shouted and called:

"Kwame! Kwame!"

"Free—dooom! Free—doooom!"

The car stopped and the Prime Minister got out; I followed him.

"What is this?" I asked him.

"This is a meeting of the Women's Division of the party," he told me.

We entered a concrete compound and sat as the meeting, dedicated to reorganization and installment of new officers, got under way. A tall black woman led a chant:

"Forward ever, backward never ..."

There was a relaxed, genial atmosphere; now and then an easy laugh floated over the crowd. The men, clad in their native togas, sat in the rear, rising occasionally to aid in dred women also clad in their native cloths and, for this ears, around their necks, on their arms and fingers. The yelmade a startling combination in the red rays of the dying had at least three or four thousand dollars' worth of gold on mixed with no alloy. . .

A psalm was sung in English. Next, an African of the Christian persuasion stepped forward and, in English, led the group in prayer. Then came a pagan chief with his umbrella, corn wine to the dead ancestors. The two religions nestled as usual; there was not a tremor in the universe. . . . After he chief had the bowl by dribbling the corn wine upon the ground, each person nearby and they took three sips. (Three is the A series of casalance) A series of casalance.

A series of speakers rose, both men and women, and, in a mixture of English and tribal tongues, exhorted the women

to give all their support to the Leader, to the Convention People's Party, and to the struggle for national liberation. To this already turgid brew was added still another ingredient; a woman rose and proclaimed:

"I'm Mrs. Nkrumah!"

A howl of laughter rose from the women. Puzzled, I looked at the Prime Minister; he grinned at me, and said:

"It's a joke."

"I am Mrs. Nkrumah!" the woman said in a voice that sought to still all doubts.

The Prime Minister rose and, sweeping his arms to include all the women, said:

"You are all my brides!"

The women laughed and clapped. Nkrumah, of course, was a bachelor.

"I have to say that to them," he whispered to me as he sat again. "Now, tell me, do you understand what you are looking at?"

"You have fused tribalism with modern politics," I said.

"That's exactly it," he said. "Nobody wanted to touch these people. The missionaries would go just so far, and no farther toward them. One can only organize them by going where they are, living with them, eating with them, sharing their lives. We are making a special drive to enlist women in the party; they have been left out of our national life long enough. In the words of Lenin, I've asked the cooks to come out of their kitchens and learn how to rule."

The new women officials to be installed were called to come forward and stand fronting the Prime Minister. A short statement of aims and duties was read to them and, at the end, each woman was asked to raise her right hand and repeat the following oath (I'm paraphrasing this from memory):

"I pledge with all my life my support to the Convention People's Party, and to my Leader, Kwame Nkrumah; I swear to follow my Leader's guidance, to execute faithfully his commands, to resist with all my power all imperialist attempts to disrupt our ranks, to strive with all of my heart to rebuild our lost nation, Ghana, so help me God!"

I was thunderstruck. Nkrumah had moved in and filled the vacuum which the British and the missionaries had left when they had smashed the tribal culture of the people! It

was so simple it was dazzling. . . . Of course, before Nk-rumah could do this, he would first have to have the intellectual daring to know that the British had created a vacuum in these people's hearts. It was not until one could think of the imperialist actions of the British as being crimes of the highest order, that they had slain something that they could never rekindle, that one could project a new structure for the lives of these people.

was offering them; it was a much harder one and they acnot a morality easier than that of the church that Nkrumah and they stood before him willingly, pledging to give. It was was commanding the whole of their lives from day to day called upon them to attend church service one day a week, ligion had no use for; he, in contrast to the Christians who ping the abandoned emotional reservoir that Christian rewould have some measure of control. Nkrumah was taplives that they had performed over whose consequences they the taking of this oath was perhaps the only act in their them feel that their oath was really binding . . . ? Indeed, actions-what symbol other than a living one could make a man whom they could see, hear, speak to, check upon his gold and silk, what symbol other than that of a living man, them, for the swearing of oaths was a common feature of of their traditions and culture, this oath seemed logical to their rituals. And, in a society ruled by chiefs decked out in an abstract oath taken to a flag or a constitution? In the light these illiterate and myth-minded women have understood oath that related directly to their daily welfare. And would gan and Christian, and now, at last, they were swearing an lives. Before this they had sworn oaths to invisible gods, pational pledge that these women had ever given in all of their reflected. Well, why not? This oath was perhaps the most ra-But, an oath to a Leader? In the twentieth century? Then I

was given to the Prime Minister and, at once, impulsively, I leaned forward and said to him: The slip of paper upon which the oath had been written

"May I make a copy of that?"

lips; but I had spoken and there was no backing out. I regretted asking the moment the words had escaped my

"What did you say?" he asked me.

"I'd like to make a copy of that oath," I stated

see in the Gold Coast? he was reticent about this, what about the other things I'd and, at the same time, being in complete agreement! But, if me. And I knew that he couldn't imagine my being shocked must have known instinctively how such an oath had struck Nkrumah had been educated in the United States and he not answered me. Ought I ask him again? I decided not to. for what I saw. . . . He was looking off into space; he had scolding myself for being too forward in my zeal to account him and his party, his people, his cause? I gritted my teeth, him distrust me? Would he think that I'd use the oath against and he seemed to be debating. Would my rash request make of paper in his hand. I knew that he knew what I had asked He glanced off without answering, still holding the slip

twentieth century? in general I agreed to it as being an inevitable part of the could I make him understand that I understood, and that portance, politically or psychologically, to that oath. How the Prime Minister did not want me to attach too much imited myself. I'd be content with what I'd heard. Obviously discretion became the better part of curiosity and I inhib- \cdots I was of a mind to remind him that I had asked for it, but his pocket. I knew then that I'd never get a chance to copy it. folded the slip of paper containing the oath and put it into Minister, looking off, slowly and seemingly absent-mindedly, Another song was sung and, as we all stood up, the Prime

> tive tunes. Suddenly the Prime Minister spoke to me: under a starry sky and listened to an African band playing naoath-taking. . . . We reached his house and sat upon the lawn Intuitively, I knew that he was thinking of my reaction to that motorcycle cavalcade back toward the Prime Minister's home. During the ride the Prime Minister was poised, aloof, silent. The meeting ended and we were escorted by the roaring

"Let's go upstairs and talk."

"A good idea," I said.

some drinks. In his living room we sat on a divan; a steward served

"Did you like what you saw?" he asked me.

fully. "Like is no word for what I felt. You've done what the Western world has said is impossible." "I'm stunned, amazed, and gratified," I told him truth-

the air for several moments. I felt called upon to say something, to explain, to justify myself. He threw back his head and laughed. A silence hung in

here. I'd like to understand all of this. I think that my life some of it. I don't know Africa intimately. That's why I'm has prepared me to do that." my personal life what has happened to us—at least, I know nist, but I'm for black people. I know from history and from nist Party of the United States. I'm no longer a Commu-I began. "For twelve years I was a member of the Commu-"Look, I think you know something of my background,"

"I'm a Marxist Socialist," he told me.

how you organized all this." with discretion," I went on. "But I'd like to see and know "I know that there are political things that have to be told

cal instrument; it was the first time in my life that I'd come weigh a movement like this, to examine its worth as a politito be shown everything. I wanted the opportunity to try to I wanted to be given the "green light" to look, to know,

in contact with a mass movement conducted by Negro leadership and I felt that I could, if given a chance, understand it.

He gave me a mechanical nod, but I could see that his thoughts were far away. Then a crowd of men and women pushed their way into the room and there were more introductions.

"He is a novelist," the Prime Minister said, pointing to me. "A novelist?" a tall black man echoed.

"Yes; a novelist," the Prime Minister repeated.

The tall black man's face was baffled; he stared at me, as though he doubted my existence. The Prime Minister saved the day by bursting into a loud and long laugh which was soon joined by all in the room. I sat silent and soon the crowd was talking among themselves in their tribal tongues. The Prime Minister rose and left; he returned a few moments later and sat next to me.

"The ideological development here is not very high," he said.
"Uh hunh," I grunted.

"There are but two or three of us who know what we are doing," he said.

"George gave me a list of your bright boys to talk to," I told him.

"Is Kofi Baako on that list?" he asked.

"Υes."

"Talk to him," the Prime Minister said. "He's my right-hand man."

"Is he here tonight?"

"No; he's in Cape Coast at the moment."

The Prime Minister disappeared and I struck up a conversation with some of the party militants. I wanted to break down their reserve and hear what they thought.

"Do you think that the English will shoot if you press your demands for self-government?" I asked.

A look of horror came over their faces. "They can shoot, but we won't," a boy swore. "They'll never get us in that sort of position," another told me.

Some of the boys who didn't understand English asked what I had said and they formed a knot debating and arguing my question. I was soon standing to one side. It was a strange household. People came and went. Presently a line of women edged into the room; at that moment a band into that same snakelike, shuffling dance that they had done on the streets earlier in the afternoon. The band boomed louder and the sound of dancing came from downstairs, and saw the Prime Minister dancing alone on the lawn with Western dancing; one dances alone if one wants to.

It was hot. I felt exhausted. It was near three o'clock in the morning when I met the Prime Minister entering the living room.

"I must go. I'm dead tired," I said.

"The car will take you home," he said.

We shook hands. A young man escorted me down to the car and soon I was whizzing through the humid night toward the government bungalow.

Nine

ment at what I'd seen was, if anything, stronger than lard been the day before. I'd seen something new under sun. What a bewildering unity Nkrumah had forged:

herstianity, tribalism, paganism, sex, nationalism, social-

ism, housing, health, and industrial schemes . . .! Could this sweep Africa? I could well understand why the British, when they first saw it, thought it was a joke. They could not believe that a black man could take the political methods that Europe had perfected and apply them to Africa.

and, what is more, many of them did, especially the young that the educated young African would side with the British, would feel too much revulsion to do so. . . . From the point degrees would never dare to stick his hands into this muck, rism had made it impossible for any European alive to claim ist feeling per se; they'd merely shunted it into ineffective Christians. And the British had never suppressed nationalof view of British mentality, an education was a guarantee thought that any African who earned a string of university that the British concepts of education had misfired; they hac them. What had given Nkrumah the chance to do this was had something that the Europeans could never take from the kind of frenzied assent from these black millions that rumah had done. Five hundred years of European barbachannels. Nkrumah claimed. To that degree, the Nkrumahs of Africa And, of course, only a native African could do what Nk-

But the British had neglected to take fully into account that some of the Gold Coast boys would be beyond the confines of British influence, that some of them would soak up Marxism and would return home feeling a sense of racial and class solidarity derived from the American Negro's proud and defensive nationalism. Above all, the British did not take into consideration that the Gold Coast boys could take Marxism and adapt it to their own peculiar African needs. For three decades the Russian Communists had tried to penetrate Africa, sending agent after agent into the jungle, and Nkrumah had, in five short years, so outstripped them that their ideas had become, by comparison, backward!

The indirect rule of the British had, unwittingly, created the very conditions which Nkrumah had organized. And the British had adopted that indirect method of ruling so that the religion and customs of the masses would remain undisturbed.... To operate their mines, their timber concessions, and their mills, the British had regimented African tribal life around new social and economic poles, and the exhortation of the missionaries had slowly destroyed the African's faith in his own religion and customs, thereby creating millions of psychologically detribalized Africans living uneasily and frustratedly in two worlds and really believing in neither of them.

But could this liquid emotion be harnessed to modern techniques? And from where would come the men to handle the work of administration when self-government came? Would Nkrumah have to impose a dictatorship until he could educate a new generation of young men who could work with him with a willing heart? Or would he have to rely upon the dangerous collaboration of the British until such could come about? I'd seen the basis of power in the streets of Accra, but could it be used? And how?

And that fierce optimism? Where did it come from? What justified it? Of course, the Gold Coast had about 4,000 British in a population of 4,000,000 blacks, and one could actually forget that Europe existed.

Last night I hadn't had time to question myself closely regarding that snakelike, shuffling dance, that strange veering and weaving of the body. . . . That there was some kind of link between the native African and the American Negro was undoubtedly true. But what did it mean? A certain group of American anthropologists had long clamored for a recognition of what they had quaintly chosen to call "African survivals," a phrase which they had coined to account for exactly what I had observed. And now, as I reflected upon last night's experience, even more items of similarity came

to me: that laughter that bent the knee and turned the head (as if in embarrassment!); that queer shuffling of the feet when one was satisfied or in agreement; that inexplicable, almost sullen silence that came from disagreement or opposition.... All of this was strange but familiar.

I understood why so many American Negroes were eager to disclaim any relationship with Africa; they were being prompted by the same motives that made the Irish or the Jew or the Italian immigrant more militantly American than the native-born American. The American Negro's passionate identification with America stemmed from two considerations: first, it was a natural part of his assimilation of Americanism; second, so long had Africa been described as something shameful, barbaric, a land in which one went about naked, a land in which his ancestors had sold their kith and kin as slaves—so long had he heard all this that he wanted to disassociate himself in his mind from all such realities. . . .

The bafflement evoked in me by this new reality did not spring from any desire to disclaim kinship with Africa, or from any shame of being of African descent. My problem was how to account for this "survival" of Africa in America when I stoutly denied the mystic influence of "race," when I was as certain as I was of being alive that it was only, by and large, in the concrete social frame of reference in which men lived that one could account for men being what they were. I sighed; this was truly a big problem. . . .

Restless, I sought the streets of Accra just to look at Africa. And while strolling along I found, for the first time in my life, a utilitarian function for nappy hair; the clerks and school children stuck their red and yellow pencils in their hair in order not to lose them, and they never did, so close and secure did their kinks cling to those pencils. Some children carried their ink bottles and schoolbooks on their

heads, their arms swinging free as they walked. I saw a little girl peel an orange to eat it; she broke the orange in two, put one half of it upon her head and proceeded, as she walked along, to eat the other half; when she had devoured it, she reached up nonchalantly and got the remaining half of the orange and commenced to nibble away at it.

Bracing myself to encounter rebuffs, I strayed off the main thoroughfares and entered a maze of warrens—compounds—enclosed by stone walls. I blinked; before me was a scene crowded with scores of men, women, children, and everything seemed to be happening at once. . . . The over-all impression was that the black human beings had so completely merged with the dirt that one could scarcely tell where humanity ended and the earth began; they lived in and of the dirt, the flesh of bodies seeming to fuse insensibly with the soil.

red pepper on a stone. A fat woman sat nursing a baby at mending a pair of shoes. A tiny little nude girl was grinding washboards that rested in the same tub. . . . Another was washing a huge tub of clothes, running their hands down flickering fire. Two men, standing opposite each other, were bling pot that cooked over a pile of stones enclosing a tiny mass, then pounded again. . . . Still another girl, just a few she paused and added a little water to the yellow, doughlike ture of boiled plantains, yams, and cassava; now and then teet from the fufu-pounder, was squatting and tending a bubplunging the pole into a wooden vat in which was a mixdeep fat. A girl was pounding fufu with a long wooden pole, the ground, frying some kind of meat in a smoking pot of moved slowly and unafraid among the children and pecked ily. Mangy dogs lay in the sun. A woman was kneeling upon at piles of refuse. Here and there a sheep or goat stood sleepgray; and, when I moved, they scuttled to safety. Chickens On a nearby stone wall were scores of lizards, red, green,

her right breast while she idly and unconsciously, staring off into space, toyed with the teat of her left breast with the fingers of her left hand. A tiny boy minded some ears of corn that were roasting over an iron grill. Off to one side a group of little girls was playing a strange game that consisted of jumping up and down and clapping their hands—a game called *ampe* which fascinated me no end as long as I was in Africa. The legs of the girls were skinny, their black shoulder blades stuck out at sharp angles, and yet their supply of physical energy seemed inexhaustible.

I took out my camera to photograph the scene and the children let out a warning yell that made every face jerk toward me. At once the women began covering their breasts and the boys rose and ran toward me, yelling:

"Take me! Take me!"

Chances of a natural photograph were impossible, and, not to disappoint the children, I snapped a picture or two of them. I turned to leave and they followed me. I walked faster and they began to run, yelling:

"Take me! Take me!"

I hastily turned a corner, hoping that they'd fall behind; but they came on and on, their ranks swelling as they ran. It was not until I was some five blocks from the compound that they began to fall out, one by one, and return. Didn't their mothers miss them? Wasn't there anyone to look after them? To let tiny children of four and five years of age have that much freedom filled me with wonder. . . .

I entered a store to buy a black bow tie and I found that I could barely make the African clerk understand me. My American accent must have indeed sounded strange to his ears which were used to British English spoken with a tribal accent. I had to repeat myself several times before he could grasp what I meant.

"Who owns this store?" I asked him

"A Syrian," he said, pointing to the rear.

"Do Syrians own most of the stores?"

"Naw, sar. The Indians own some too."

"How are they to work for?"

"What do you mean by reasons"

"What do you mean by now?"

"I mean since the CPP, sar," he said, referring to the Convention People's Party.

"How was that? Why did they change?"

"They were scared that we'd take power and chase 'em out of the Gold Coast if they didn't behave, sar," he told me.

Before the coming of Nkrumah there had been much racial tension between the Africans and the Syrians, but, with the mounting tide of clamor for self-government, the Syrians had abruptly changed their attitudes toward the masses of the Africans, and the Syrians were now considered the largest and steadiest contributors of cash to the coffers of the Convention People's Party. . . .

that culture had once meant to them. True, they still clung, in secrecy and shame, to the ways of their fathers; but, surhad to depend upon guesses and folklore to determine what climate of West Africa, so purely woven out of the naked strong and predatory nation. The delicate strands of that years, had been condemned as inferior, and shattered by a fragile culture, so organically dependent upon the soil and customs, laboriously created and posited for thousands of impulses of naked men, could never be reconstituted. We earth, and I felt a sense of melancholy knowing that their that these people were old, old, maybe the oldest people on small-boned, of medium height, well-developed muscularly but tending toward slenderness. I had an intuitive impression of the physique of the people. For the most part they were by what I felt to be a sense of fragility, of delicacy almost, When I was back upon the streets again I was impressed

rounded by a new order of life, they didn't and couldn't believe in them as they once had

submit to any operation, no matter how urgently needed.) doctor told me that no wife of the King of Ashanti could an's blood was also strictly forbidden. An intelligent African among those close to the royal family, the spilling of a wompended somewhat upon the degree to which one's body was chances of passing, when one died, into the other world dedeformations abhorrent to them, for they felt that one's rare. (I divined later that their religious customs made such on their skins in order to beautify themselves, but that was or twice I did see women who had induced strange swellings intact. Circumcision was taboo among the Ashanti, and, their lips, or force huge holes in their ears or nostrils. Once did not deliberately disfigure or deform their bodies, distend I was pleased to see that, with but a few exceptions, they

at the door to talk to me. ment bungalow and found a strange young African waiting Wilted from the heat, I made my way back to the govern-

"What can I do for you?" I asked him.

"Dr. Wright--" he began.

"Please, I'm no doctor of any kind," I told him.

ily next door.... "Well, sar," he said, smiling. "I work for the English fam-

"You're an American, sar? Aren't you?" "Yes; I am."

"I'll try. But what is it?" "Maybe you can help me, sar? Please," he begged.

take a correspondence course from America and I need explained. "Now, sar, I want to educate myself. I want to help, sar." can soldiers during the war and they were nice, sar," he "You see, sar, we don't like the British. I met Ameri-

> course do you want to take?" I asked. "Just what sort of help do you need and what kind of a

"I want to be a detective, sar," he said.

"What?" I thought that I hadn't heard him.

made himself explicit. "A detective, sar. Like the ones you see in the movies," he

spondence course from America?" "And you want to take all of this in the form of a corre-

understood him. "That's right, sar," he said, smiling, glad that at last I'd

"Now, just how can I help you in that?"

cation for dollars. Then I went to the government, sar, and talked to a young Englishman." They said I'd have to get the government to okay my applithe bank and they said no; they wouldn't sell me dollars, sar. office, sar, to buy dollars and they wouldn't sell them to me. They said that I'd have to go to a bank, sar. Well, I went to "Well, sar, money is controlled here. I went to the post

"And what did he say?"

"Sar, he said I couldn't have any dollars. . . . You see,

anything, sar.... sar, the English are jealous of us. They never want us to do

"Why wouldn't the Englishman let you have the dol-

in how to be a detective from London, sar." "He just wouldn't, sar. He said that I could take a course

"From London?" I echoed.

"Yes, sar; that's exactly what he said, sar."

posture. waiting lips, at the slight stoop of respect in his bodily I looked at him, at his pleading eyes, at those half-parted,

"Come onto the terrace," I told him.

He followed me and stood respectfully as I sat. "Sit down," I said.

"Thank you, sar," he said, sitting.

"From where did you get this notion of becoming a de-

my room now, sar. Shall I get it for you, sar?" can magazines. . . . They tell about crimes. I got it right in "In a magazine. . . . You know, sar. One of these Ameri-

to become a detective?" "No; no; that's not necessary. Now, just why do you want

"To catch criminals, sar."

"What criminals?"

He stared at me as though he thought that I'd taken leave

diamonds, sar. If I could be a good detective, sar, I'd find out came here and fought us, took our land, our gold, and our how they did it. I'd put them in jail, sar." violate the law. This is our country, sar. It's the English who "The English, sar!" he exclaimed. "Sar, we Africans don't

for several moments. It was all clear now. But the pathos of it stilled my tongue

don?" I asked him. ing courses in detective work from either New York or Lon-"Didn't the British tell you not to spend your money tak-

than to do that, sar. Oh, sar, you don't know the English!" me all the truth about detective work, sar. They know better London, sar," he said. "But the English courses wouldn't tell "Naw, sar. They just wanted me to take the courses from

important secrets from you . . . ?" lessons in detective work? Is that it? They'd keep the really "In other words, the English wouldn't give you the real

"That's it, sar! You can't trust them, sar!"

ity of the English?" "To whom would you give this evidence of the criminal-

I'd send some of it to America, sar." "To all the people, sar. Then they'd know the truth. And

"So they'd know, too, sar.".

"Then maybe they'd help us, sar. Don't you think so, "And if they knew, what do you think they'd do?"

some way to get his feet upon the earth. "Why don't you try studying law?" I asked him, seeking

property. Detective work's for catching criminals, sar. That's what the English are, sar." "Law's all right," he said hesitantly. "But, sar, law's for

"Just how did you get hold of this magazine?"

"My Massa brought it home, sar."

out of the dustbin in back," he told me circumspectly. "Yes, sar. But he threw it away before I took it, sar. I got it "And when he got through with it, you read it?"

way up. Or they start out as stool pigeons.... Do you know what a stool pigeon is?" tives," I said. "They start out as policemen and work their "Look, let me tell you how most detectives get to be detec-

"Yes, sar. I know that from the movies, sar."

"American movies?"

"Yes, sar. I see a lot of them, sar."

tive. It's not really a good job for you." him. In time, if he's really good, he might become a detecbody and everybody. In that way the police come to trust "Well, a stool pigeon tells stories on his friends, on any-

thought. He was baffled; for a moment he hung his head in

seventy-five dollars to pay for the first course, sar." warped; it was composed of fragments of Hollywood mov-Where could I start with the boy? His view of reality was "But I want to be a detective, sar," he said insistently. "Well, sar, you can sell me some dollars," he said. "I need "But how can I help you?" I was dejected.

try, he could always blame the British for everything. badly he did it. As long as the Union Jack flew over his counof the organization of his hate, a hate that would always be would be thwarted by the British who were the focal point he felt that the least move he made to better his condition of this was fed by an inflamed sense of national oppression; to tell what was plausible or implausible in them. And all so far from such manufactured dreams that he was unable ies and American pulp magazines and he had lived his life his excuse if he failed, no matter what he tried to do or how

you?" I suggested. "Why don't you ask some of the rich Africans to help

"Oh, them, sar?" He actually repressed a sarcastic

"Why not?" I demanded

"They are worse than the British, sar."

skin who disagreed with him. The black man who opposed him was a British collaborater. had a ready category in which to put anybody with a black I saw now that I had to be careful in talking to him, for he

"How are they worse?"

"They keep away from their black brothers, sar."

travelers' checks. And they can't do you any good," I told "Look, I don't have any dollars with me in cash. I've only

to be false, too understandably human to have been calcuto ask me for dollars? No; his story sounded too pathetic I studied him. Maybe he had been prompted by the police

I've saved the pounds, sar. I can give them to you." "Can't you do something, sar, please? I'm not begging.

a delusive dream and he was determined not to surrender it; if he had to let that dream go, he'd hate whoever robbed him How could I get at the boy? He was hugging to his heart

> of being a detective.... reality for what it was, colored his vision regarding the value of it. But that false dream stood between him and his seeing

"I'll have to think about this," I told him with a sigh.

trust of the British; it was by far the deepest emotion of his what stunned me most about the boy was his absolute dishad, I was sure that they would have been frightened. But was inclined to feel that they had not known it, for, if they boys? Maybe they had known it and had not cared? No; I know that this sort of rot was simmering in the minds of administered this colony before the coming of Nkrumah and shook my head, Good God. . . . Did the men who had He thanked me and left; I went upstairs and sat in a chair

wanted me to greet his followers with a short speech. ing motion for self-government and he indicated that he Prime Minister was scheduled to speak upon his forthcomoutdoor political rally to be held at the Westend Arena. The me that I'd be called for at four o'clock and taken to a huge Next morning the Prime Minister's office phoned to tell

led through packed black bodies to the platform where the Ga, the language of a tribe close to the Accra region. I was Prime Minister sat surrounded by his ministers and aides. the throng, I heard a speaker addressing the audience in na came into the line of my vision. Arriving at the edge of hear the roar of the vast crowd five blocks before the are-As I was driven toward the rally that afternoon, I could

lance that I was to get accustomed to in all public affairs of In. There were practically no women present, a circumthem wore their native togas. An impression of earthi-Gold Coast. Many of the men were barefooted and most to a blatant distinctness by the long red rays of the setting housand faces whose brown, reddish, and black skins were Fanning out in front of the platform were more than ten

ness rose up from those tense, lifted faces that stretched so far away that they became dim to the eye—faces that seemed like a reality conjured up by a sorcerer from the early days of mankind; they appeared unsubstantial, like figments of a dream that would vanish upon close inspection. Then, at that moment, a roar welled up from ten thousand throats and the crowd's reality not only became real, but suggestive of a menace, a threat....

The speaker threw a challenging question in English requiring a yes or no answer, for he wanted the audience to participate in the meeting, and the crowd hurled a rolling "NO!" that made my eardrums tingle. The speaker switched to Ga and hammered on and on; then he swung back to English, declaring:

"Nkrumah has led you this far and he will lead you on! If you don't support him, he cannot have the power to act for you! You must believe that he'll never let you down! He went to prison for you; he suffered for you; hell lay down his life for you! You must have faith and trust him! Do you trust him?"

"YES!" the crowd roared.

"Will you follow him?" the speaker asked.

"YES!" the crowd answered.

"Do you believe that he fights for freedom?"

"YES!" the crowd answered.

"Who organized the CPP?"

"NKRUMAH!"

"Who raised the slogan for self-government NOW?"

"NKRUMAH!"

"KodW"

"NKRUMAH!"

"I asked you who?"

"NNNKKKKRRRUUUMMMMAAH!"

"Will he fight for you?"

"YES!"
"Will you fight for him?"
"YES!"
"And what are we fighting for?"
"FREE—DOOOOM! FREE—DOOOOOM!"

At times the dialogue between the speaker and the audience became so intimate, so prolonged, so dramatic that all sense of distance between leaders and followers ceased to exist, and a spirit of fellowship, of common identity prevailed among faces young and old, smooth and bearded, wise and simple.... The speaker lifted his voice in song and the mass joined in, and the collective sound seemed to rise as high as the skies:

There is victory for us In the struggle of the CPP, There is victory for us!

Sons of Ghana, rise and fight!
Girls of Ghana, rise and shine!
In the struggle of the CPP
There is victory for us!

Forward ever, backward never; In the struggle of the CPP There is victory for us!

My turn came to greet the audience and I rose and spoke mewhat as follows:

Men of Ghana: Your great and respected Prime Minmer has extended to me an invitation to see your country, people, and the rapid rate of development that you are alking. It is with pride that I've come to look upon the la-

bor of a man who attended our American schools and who has dedicated his life to the struggle for the freedom of his country.

"I'm one of the lost sons of Africa who has come back to look upon the land of his forefathers. In a superficial sense it may be said that I'm a stranger to most of you, but, in terms of a common heritage of suffering and hunger for freedom, your heart and my heart beat as one.

"Centuries ago the living bodies of our forefathers were dragged from these shores and sold into slavery; centuries ago the bodies of our forefathers formed the living instruments which the white men of Europe used to build the foundations of the Western world; centuries ago we were reduced to nameless, stateless pawns shuffled by the will of Europeans and Americans across the chessboards of history; centuries ago our tribes were so mauled, mixed, and scattered that we could not even speak to one another in a common tongue.

"This is indeed a turgid, cloudy past, a past not of our making or choosing; yet, despite all this, this heritage has brought us a sense of unity deeper than race, a sense of humanity that has made us sensitive to the sufferings of all mankind, that has made us increasingly human in a world that is rapidly losing its claim to humanity....

"Under the leadership of your Leader, the Convention People's Party has roused immense interest throughout America and the world at large. You men are, of all the teeming millions of Africa, the first to step upon the political stage of the twentieth century. What you do will have consequences that will roll down the years. What you achieve in the coming months will to a large degree define the character of the coming struggle for the redemption of Africa.

"Today, in your struggle for self-government, you are presenting to the men of England a political promissory

currency of mankind, and now the world is watching to see if the English will honor their own currency! They asked you to build political parties, and you did! But you did it so much quicker than they thought you could! You are making your bid for freedom in terms which your teachers in England and America told you were correct. Now, in your struggle for self-government, you are presenting for redemption a promise made to you by the heart of England. Will she honor it? The world is waiting to see....

"From the 30,000,000 sons and daughters of African descent in the New World, both in North and South America, and in the many islands of the Atlantic, I bring you deepfelt greetings.

"I am an American and therefore cannot participate in your political affairs. But I wish you victory in your bid for freedom! Ghana, show us the way! The only advice that I can give you is two thousand years old and was uttered by a Man Whose name is frequently used but Whose moral precepts millions choose to ignore. To a great and despoiled Africa, to an Africa awakening from its slumber, to an Africa burning with hope, I advise you: TAKE UP YOUR BED AND

they were not used to hearing speakers who did not raise their voices, or maybe they had not understood . . .? I sat. The Prime Minister rose to speak. The chairman asked the crowd to pledge their personal loyalty to the Leader and I saw twenty thousand palms shoot willingly upward and the paray—made me feel that I was gazing upon a sweep of newly turned earth. . . . And from the rapt look on their faces I speak they were made mental new paray and the province of the provin

ence was being converted into vigilance.... obedience; trust was turning itself into discipline; and revertranslating itself into organization; devotion was becoming ing into politics; prayers were becoming pledges; hope was such a pledge to a secular cause. Here was religion melt-

that if they were displeased with him that they could dishe informed his followers that it was necessary from time miss him. He asked for their trust for the future to time to report to them upon progress. He reminded them In his speech the Prime Minister was quiet, restrained;

tered a quiet phase, do not think that we are not fighting. means," he told them. "Because our struggle now has en-We are fighting the same old battle for freedom with other "It was Clausewitz who said that politics is war by other

sea of politics: of loyalty withstand the many snarling currents ahead in the party behave in complicated situations? Could these pledges grasped by men so new to party struggles? How would this cepts? I wondered.... Could such sophisticated language be I watched the faces closely. Did they understand such con-

their justification in the eyes of the world. to a leader-eager to die, if need be, for their redemption other black people just as eager, as submissive, as trusting, again those clay-colored, orange, red, yellowish, brown, and to pledge its loyalty to the Leader by raising its hands, and down in the west, was a huge blue-gray ball showing through who wanted to hold up their hands and pledge their loyalty ized that sprawling over this vast continent were millions of fading purple light as my eyes could see. . . . And I realgrayish palms lifted skyward, extending as far back in the tolds of straggling clouds. Again the vast crowd was asked The Prime Minister spoke on, and the sun, as it went

The Prime Minister finished and there was applause, sing-

and talking. A newspaperman came to me and asked: ing, chanting. On the platform there was some milling around

with the Graphic. Can we have it?" "We'd like to run your speech in tomorrow's paper. I'm

Instinctively I turned to the Prime Minister

"Have you got it written down?" he asked. "Yes," I said. "There's a reporter asking to print what I said."

"Let me see it," he said.

such a meaningful gesture? I wanted to know, but, in the end, I resolved that I'd do nothing; I'd wait. . . . Minister taken my notes and given them back to me with submitted my ideas to be censored. But why had the Prime I made my way back to the government bungalow in a read what I had proposed to say. If they had, I'd have gladly I said something wrong in my speech? No one had asked to and I did not want to ask for any explanation in public. Had embarrassment. I did not understand what was happening reporter took a few steps backward, looking around with and I said no word. I looked at the reporter and he looked at me. Then the Prime Minister moved silently away. . . . The notes into the top breast pocket of my suit; he said no word then folded them slowly. The reporter waited. I waited. Then the Prime Minister came close to me and pushed the I gave him my notes. He took them, looked off solemnly,

deeply thoughtful mood.

otels. I finally settled on the Seaview which stood at the dee of the beach and fronted James Town, the slum area. ext morning I resolved to move at once into the center of the city and I made the round of the three available

The Seaview was grim, with dingy mosquito nets over the beds; there were flies, greasy food, spattered walls, wooden floors whose cracks held decades of filth. The cold-water faucets gave forth water that was almost hot, so exposed to the tropic sun was the plumbing of the establishment. It was the kind of hotel that one read about in a Joseph Conrad novel and, what intrigued me most, I had only to go to the balcony and look down and there was Africa in all its squalor, vitality and fantastic disorder. . . .

No breezes blew here to freshen the air. My skin was always oily and wet and tiny mosquitoes bit deeply into my arms and ankles. The humidity was so dense that each time I shaved I had to clean a film of sweat from the mirror. An army of stewards was in attendance, dressed in white, their naked feet swishing to and fro day and night. No one hurried; voices were never raised; the hotel seemed in the grip of the heat, mastered by it.

and the vapors of excrement drifting into the hotel from the quickly I got used to the medley of odors; the early morning sometimes dangerous drinking water. It was amazing how of the hotel at all hours. And almost always one could hear open drainage ditches outside. stench of homemade soap, the noon-hour cooking smells, guzzling beer which was used instead of the uncertain and randa was constantly crowded with Africans and Europeans the maze of the streets of James Town. . . . The hotel's vethe continuous and mysterious beating of drums deep in set up a groaning, howling noise that penetrated every room the ever-present moisture. The lavatory, when it was flushed, and worked with difficulty, so damaged had they become by what. The locks, keys, and latches on the doors were rusty tresses on the bed were damp and stained by God knows seemed to have been named grease, was served. The mat-At mealtimes fried food, prepared by a chef whose god

The hotel was owned by a Greek; there were three hotels in Accra and all of them were owned by foreigners. Africans seemed to have the notion that there was something how needful hotels were to travelers, to those who had no any African, if he had had the capital, from operating a horor Cambridge. Living in tribal families, boasting "brothers" an African had only to seek out his tribe to be housed, fed, and taken care of.

Using the Seaview as a base, I made many long excursions into the alleyways and compounds of James Town, in and down to the seashore where the strangely painted canoes of the fishermen lay upon the hot sand. Those inhabitants folk, and their drying nets, dark brown or purple, could be of herring had come in the night before, the women, their sun to dry, laying them in rows side by side upon the red the cured fish would be shipped into the interior.

Using the Seaview as a base, I made many long excursions of James Town, in and even or purple year front were fisher-seen draped over wooden trestles in the sun. If a good catch cloths tied at their hips, would be arranging the fish in the earth, upon palm leaves, or upon the rusty tin roofs. . . . And the cured fish would be shipped into the interior.

In shady places the men could be seen standing or squatpp, mending nets, or talking politics, or arranging the etails of their next fishing expedition. Now and then, stepping calmly among the sprawling men and women, would ome a chief, togaed, sandaled, surrounded by his "linguist" shead....

Practically no grass grew in James Town and there were trees. Above all, there were no flowers. So denuded

of blooming things was the African's environment that one wondered if it was by intent. (Someone told me later that the lack of vegetation was to keep down the invasion of snakes, but I doubt if that can account for the scarcity of green stuff around African homes.) It might well be that the nearness of the jungle and its lush creepers have made the African feel that he could derive all the delight he needs in growing and blooming things without bothering to plant anything in front of his door.

I turned down a narrow path and saw a woman bent over, resting on her knees, washing her hair in a tin pan, lathering the soapsuds over her head, her eyes closed. Evidently she had heard my footsteps on the hard red clay, for she paused, cocked her head, and listened for a second with her eyes still closed; then, as I walked on, she resumed her vigorous massaging of her hair. . . .

I came upon a group of old men sitting upon their wooden stools, their naked backs resting against a stone wall; they were talking and their bony black bodies reminded me of those wooden carvings now so rare in Africa and which can be seen only in the drawing rooms of rich Europeans. As I passed them I caught the low, soft murmurs of the Ga language flowing from their lips. They knew undoubtedly from my dress that I was a stranger, yet they evinced no overt curiosity. After I'd gone about twenty yards I turned my head and found them gazing at me. But the moment they knew that I knew that they were staring at me, they turned their eyes away. A stranger incited Africans to a high pitch of interest, but they were sensitive and always tried to hide that interest.

I barged into a crowded compound, walking slowly, as though I had a right to be there. The women, as they saw me approach, stopped their work, reached down and took hold of their cloths and covered their naked breasts. I walked on

behavior. The words of St. Paul, that arch inhibitor of men, came to my mind: they had reverted quickly and naturally to their traditional paid deference to that Cross; but the moment I had gone, simple lives, and, because of their conditioning, they had shadow of the Cross falling athwart the innocence of their themselves. My approaching presence had been like the when they had caught sight of me, they had hastily sheltered that others considered it shameful—to be naked, and so taught by the missionaries that it was considered shameful customs, they did not really believe. But they had been long sun helmet, that they had shrunk and covered themselves. They had performed a gesture in which, according to their modesty; it was because I wore Western clothes, shoes, a only because I was a stranger that they had exhibited such for there were many men in evidence everywhere. It was not not because I was a man that they had covered themselves, ening the performance of their domestic duties. . . . It was and had let their cloths fall again to the ground, not slackfor a few yards and glanced back; they felt that I had gone

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

But sin taking

But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin is dead.

For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

As I walked on in the hot sun I could sense vast emotional impactions taking place; I could feel dammed-up physical denigers straining like jungle plants for the heat of the sun; and, in the end, I could see that Africa too some day would

exhibit those strange and fantastic patterns of Western neurotic behavior that would necessitate the uncovering of all of that which religion was now covering up, that there would be doctors to coax these people to believe again in that which religion had taught them to repress. I could feel the mental suffering and emotional anguish that had yet to come into those innocent lives. . . .

I paused before a young woman selling tin pans and, by pointing, I indicated that I wanted to buy one. At once a group of women gathered about; it seemed that my buying a pan made them feel that they had the right to examine me at close quarters. The woman to whom I had pointed out the pan seemed baffled; she called hurriedly to a friend. Soon a crowd of no less than fifteen women were ranged about me, chattering excitedly. Finally they called an old man who spoke a little English and he translated. The pan cost seven shillings and I paid, sweating, wondering why the women were evincing such interest. As I started off with the pan under my arm, the old man called me back.

"What is it?" I asked.

The women chattered even more loudly now.

"What you do with pan, Massa? Women wanna know." I looked at the women and they hid their faces, laughing.

"I'm going to use the pan to boil water. I'm making a chemical solution in which to develop films..." My voice trailed off, for I could see that he had not understood me.

"They wanna know if you buy it for wife?" the man asked.

"No."

There was another outburst of laughter.

"They wanna know if Massa cook chop in pan?"

"No. I eat in a hotel restaurant," I said.

The women conferred with the man again and he shook his head. Finally he turned to me and asked:

"Massa, women wanna know if Massa make peepee in pan?"

I blinked in bewilderment. The women were howling with laughter now.

I pushed away, hearing their black laughter echoing in my ears as I tried to lose myself in the crowd. I learned after-pots, pans, or food, that it was an open confession that he cent, self-respecting African would ever dare be caught buyof those women I'd lost caste, for they'd been conditioned slogans regarding women were: keep'em ignorant, keep'em pregnant, and keep'em ten paces behind you.

a tossup and an opposition victory was being predicted in tion People's Party and the opposition that the outcome was wild and hot charges had been made by both the Convention People's Party was most anxious to win. But, so many Cape Coast goes, so goes the country. Hence, the Convenucated families lived there. A Gold Coast slogan went: as educational center of the nation and most of the best edled by the English-educated old guard. Cape Coast was the seat was being hotly contested by the opposition parties Nkrumah could rely in the Legislative Assembly. The Plange was now necessary to fill his post with a man upon whom and brightest members of the party, had died and that it election. It seemed that Kwesi Plange, one of the youngest to watch the Convention People's Party campaign in a byformed me that I'd be picked up and taken to Cape Coast That evening the Prime Minister's office called and in-

Next morning at ten o'clock a string of about twenty aucomobiles halted in front of my hotel; the cavalcade con-

would vanish as quickly and silently as they had come. chores, and, it seemed, at some prearranged moment, they their appearance, and then they moved ghostily, doing their never saw their women until the time came for them to make seemed to prevail in almost everything the Africans did; you with women only. . . . This rigorous separation of the sexes ablest speakers and organizers. There was one car filled sisted of sound trucks, private cars filled with the party's

stretches of forest. Much of the conversation that went on such bewilderment in the presence of strangers could have of childish pride in trying to create a state of bewilderment oblique, a hard-to-know man who seemed to take a kind their manners, and their attitudes. I found the African an tongue so that I wouldn't understand. . . . I felt that some of I couldn't understand; it may be that they talked their tribal was in tribal language and it didn't seem to bother them that out into the countryside. A blue haze hung over the green that that which they did not reveal to me I could never know, placed so high and false a value upon it. They seemed to feel in the minds of strangers. Only a man who himself had felt them regarded me as an outsider who'd scorn their habits, but nothing could have been more erroneous. I sat in the car with the Prime Minister and we roared

slept, played, and ate with them, sharing his life in a manner common masses in deed and word each passing hour. He tactics. I'd not witnessed any evidence of the fury of white rived from his demonstrating the correctness of his political self and them. His prescriptive right to leadership was de lapsing into a sudden silence that drew a line between him that no Englishman or missionary ever could. . . . It was his was a democrat, self-forgetfully identifying himself with the Minister in action at close range. Among his own people he I'd been told that he was capable, but there was a hidden On this journey I had an opportunity to observe the Prime

> bring to the surface quicker than an Englishman. . . . core of hardness in him which I was sure that no one could

agenda for the day was drawn up; the route to be taken was car. The loud-speakers of the sound trucks were tested; an cating which car was to enter first, who was to ride in each the Prime Minister organized his entry into the town, indibeach. Standing to one side and flanked by his trusted aides, white-capped waves breaking in foam upon the rock-strewn of Cape Coast, in sight of the rolling Atlantic which sent The cavalcade halted in a coconut grove just outside

Prime Minister asked me: ing, a crowd of barefooted black boys clustered around. The went about their duties with a zeal that would have put even Communists to shame. While this organizing was transpirwhom the world had branded as being lazy and indifferent tor, amidst an appalling heat and humidity, these blacks keenly; here, less than five hundred miles from the Equa-To Nkrumah's orders the party men reacted quickly,

"How about a drink of coconut milk?"

"That'd be fine," I said.

anded one; the juice tasted sweet, cool, and delicious. tem up and, with a cutlass, whacked holes in them. I was g away.... She was a fully mature woman and surely trees and coconuts rained earthward. A tall boy picked Il, slick tree trunks. Soon they were nestling in the tops of simb them; they walked up, so adroitly did they scale the a deep basis, a religious origin. At no time did the one side. Such separateness, I was now convinced, must noticed that the women's contingent stood discreetly men mingle with the men; they kept in one compact was not afraid of talking to a man. This exclusiveness p; to themselves. I spoke to one and she replied shyly, At his signal the boys raced toward the trees; they did not

of the women was undoubtedly due to some powerful tribal taboo too deep for even the Convention People's Party to overcome....

The cavalcade was ready; we got into the cars; the Prime Minister stood up, lifted his hand in the party salute. I sat behind him in the open convertible car. . . . The loud-speakers of the sound trucks blared:

"FREE—DOOOOOM!"

And the procession was off on its political mission. Already the people of Cape Coast, hearing the roar, were crowding into the streets, rushing from their mud or concrete houses to salute and scream:

"FREE-DOOOOOM!"

The Prime Minister knew where his votes were; he hit the slum section first. The people, many of them half naked, flowed out of the warrens and mazes of compounds into the streets and their reactions were vital. They waved their hands in that queer, trembling vibration of the outstretched palm, giving a rolling, veering motion with their bodies as they sang and yelled:

"FREE-DOOOOOM! FREE-DOOOOM!"

"All for you, Kwame!"

"FREE-DOOOOOM! FREE-DOOOOOM!"

The procession wove in and out of the narrow, dusty streets, up and down hill. We passed Cape Coast Castle, built by the Swedes in 1657; it stood white and awesome in the hot sun. It was here that most of the slaves of the entire Guinea Coast had been assembled to be shipped to the New World. With loud-speakers screeching, we finally entered the Cape Coast residential section which fronted the sea; here lived some of the oldest and most respected families of the nation. They boasted a Sir or two, a few Orders of the British Empire, scornfully dubbed by the nationalists as: Obedient Boys of the Empire. . . . It was here that the Afri-

can elite attitude held forth with bitter mien; it was here that the colony's most famous schools were located; it was here that Drs. Danquah and Busia, the intellectual leaders of the opposition, had raised the nostalgic but futile cry: "Preserve our traditions!"

There was less shouting for "FREE—DOOOM!" in these quiet and sedate streets. Indeed, a skinny black man with a pince-nez athwart his nostrils, a chuck of graying mustache upon his upper lip, wearing his toga like that of a Roman emperor, stood on the wooden steps of his house and shouted again and again:

"I HATE HIM! I HATE HIM! I HATE HIM!"

The loud-speaker grated:

"VOTE FOR WELBECK! VOTE FOR THE CPP! VOTE FOR SELF-GOVERNMENT NOW! FOLLOW NKRUMAH TO VICTORY!"

After two hours of emotional blitzkrieg upon the inhabitants of Cape Coast, the tour ended; later in the afternoon would come the ideological assault in the form of words hurled in an open-air rally in the center of the city. As we drove toward a private home for lunch, the Prime Minister told me some of his problems.

"We really don't know the exact mineral resources of this country," he said. "The British were only interested in getting rich quick, exporting those minerals which could be carried away to England or some other place. One of our urgent tasks is to find out just what mineral wealth we have locked in our soil.

"We have a wonderful soil out of which to make bricks. We've also found locations with soil from which we can make cement. But the British ship us cement from England... And nothing is done about the natural advantages of making cement here. We'd like to, say, in housing, wolve a distinctly native style of architecture that would be suitable both to our people and to the climate....

"Until today England has decided what was good for us and shipped it to us at prices that they determined. For example, woolens, which are far too hot for this climate, were shipped here and sold. Even now they make our local police wear woolen uniforms in this awful heat. . . .

"Take another example.... Our climate is good to grow almost anything, yet 80 per cent of our staple food is imported. No one has really ever tried to experiment and determine what foods this soil will grow best. Why should the English care about things like that? They don't live here. They came here to make money in government or business and then they go back. And, of course, they never dreamed that one day the native would arise and say:

"No more of this!"

We sat down to lunch and the Prime Minister warned ne:

"Take it easy with that food. You're not used to it."

I ignored him and served myself generously with groundnut soup, *kenke*, *fufu*, all of which tasted wonderful except for the fiery red pepper which pervaded everything.

"It may give you trouble," somebody else cautioned me.

"What harm can this good food do me?" I asked challengingly.

The next morning I knew. . . .

After lunch the cavalcade set out for the center of town where a vast crowd had congregated. There was no shade and the tropic sun beat down without mercy, making me squirm, sweat; finally I put my handkerchief, dampened with water, to my face to keep from feeling faint.

An African band—composed mostly of drums—played music and a group of singers chantéd a dirge for the dead Kwesi Plange; then speaker after speaker lashed out at the crowd in Fanti and English. It seemed that the oppositions ist, Dr. Busia, had allowed himself at some time or other to

was ready for self-government and this was used for all that it was worth against him. Even if people were not ready to govern themselves, they certainly would not want to be told so in such snobbish terms. ... Nkrumah's orators were no upon the crowd's emotions with great skill. But from where had they gotten this art ...?

Again, as it had been in Accra, the meeting was a mixture blended together and directed toward modern political aims. One speaker, for example, trained his audience to respond The speaker then chanted his words and the audience rewere leading. It went something like that game that children ball . . ." And ending in: "Ten nis ball, two nis ball, three nis crowd discovered that they had been unknowingly led into opposition, they literally howled their approval. One man, and dreamlike, he sang out with orgiastic joy:

What a wonderfiller.

"What a wonderful life! What a wonderful life!"

Never before had that man had a chance to express himself, or to hear others state what he felt to be true, and the enough to make him feel free. England was reaping the rewinds of keeping these people from trying to manage their wito speak.

The Prime Minister advanced to the microphone. He was form; he was sharp, unyielding in his condemnation of opposition. He hissed:

"I don't care how many university degrees that Busia and Danquah have between them! The truth is: they don't know politics! Why, they are scared of you, as scared of you as the British are!"

The crowd laughed.

"Danquah ought to be an assistant librarian and leave politics alone! I'll give him such a job, if he wants it!"

The audience listened, open-mouthed, smiling in agreement.

"Busia? He's a goat! Let him keep to his sociology! As a politician, why, he's not worthy to stoop down and untie my shoestrings!"

This was hard fighting and the crowd roared their appreciation.

"We prefer self-government with danger to servitude in tranquillity!"

"FREE—D0000000M! FREE—D000000M!"

The crowd chanted as their dark and emotion-spent faces left the meeting; wistfully I watched their toga-draped bodies wander off in the fading light of the setting sun.... I sat brooding. How had he conquered them? He had held them in the palms of his hands; he had poured scorn on the claims of the opposition; he had allowed no mercy for a contrary opinion; and it seemed that that was what his followers wanted. Prolonged British evasion and aloofness had made them ready to embrace certainty, definiteness....

Back in my hotel room that night in Accra I tried to analyze what I'd seen. One could argue that Nkrumah had learned such tactics from observing Communist activities in London and New York, but there was the problem of determining how his aides, in five short years, had developed such a high degree of political dexterity with the masses. I had had enough experience in the Communist Party of the United States to know that what I had seen in Cape Coast

had not been Communism. Communism was, above all, ideological; and what I had seen was the quintessence of passion.

sharing the lives of those Africans.... efforts to save Africans when their racial codes forbade their tion that they could never realize how taunting were their nies. White uplifters were generally so deficient in imaginacontrol over their lives and create a new sense of their destinow there burned in these black hearts a hunger to regain ture that had once given meaning to these people's lives, and this mass movement by shattering the traditional tribal culforts of missionaries had made an unwitting contribution to tried. The greed of British businessmen and the fumbling efelements which they could not have ignored even if they had These men were not being so much guided as they were being provoked by elements deep in their own personalities, out of the compulsive nakedness of men's disinherited lives. century was throwing up these mass patterns of behavior of Marxist thought. It was my conviction that the twentieth thing much deeper and more potent than the mere influence their people; moreover, back of it all was, I believe, somerest, had guessed it, had fumbled and found how to organize sense of direction, Nkrumah and his boys had doped out the lutionary examples before their eyes to indicate a general My tentative answer was that, with the multitude of revo-

plus.... It bordered upon religion; it involved a total and basic response to reality; it smacked of the dreamlike, of the men around the Prime Minister who knew Marxism were with number, and how could they have instilled so quickly as a smattering of Marxism plus the will to be, a thirst plus that Nkrumah himself

in all of their ramifications.... emotions which even he did not quite grasp or understand was but an agent provocateur to the emotions of millions—

Eleven

of notes; he got down to work at once, the words coming fluently from him. I recapitulate his story: did he know the story that he had to tell that he had no need brownish-black man, thin, restless, intense, nervous. So well ▲ko, called at my hotel to talk to me. He was a short, t last the Prime Minister's political secretary, Kofi Baa-

don, was recommended for the post. government. To carry on the work of the organization, a Gold Coast Convention, the declared aim of which was self-Saltpond and inaugurated an organization called the United full-time secretary was sought and Nkrumah, then in Lon-In August of 1947 the leaders of the Gold Coast met at

strata of the *people* to become involved.... wanted to rule in their name; Nkrumah wanted the widest their efforts as representing the aims of the "people." They lawyers and doctors educated in England, did not regard terests arose. The wealthy Africans in the organization, nationalist movement," and at once a deep conflict of inlitical character of the organization as being "the people's Arriving in December of 1947, Nkrumah defined the po-

eign merchants pledged to Nii Bonnie II to reduce prices. in a meeting at which members of the government and for a nationwide boycott of imported goods in an attempt to force foreign firms to reduce prices. The boycott terminate Bonnie II, a subchief of the Ga states who had launchee organization and his drive coincided with the efforts of Nij Nkrumah set about at once broadening the basis of the

> hundred and thirty-seven were injured. the country. Twenty-nine people were killed and about two of foreign firms; arson and street fighting ensued and, during the following days, violence gripped the southern half of The news spread and an infuriated populace began a looting three veterans of British campaigns in India and Burma.... demonstrators refused and the police opened fire and killed agreed-upon line of march. When ordered to disperse, the ter charging that the demonstrators had deviated from the veloped between the ex-servicemen and the police, the latcastle in Christianborg to present grievances and a clash dea delegation of ex-servicemen marched on the Governor's a score of European firms. In the afternoon of the same day of prices and spontaneous demonstrations broke out against the people went into the stores, they did not find a reduction But, on the morning of the 28th of February, 1948, when

an interim government. A few days later the leaders of and William Orfori Atta were arrested and banished to the B. Danquah, Ako Adjei, Akufo Addo, Obetsebi Lamptey, Northern Territories; they were incarcerated separately for the underlying causes of the disorders; they also demanded the United Gold Coast Convention, Kwame Nkrumah, J. ing the British to create a commission of inquiry to study ear they would meet and plot. Gold Coast Convention to send cables to London petition-These disturbances prompted the leaders of the United

ported troops from Nigeria. hat the local soldiers and police were not loyal and they was imposed. Suspicion rose in the minds of the British The Governor declared a state of emergency and a cur-

ned because of its chairman, Aiken Watson—took to investigate the causes of the violence and to recom-The Colonial Secretary in London appointed a commisad constructive measures. The Watson Commission—so

testimony in April of 1948 and the six arrested leaders were released so that they could give evidence. In June of that year the commission issued a report which declared the old constitution outmoded, urged a new constitution embodying the aspirations of the people, and endorsed a ministerial type of government patterned on those obtaining in the dominions.

But, when the Governor appointed a constitutional committee of forty Africans under the chairmanship of Mr. Justice Coussey, apprehension set in. The committee was composed entirely of upper-class chiefs and lawyers and the younger elements of the population were completely ignored.

When the committee began work on the 20th of January, trade-unionists, students, "mammy" traders of the streets, and the nationalist elements launched a protest against their representatives being excluded. Nkrumah hastily formed a youth committee and sent young men touring the nation to raise three demands: (1) universal adult suffrage; (2) a fully elected legislature with a fully representative cabinet; and (3) collective ministerial responsibility.

The traditional leadership of the United Gold Coast Convention now felt that Nkrumah was deviating from the organization's policies and an inevitable class split developed. Nkrumah was determined that the people should know what the real issues were and, accordingly, on September 1, 1948, he founded the Accra Evening News. The split widened as Nkrumah's journal vehemently demanded a democratic constitution. Attempts to bridge the differences between the right-wing old generation and the left-wing new generation served but to sharpen the conflict. Failing to achieve a satisfactory agreement with the leaders of the United Gold Coast Convention on points which he felt too vital for compromise, Nkrumah publicly announced his resignation.

The Convention People's Party took actual shape from that point on and Nkrumah announced his intention of staging positive action based on nonviolence if the people's demand for a democratic constitution was not granted.

The British Government now actively entered the campaign against Nkrumah, filing a series of libel suits. On Sepcourt and fined three hundred pounds. This sum was quickly raised by the voluntary exertions of the street "mammies." the leaders of the new Convention People's Party that they and they intensified their protests.

This mass meeting declared immediate self-government as its aim; it objected to the three ex officio members representing British vested interests being included in the cabinet; five years; it demanded a legislature composed of fully elected members instead of, as the report recommended, some being nominated and others being elected.

The organizers of the Convention People's Party now

wide civil disobedience and nonco-operation if the British

This campaign brought about a conference, on January 1949, between British government officials and the leaders

the Convention People's Party. At this conference the Brit-

rumah felt that the British were merely playing for time and on the radio that an "agreement" had been reached, Nkevoked. When, however, the next day, the British announced the proposals and asked that positive action should not be he announced that positive action would begin.

and sentenced to prison terms varying from three months to two months, ended with all of the leaders being convicted with sedition, and refused bail... The trial, which lasted Nkrumah and about twenty others were seized, charged the arrest of the leaders of the Convention People's Party. tion could continue almost indefinitely, the British ordered tive action continued. When it became evident that such acevocation of the emergency powers of the Governor, positial services: water, electricity, health, medical care, etc. For from jobs, numerous warnings and curfews, and the full twenty-one days, despite threats of dismissal of workers went to work; busses and transportation trucks stood still. The nationalist leaders agreed to the functioning of essen-On the morning of January 8, not a train ran; no one

majorities in all three cities. It began to look as if the real cra, Cape Coast, and Kumasi and the condemned party won leaders of the nation were in prison. positive action, elections for town councils took place in Ac-Yet, in 1950, during the imprisonment of the leaders of

and the salute of the elbow-resting-on-the-hip-and-the-palm be conducted! It was in prison that the greeting of "Freedom" fronting-outward was conceived of. . . . Nkrumah himself, came smuggled-out directives as to how the campaign should thirty-eight constituencies. And from the imprisoned leaders coming general elections, presenting candidates in all of the chairman of the party and took charge of organizing for the vention People's Party, came out of prison and became acting In April, 1950, Gbedemah, one of the leaders of the Con-

> sang: "There Shall be Victory for Us." his cell, wrote the party's song which the marching Africans

British had a new headache on their hands. government men who were lodged in prison cells and the people of the Gold Coast had elected as leaders of the new nation, winning thirty-five out of thirty-eight seats. The On February 8, the Convention People's Party swept the

as the British quaintly called it. to another prison. . . . But it was freedom, an act of "grace," populace to see their newly elected leaders being transferred suspicion, for they thought that the British did not want the get dressed in civilian clothes, an order that aroused their A few days later the imprisoned nationalists were told to

named by the Territorial Council, and there were seventeen epresented a minority, for nineteen representatives had been government." He warned the people that self-government Provement of the country from both within and without the had not been achieved and he described the constitution unthe chance to fight for the political, social, and economic imshow the world that the African can rule himself. We want hiefs or representatives of chiefs, and there were also three der which he would be acting as "bogus and fraudulent." will of the nation. "We are going into the government to officio British members representing special interests, would enter the new government as a representative of the ch as mines, commerce, etc. Nkrumah had won the election, but his thirty-five seats vention People's Party, Nkrumah made it plain that the party Convoking the national executive committee of the Con-

geted by the Assembly. Three other cabinet posts were filled inbly in a vote that carried seventy-eight out of eighty-four ces. His ministerial colleagues, five in number, were also Is Nkrumah was then elected to the same post by the As-Appointed Leader of Government Business by the Gover-

from three other territorial councils: one from Ashanti; one from the Northern Territories; and one from the Colony.

Eight months later, in October, 1951, the Convention People's Party, through the Legislative Assembly, smashed the old system of Indirect Rule (Native Authority) which had given the chiefs statutory powers to maintain order, collect taxes, and dispense justice, etc. In place of Indirect Rule there was erected a system of District, Urban, and Local Councils elected on the basis of universal suffrage... With this one stroke religion was swept out of government and the will of the people took its place.

"This, in short, is how the first determined bid of Africans to rule themselves turned out," Mr. Baako told me. "We know that we're not through, that victory has not been won. This is only the first step..."

"Suppose the British do not grant full self-government? What then?" I asked Mr. Baako.

"Our program has the full support of the masses," he told me. "And the British know it. They have co-operated so far. If they do not continue, we shall declare ourselves a republic."

After Mr. Baako had gone I marveled how, in one historic leap, the Gold Coast African had thrown off his chains. Though the conditions of his life were harsh, ridden with fetish and superstition, he would eventually be free, for he was determined and tough....

Twelve

ext morning I resumed my trudging through the winding mazes of James Town's slums. And this time, as each time I sauntered out, I saw something that had escaped my notice before. The streets, doorways, and the little com

at the window and looked out into the blackness... Jungle lay out there. Then I started, my skin prickling. A sound a tree bear, I was told afterwards—began a dreadful kind of then it ascended to a sort of haunting scream, followed by a sound kept on and on, sobbing, seemingly out of breath, as could not be drawn. Finally, a moan came at long intervals, physical suffering. And when I could no longer hear it, I still felt that it was sounding in my mind....

Forty-Two

man victim each year, and if it does not get it, there is trouble. About six weeks ago, it seems, there was an unusually heavy rain and the river rose to the level of the only the native workers had to come from their compounds each cause, if the bridge was swept away, the vast mill would have the loss of man hours would be stupendous.

Both Africans and Europeans gathered on the bank of the swollen river and anxiously watched the progress of the rising water. It was disclosed through gossip among the natives that the chief, a new one, had forgotten to sacrifice a sheep to the river that year, and that, they said, was why the river was behaving so angrily. Tano would claim a victim in revenge for its neglect; then, as the crowds stood watching,

the current uprooted a huge tree which fell athwart the stream and inched its way slowly toward the bridge....

The European engineers got busy at once; that tree had to be anchored or the bridge would be lost. After much desperate work, they succeeded in tying a rope about one end of the tree; but would the tree, so big and heavy, hold with just one rope? No! It was decided that another rope was needed, and it had to be tied onto the tree at its middle. The Europeans called for volunteers from among the Africans and none was forthcoming. The raging torrent frightened them. Finally an African from another tribe, to whom the god Tano meant nothing, said that he would try. The Europeans fitted him with a lifebelt; the man was an excellent swimmer; and, secured the man with an extra rope tied about his waist.

Cautiously, I was told, the man waded out toward the tree, then swam. He actually made it, tied the rope about the middle of the tree. The tree budged and the rope grew taut, like a violin string. His work done, the man reached up and caught hold of the taut rope; then a strange thing happened. Just as the man was ready to launch himself into the water, he let the weight of his body suspend from the rope; he was seen bobbing, then the taut rope shot the African into the river, like an arrow from a bow. . . . Frantically, the workmen began hauling on the rope that was tied to the man's body; they pulled it out of the river, but the man's body was not tied to it. He was lost. . . . The man's body was never recovered.

That was proof! A lamentation set up at the riverside. Tano had had its victim! You see, you can't ignore that river! These Europeans, they don't know what they're talking about, the Africans said. They think that they are so smart, but look at what they did....

I went out into the jungle to see how those huge trees,

weighing many tons, were cut down. The ground was sodthat a faint vapor came from my mouth as I breathed. Solid
walls of leaves and branches and creepers and plants whose
round me. It was so quiet that the voices of the workmen
that I saw my first soldier ant, that black, almost inch-long
human life on this earth, could devour man and animal. I
lines of them, busy tunneling, making bridges of themselves
their mysterious errands.

Trees, some of them forty feet in diameter, towered skynut, I was told the names of some of them: the African Wallidgbo, Opepe, Sapelewood, Iroko, Abrua, Omu, Colawood, Piptadenia, Akomu, Antiaris, Canarium, Celtis, Limba, Mimusops, Apa, Ekki, Ochrocarpus, Okan, Avodire, etc.

An eagle swooped through the skies; there came a sound like someone pounding an anvil with a hammer; it was a bird cry and it kept up for a moment, then stopped. There golden web, the strands of which are thick, wet, sticky, and glisten hrightly

That evening I had an interview with the leaders of the African Plywood Timber Employees' Union. The organization had a membership of about a thousand; it was two and one-half years old; the illiteracy rate was established at 75 the workers got free rent, medical care, etc.

I could detect no special problems about the workers' being able to relate themselves to industrial conditions. The

management informed me that they were punctual, diligent. There was but one terror: the manner in which the African drivers handled the trucks carrying logs weighing fifteen tons or more along the dirt highways. The accident rate was appalling. The logs were chained to the trucks and a sudden putting on of brakes would send the fifteen-ton logs plunging forward against the driver's cab, crushing the driver to death. Also there were hundreds of Africans, bedeviled by the problem of transportation, who would sneak rides atop the logs. I was shown a blotch of blood on the roadside where one such rider had been caught beneath a twenty-ton mahogany log. . . .

"But doesn't this awful accident rate make them want to be more careful?" I asked one of the more intelligent union leaders.

"With a Westerner, yes," he told me. "But the African believes that when an accident occurs to him, it's because of juju.... So he goes right on speeding, not caring, with death loaded behind him in the form of a tree weighing twenty tons...."

The union members were athirst for technical education; the hammering of this point by Nkrumah had sunk home in their minds. Yet, almost every question they asked me about education was couched in terms of somebody somewhere beyond the Gold Coast giving them something. Does this curious attitude of dependence stem from tribal life?

"Self-reliance is the only sure way to freedom," I told them over and over again. But I doubt if they grasped what I meant.

Politics was the one topic about which they were most vocal. In a colony, trade unions are not and cannot be simply economic organizations; they must, of necessity, if they are to hold their membership, enter politics in a vitally active way. The drive toward self-government was more urgent to

them than wage rates. Most of their meetings, I was told, were taken up with questions of nationalism and political strategy. Their standard of living could not be thought of as being separate from their colonial status, and nobody could ever fool them on that fundamental point.

Adhering, according to my instructions, to my itinerary, I had to leave Samreboi and head for Takoradi, that most industrialized of all Gold Coast cities. The opportunities for employment had caused this port to become clogged with migrants for whom living space had not been found. Indeed, migration was so great that there was some unemployment. The process of urbanization was reflected in the attitude of the people, their speech and walk.

Economic activity dominates life here: the building and repairing of locomotives, fishing, furniture making, house construction, leatherwork, and the fashioning of gold into ornaments, transportation, etc. Almost one-tenth of the population of forty-odd thousand work for the government or public services. Poverty is acute and stares at you from the overcrowded compounds. Detribalization has proceeded further here than at any other spot in the Gold Coast.

The inflation of prices that took place during the war has not been adjusted and the laboring masses find it almost impossible to make their scanty wages cover the bare cost of existence. Dr. Busia's Social Survey Sekondimarry in terms of their tribal customs; their wages simply enough to feed themselves and must take on extra work of the food that is eaten in this city comes from either the augments the prices of staples.

The impulse to organize for economic betterment has

palm wine, gin, food, a silk shroud for the corpse, etc. funeral celebrations included: whiskey, beer, mineral water, cost £85 14s. 10d., and £87 12s., respectively. Items for these while; hence, large funerals are a much desired end to one's comes to the city, hangs onto his feeling about death for a their former tribal identification. The African, even when he ally an attempt to fill the emotional void in their lives left by makers, chauffeurs, seamen, sugar sellers, cooks, stewards, membership is composed of fish sellers, carpenters, shoelife. Dr. Busia reports that two recent funerals in the city Takoradi). It seems that these organizational efforts are regold- and silversmiths. . . . (Busia's Social Survey Sekondithrown up a multitude of occupational organizations whose

women, and children. seemed a respectable quarter, I heard the yelling of men, that I could get the "feel" of the city. Riding through what Upon my arrival I ordered Kojo to drive me around so

"Where they act wild, Massa?" "Find the place where that noise is, Kojo," I said

a circle they went, chanting; but, at some signal, they would a grass skirt covered their buttocks. Around and around in shells, cutting deep into the flesh. In each right fist was a a veranda, resting on the bare red earth. Around this coffin black substance and their mouths were dabbed with red. and jabbering furiously. Their eyes were smeared with some about twenty men were running and sweating and panting of cement, I was witnessing the wildest funeral I'd yet seen. long, evil-looking knife. They were naked to the waist and Crisscrossing their forcheads were white strings of cowrie Though the streets were paved and the houses were made I got out and stood stockstill, unable to believe my eyes. ... There was an unpainted coffin in the background, near The car turned and drove into a crowded compound.

> sume their running in a circle.... from side to side with intense passion. Then they would retheir feet; they puffed their cheeks and swung their heads all halt, crowd about the coffin, pointing to it, stamping

the head of the coffin. the woman knelt and placed a small bottle of clear liquid at dead man to push aside the lid, rise, and live again. Then been driven home; it was as though they were expecting the coffin and pointed to each nail. Strangely, the nails had not A woman, presumably the dead man's wife, went to the

cused. A painted man came running to me. had gone off in back of me. I took out my camera and foingless grimaces with their faces. I jumped; several muskets others dancing, while the onlookers made wild and meanhorns, and brandishing sticks. Some people were prancing, "You take no picture!" he said, turning hurriedly away. To one side was a row of men beating drums, blowing

But another man yelled:

rushed forward, waving that awful knife.... to focus my camera, the first wild man who had objected nally they said that I could take two pictures. But, as I tried to me. I waited while they consulted among themselves. Fiwanted somebody to explain the meaning of the funeral rite I stopped. I explained that I was an American, that I "No; no. . . . Stay here! We want you take picture!"

"Take no picture! I kill you!" he screamed.

"You work for British!" the wild man yelled. The others caught him and held him. I stood, undecided.

"You lie! You work for British!" "I'm an American!" I yelled back.

would sympathize with me. "I'm an American!" I screamed, hoping that the crowd

knew that they would not have moved a finger if that crazy But the crowd looked on with detached curiosity and I

backing discreetly off. man had got ever so close to me with that knife. I started

from his pals. were trembling. The wild man was struggling to get free aged two more shots with the camera, but my sweaty hands knives would yank me straight into the other world. I mantive sacrificial victim. One flick of one of those monstrous poetic heads that I was some kind of a ghost, or a prospeca dead man's body might just as well get the idea into their I thought hard. People who carry on in this manner over "Naw; don't go—Stay and take pictures!" another man said

"He be drunk, Massa," Kojo warningly whispered to me. "Let's go," I said.

a tall, handsome woman. I turned and started toward the car, almost colliding with

"Take me," she said

"Take me," she said again, putting her hands on her hips.

well-meaning sort of fellow.... this wild and mean-tempered crowd that I was a sport, a I got out my camera; I'd take a shot of her just to show

hand. "Take me, me," she repeated. "No, no," the woman said, blocking my lens with her

thought that I would buy. I blinked. Then I understood. She was selling and she

"Nuts," I said, whirling and making for the car.

invitingly. the door and locked it. The "take me" woman was smiling ing in circles about the coffin. I got into the car, slammed The crowd guffawed. The painted men were still rush-

"Let's get away from here, Kojo," I said.

and tapped on the window glass. Cautiously, I lowered the window an inch. A fairly well-dressed man came to the door of the car

"You'd better go," he said.

"I'm going," I said. "But what in God's name are they

"They're trying to frighten away the dead man's spirit,"

told Kojo to drive nonstop to Accra. they sure scared the hell out of me. . . . Next day at noon I scaring away the dead man's spirit or not; all I know is that those painted men with their long knives were successful in back and closed my eyes and tried to relax. I don't know if "Thanks," I said, rolling the window up again, tight. The motor roared; the car pulled off and I felt better, I lay

Forty-Three

reality of Gold Coast life every waking hour. cast my accounts and found that I was near the end of my pounds. Since the 4th of June I'd been reacting to the

for the 2nd of September, which gave a few days' breathing Through a travel agency I booked passage for Liverpool

ing the gentleman who held the book I so urgently wanted. that the book was to be had; and, at once, I set about locattray's Ashanti, I received a neatly written reply informing me newspaper asking to buy an out-of-print book, R. S. Ratway back to the port of Takoradi. spell and allowed me time to visit the forts and castles on the In response to an advertisement I had inserted in a local

when I applied there, I was told that: His address was in care of an educational institution; but, "This gentleman comes here for his mail sometimes, but

we don't know him."

"We do that for many people, sir," a mild black man told "You receive his mail and don't know him?"

me. "You see, many people have no fixed place of abode."

"But I thought that that only applied to juvenile delin-

consequently, no home." "Oh, no, sir. Many respectable people have no work and

"How can I locate a man with no fixed place of abode?" "You can't, sir. You'll have to wait. He'll show up."

"But I need him urgently."

"Why do you need him urgently?"

"He has a rare book for sale. I want to buy that book."

"Oh, just a book, sir?" he asked, surprised.

"Well, I can't help you, sir," he said

with the rare book. I instructed him to meet me in a bar. asking me to telephone a certain number; I did. It was my man that I wanted to see him at once. A few days later I got a note the official and told him to tell the man possessing the book I left my address, which was a post-office box number, with

asked him: rather rough-looking fellow. . . . I bought the book, then was the rare book. I'd thought that maybe a thin, hungrylooking professor would have come; I hadn't expected this flat package wrapped in frayed newspaper under his arm. It He came wearing a dirty native cloth, holding an oblong,

"Haven't you got an address?"

"No, sar."

"Where do you sleep at night?"

"I got a big family, sar."

"Where does your family live?"

"All along the coast, sar."

"Your family, your clan, or your tribe?"

"My family, sar. I've many brothers---"

"Blood brothers?"

"Are these brothers sons of your mother?"

sar, blood brothers." "Not quite, sar, you see. . . . But men are brothers to me,

"What's your tribe?"

"Ashanti, sar."

"And your blood brothers are Ashanti men?"

"Yes, sar. We know and help each other, sar."

"But, why?"

"Because we are brothers, sar."

"But how did you get to be brothers?"

"We grew up together, sar."

and I could not.... that stretched for miles and miles. . . . I tried to visualize it consoled him when he was sad. . . . He had a large "family" him when he was hungry, let him sleep when he was tired, men to whom he felt a blood relationship, brothers who fed worried. He had brothers, not the sons of his mother, but not had time to talk with him. . . . And he hadn't seemed A man with no address? A nomad.... I regretted that I had under his dirty cloth, pull on his battered hat, and walk out. did not know I watched him stuff the money somewhere and feel of the world that other men of other generations men of the same generation were brothers. They knew a look The men with whom he had shared life were his brothers;

Forty-Four

for four hundred years did it in the name of religion! It was ironical that the men of Europe who plundered this continent ligious. Africans hold their lives as being sacred. And it is life in terms of magical religion. Africa, until now, was re-To think about Africa is to think about man's naïve at-L tempt to understand and manipulate the universe of

religion against religion. That is the only manner in which the insane thirst for gold and slaves could possibly have felt itself justified. The white masters of Africa were and are remarkably akin, emotionally and spiritually, to their black slaves.

The African conception of life is neither evil nor criminal; it is simply pitiably human. His conception of the state is symbolically derived from his love and reverence for the family. The state as well as the universe are symbolically conceived of in a way that is but a sweeping projection of his concept of and feeling for the family. To understand the Akan idea (and it's a pretentious, inordinately vain one!) of the state, one has to unite two distinctly different ideas: the family and the universe.

The African does not distinguish absolutely between good and evil. No matter how malignant he thought some of the "spirits" of the universe were, he never succumbed to feeling that the world as a whole was evil. Maybe he has more than paid for that mistake, a mistake that was squarely on the side of the angels.

It was only when adversity drove him to feel evil that he felt it, and the white men of Europe contributed more than their fair share to that psychological process by their wars and oppression. One would have thought that Christian Europe, discovering people serving God in an Old Testament style, would have been deeply mindful of the fact that only a nuance separated their religious beliefs from those of the African. Compassion could have served here better than scorn or bungling uplift. . . .

The state is owned by a female king, just as a child is regarded as being owned by its mother; the state is ruled by a male king, just as a family is headed and its affairs managed by a father. Hence, female kings are founders of states, the "mother" of everybody in the state; the female companion of the king is called queen mother, though she is not

actually the mother of the king at all; she is either his sister or some other worthy female.

The symbolic nature of these relationships have been rather well worked out in a book entitled *The Sacred State of the Akan*, by Eva L. R. Meyerowitz (London: Faber and What this book has to say, it does fill a void when one tries the queen mother the emblem of the spiral, the sign of birth considered as the daughter of the moon, for the moon is reking and the moon the queen... Now, I don't believe any of this, but I see nothing barbarous in it.

The moon (that is, the sense of woman) created the universe and in that universe are seven aerial bodies—the Moon, the Sun, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn. Consequently, any state or universe that wants to rule must mother and the basic origin of all things, families as well riod, her moodiness and irrationality—all of this tended to the Akan mind in projecting out upon her a contradictory and dubious mixture of honor, fear, worship, and loathing.

The moon, being the color of silver at times, made them feel that the mother must be symbolized by silver; and the sun, being yellow, made them think that the man was symbolized by gold. When a queen died in the old days, silver dust was stuffed into all the opening of her corpse: eyes, gold dust was packed into his eye-sockets, etc.

These primal symbols, derived from the reality of mother and father, female kings and male kings, created many of

the Akan details of life. The female kings introduced lamps, codes for women and girls, laws governing sexual offenses, etc., and the male kings and his advisors, in the name of their ancestors, elaborated laws and rules for the state, war, trade, etc.

The Akan people believed these poetic conceptions, the only conceptions available to them. Blood relations were replaced by mystical ones which were believed to be based upon "blood." In this manner came about the matrilineal conception of descent and inheritance. It was an intuitive grasp of life dictated by endemic wisdom, tracing relations between objects that really had no relations, but establishing such relations by similarity, proximity, succession, etc. I still do not believe a single word of all of this, yet I do not endorse the killing of a single flea if that flea happened to believe it. I cannot say that imperialism is right because it blasted the lives of people holding such notions. . . .

The king is the son of the sun, and is, thus, sacred. The king's greatest dangers are death and unclean women in their menses; hence, the king's food must always be cooked by men; if a menstruating woman touches a king, rites of purification and sacrifices must be made. The king wears sandals to keep his feet out of touch with the earth which contains the countless bodies of the dead.

Since he partakes of the divine, the king never really dies; his soul becomes a part of that in which it resided before it was born, that is, the sun; and that "blood" part of him becomes an ancestral spirit which can, with proper ritual, words, and sacrifices, be evoked to enter those things which were once the intimate possessions of the king. Indeed, these spirits are conceived of as being capable of eating and drinking. All of which explains libation pouring, etc.

The corpse of the king in the old days was allowed to decompose under ritualized conditions. It was placed in a

coffin which had holes in its bottom and then the coffin was set over a pit; when the body fluids had all dripped out, the remainder—the sodden bones—was taken from the coffin and scraped, dried, oiled, and the skeleton was strung skeletons bone by bone, with thread spun of gold. These Bantama where they were jealously guarded. A stranger intruding into such a place would be instantly slain...

All of this seems bizarre to me; I can't conceive of myself ever believing any of it; but, still, I don't agree that people who do believe in such ought to be declared biologically inferior!

It is thought that forty days after the death of a king, his soul reaches heaven or the African counterpart of such a place; and a great deal of joy is evinced at that period by the general populace.

The Akan, acting upon the division of the sexes, erected two corresponding attitudes to denote them: ntoro implies Ntoro is the semen of life, and abusua the female principle. the power of bestowing spiritual qualities of a male sort. the offspring, and, it is believed, it is only the woman, in magical qualities to the child. This is the erroneous conceptant the practice of exogamy to some degree in some clans of the Gold Coast.

The *ntoro* outlook actuated the impulse to create armies, to wage war, etc.; the *abusua* outlook prompted the religous role of woman. Both outlooks, hedged about with numberless taboos, account for the sexual segregation that cleaves African society in twain. Out of *ntoro* and *abusua* have come a multitude of gods and rituals and ceremonies, the dreaded

gold. It was religion.. such delight. It wasn't simple-mindedness that made them feel that the beads were something for which one exchanged cans regarded the worthless trinkets of the Europeans with state chairs if gold itself is not obtainable. This is why Afriordinary nuts; brass, resembling gold, is used to decorate colors or some shades of them. Kola nuts, being red (like and silver assumed powerful meanings. Throughout Akan blood or gold), occupy a higher place of esteem than just projected onto objects, natural or fabricated, having those society emotional values are attached to these colors and fiery sun and silver moon as an eternal background, gold ers allied to the hidden energies of the universe. With the tion that blood, menstrual and otherwise, possesses powlakes, lagoons, rivers, etc. From abusua springs the convicmeaning semen, comes a deep and mystical regard for water, apex of which is human sacrifice. For example, from ntoro,

The moods born of this apprehension of existence gave birth to a high order of simple poetry. Thus, the Earth Goddess Assaase Afua is addressed as follows on the Talking Drums:

Spirit of Earth, sorrow is yours, Spirit of Earth, woe is yours. Earth, with its dust, Earth, while I am yet alive, It is upon you that I put my trust, Earth, who receives my body.

A funeral song goes:

I am an orphan, and when I recall the death of my father, water falls from my eyes upon me.

When I recall the death of my mother, water from my eyes falls upon me.
We walk, we walk, O Mother Tano,
Until now we walk and it will soon be night.
It is because of the sorrow of death that we walk.

tion People's Party among the women of the Gold Coast. might well account for the great popularity of the Conventhe Ashanti was led by a black woman! And this same fact is not without its meaning that the last military effort of "free" but with far less real power than she had before. It can woman; as Christianity gained a foothold, she became The coming of the white man spelled the doom of the Afriand no new ones were devised to perform their functions. ognized and the women ignored. Institutions were smashed the religously patrilineal English power, the chiefs were recnew head of the clan or state. . . . With the establishment of chief or king, she, in consultation with advisors, selected the much of the men's actions. In the event of the death of the mystical position. The queen mothers had the right to veto tutions conferred upon the African woman a special and Before the coming of the white man, matrilineal insti-

Forty-Five

I visited Christianborg Castle which was built by the Swedes in 1657 and taken by the Danes in 1659. In 1679 it the Danes, and in 1682 was bought by the Portuguese from the Danes. This swift change of ownership reflected the desperate struggles that went on between European powers in the early days of the Gold Coast. The castle was captured by

Danes a year later. In 1850 it was bought by the British.... Gold Coast native tribes in 1693 and resold by them to the

plained that I wanted to look over the castle. Six of them armed Northern Territory guards came to attention. I expalm-treed landscape. As I entered the castle grounds, the at the edge of the Atlantic, it dominates the tropic, sandy, spoke at once: the Colony, Sir Charles Arden-Clarke. White, vast, standing It is at present the official residence of the Governor of

"Me, Massa."

spick-and-span steps and stood looking out over the rolling "dash" at the end of the tour. I mounted the broad, white, They were eager because they wanted that inevitable

Indies... Where did they anchor?" "The ships that took the slaves to America and the West

there, Massa." The guide pointed to the sandy seashore. "Right out

"And where were the slaves kept?"

"Follow me, Massa."

only light came through barred windows. and dank passageway, then into small dark rooms whose l was led down winding steps until I came into a narrow

"Are these the same windows that the slaves looked out of?"

"The same, Massa."

The walls were incredibly thick.

"Just how thick is that wall?"

"Fifteen feet, Massa."

fingers now touched. doors to keep the slaves imprisoned were the ones that my I was told that the same iron bolts which secured the

sageway?" "How did they take the slaves to the ships? Is there a pas-

"Yasa, Massa. Come."

had been led in chains to the waiting ships. He pointed out the route the slaves had taken when they

"It was that simple?" I asked.

The guard showed his white teeth in a sad grin.

"Yasa, Massa. Very simple. But it gone now," he told

"We hope, Massa." "And maybe you'll be free, really free soon?"

spell of awe and wonder.... I looked at the chapel—it was quiet, dim, ready to cast its

"Did you ever worship in there?" I asked the guard. "No, Massa."

"Are you Christian?"

"I'se Moslem," he said.

"And what about the Christian's God?"

"He all right, Massa," the guard said, laughing

refused to function. black prisoners of war to the castle to be sold.... My mind rie shells, leopard skin, golden bracelets, leading a string of spaired and the white men died of yellow fever and malaria. in that castle were forever lost. The slaves sickened and deat the grim stone walls. The dramas that once took place ··· I tried to picture in my mind a chief, decked out in cow-I "dashed" him a few shillings and left. Outside, I gazed

geons, and then marched to the great slave headquarters of ficials, the post office, etc. Slaves had been kept here in dunit nevertheless shows by its moldering gun emplacements what went on in those days. It is now occupied by state oftured it, lost it to the Dutch, and recaptured it from them in 1664. Less impressive than the castle at Christianborg, Fetus tribe, it was taken in 1660; in 1662 the English cap-1657, captured by the Danes in 1659. Stormed by the local to see Cape Coast Castle which was built by the Swedes in A few days later, with Kojo behind the wheel, I set out

the Gold Coast, the Elmina Castle, and thence shipped to the New World.

I reached Elmina just as the sun was setting and its long red rays lit the awe-inspiring battlements of the castle with a somber but resplendent majesty. It is by far the most impressive castle or fort on the Atlantic shore of the Gold Coast. Built originally by the Portuguese in 1482 with stones prepared in Portugal, it is approached by a drawbridge which, when lifted, foiled any attack from either natives or Europeans in the old days.

I crossed the vast courtyard and entered the auction room in which countless slaves had been sold. One had to know how to pick a good slave in those days, for slave traders were tricky men. They shaved all the hair off the Africans, oiled their bodies, making the ill look as good as the healthy. I stood in a tiny enclosure which had slits in the wall; it was here that African chiefs would hide themselves while their captives were being bid for by Europeans. The chiefs didn't want their victims to know who was selling them. . . . I saw the dungeons where the slaves had been kept—huge, bare rooms with stone floors.

No one will ever know the number or identity of the black men, women, and children who passed through these walls, but there is no doubt but that the men who dealt in this human flesh waxed rich. Even today the castle bears marks of crumbling luxury; there are marble sills at many of the doorways; there are lofty, spacious rooms which you know at a glance no slaves had ever entered. The mighty guns that still point toward the horizon and the misty landscape must have cost heaps of gold dust; and the mere upkeep of such an establishment must have necessitated a staggering turnover in human flesh each year....

Some of the walls are thirty feet thick. Towers rise two hundred feet in the air. What spacious dreams! What august

faith! How elegantly laid-out the castle is! What bold and plunging lines! What, yes, taste. . . . King Prempeh I was kept in a large bare room in one of the towers by the British. I stood gazing into that room and wondered what could have passed through his mind. . . . How he must have prayed to his ancestors for help!

dank steps that guided her to the tunnel that directed her arm was grabbed and she was led toward those narrow, unappeased—a tear that was hastily brushed off when her all is quiet, hanging there on that black cheek, unredeemed, at the sound of approaching footsteps, but reappears when feeble rays of the dungeon's light—a shy tear that vanishes from her children, a tear that gleams here still, caught in the it has a sheen that outshines gold-a tiny, pear-shaped tear there is any treasure hidden in these vast walls, I'm sure that feet to the waiting ship that would bear her across the heavthat formed on the cheek of some black woman torn away think that there is gold dust here, thousands of tons of it. If horrible tales of what went on within these walls, likes to tress. I don't think there is; but the native, remembering the sure trove buried somewhere in the depths of the castle foring mist-shrouded Atlantic... Rumor among the natives has it that there is a vast trea-

Dear Kwame Nkrumah:

My journey's done. My labors in your vineyard are over. The ship that bears me from Africa's receding shore holds a heart that fights against those soft, sentimental feelings for the sufferings of our people. The kind of thinking that must be done cannot be done by men whose hearts are swamped with emotion.

While roaming at random through the compounds, market places, villages, and cities of your country, I felt an odd kind of at-homeness, a solidarity that stemmed not from

ties of blood or race, or from my being of African descent, but from the quality of deep hope and suffering embedded in the lives of your people, from the hard facts of oppression that cut across time, space, and culture. I must confess that I, an American Negro, was filled with consternation at what Europe had done to this Africa....

Yet, as grim as the picture is, its grimness is somewhat relieved by the fact that African conditions are not wholly unique. The suffering that your people bear has been borne triumphantly before, and your fellow countrymen have shared that burdensome experience of having had their destinies dictated by alien powers, from above, an experience that has knit together so many of the world's millions in a common consciousness, a common cause.

Kwame, let me put it bluntly: Western lay and academic circles utter many a hard saying against Africa. In defending their subjugation of Africa, they contend that Africa has no culture, no history, no background, etc. I'm not impressed by these gentlemen, lay or academic. In matters of history they have been more often wrong than right, and even when they have been right, it has been more by accident than design, or they have been right only after facts have already been so clearly established that not even a fool could go wrong.

I found only one intangible but vitally important element in the heritage of tribal culture that militated against cohesiveness of action: African culture has not developed the personalities of the people to a degree that their egos are stout, hard, sharply defined; there is too much cloudiness in the African's mentality, a kind of sodden vagueness that makes for lack of confidence, an absence of focus that renders that mentality incapable of grasping the workaday world. And until confidence is established at the center of African personality, until there is an inner reorganization of that personality, there can be no question of marching from

the tribal order to the twentieth century... At the moment, this subjective task is more important than economics!

Manifestly, as in all such situations, the commencement of the injection of this confidence must come from without, but it *cannot* and *will* not come from the West. (Let's hope I'm wrong about that!)

Have no illusions regarding Western attitudes. Westerners, high and low, feel that their codes, ideals, and conceptions of humanity do not apply to black men. If until today Africa was static, it was because Europeans deliberately wanted to keep her that way. They do not even treat the question of Africa's redemption seriously; to them it is a source of amusement; and those few Europeans who do manage to psychological reasons than anything else. The greatest millyears has been the psychologically crippled white seeking his own perverse personal salvation. . . .

Against this background one refrain echoes again and again in my mind: You must be hard! While in Africa one question kept hammering at me: Do the Africans possess the necessary hardness for the task ahead?

If the path that you and your people had to tread were an old and tried one, one worn somewhat smooth by the past trampings of many people; had Europe, during the past centuries, dealt with Africans differently, had they laid the foundations of the West so securely that the Africans could happened, the question of "hardness" would not have preto say: "Ah, look, a black man advocates stern measures for Mirica! Didn't we tell you that they needed such as that?") But Kwame, the truth is that nothing could have been more brutally horrible than the "slow and sound" educational de-

velopment that turned into a kind of teasing torture, which Europe has imposed so profitably upon Africa since the fifteenth century...

The accomplishment of this change in the African attitude would be difficult under the best of circumstances; but to attain that goal in an Africa beset with a gummy tribalism presents a formidable problem: the psychological legacy of imperialism that lingers on represents the antithesis of the desired end; unlike the situations attending the eruptions of the masses in Russia, China, and India, you do not have the Western-educated Africans with you; in terms of mechanization, you must start from scratch; you have a populace ridden with a 90 per cent illiteracy; communication and transportation are poor. . . .

Balancing these drawbacks are some favorable features: West Africa, thanks to climate, is predominantly *black!* You can pour a libation to the nameless powers that there are no white settlers to be driven out, no knotty land problem to be solved by knocking together the heads of a landed black bourgeoisie. And, though the cultural traditions of the people have been shattered by European business and religous interests, they were so negatively shattered that the hunger to create a *Weltanschauung* is still there, virginal and unimpaired.

If, amidst such conditions, you elect, at this late date in world's history, to follow the paths of social and political evolution such as characterize the history of the institutions of the Western powers, your progress will go at a snail's pace and both of your flanks will be constantly exposed and threatened.

On the one hand, just as you organized against the British, so will other Nkrumahs organize against you. What Nkrumah has done, other Nkrumahs can do. You have made promises to the masses; in your heart of hearts I know that you wish hotly to keep those promises, for you are

sincere.... But suppose the Communists outbid you? Suppose a sullen mood sets in? Would not that give the Communists their opportunity?

much in the African heart. . . . After all, you have already so much in the past, values that go against the grain of so solely Western, values that have mocked and shamed them been down that road. make it difficult for them to adjust quickly to values that are convinced that the cultural conditioning of the Africans will know that they have pounced in the past. And, also, I'm hard-pressing social and political problems, just as you well they'll pounce at any time upon Africa to solve their own moment!—deal honestly with you. Given the opportunity, never—no matter what they may say to you at any given have solved their racial and economic problems, they can in order with their own restless populations, until they of the West. Kwame, until they have set their own houses the agitated doctrines and promises of the hard-faced men scent brought up in the West, recommend with good faith On the other hand, I cannot, as a man of African de-

Your safety, your security lie in plunging full speed ahead!

But, how? What methods? Means? What instrumentalities? Ay, there's the rub... The neurotically fluttering attempts of missionaries, the money lust of businessmen, the cool contempt of European soldiers and politicians, the bungling cynicism of statesmen splitting up families and cultures and indigenous national groupings at their pleasure—all of these have left the task of the redemption of Africa to you and yours, to us... And what a task! What a challenge! What an opportunity for creation...!

One simple conviction stands straight up in me: Our people must be made to walk, forced draft, into the twentieth century! The direction of their lives, the duties that they

must perform to overcome the stagnancy of tribalism, the sacrifices that must yet be made—all of this must be placed under firm social discipline!

I say to you publicly and frankly: The burden of suffering that must be borne, impose it upon *one* generation! Do not, with the false kindness of the missionaries and businessmen, drag out this agony for another five hundred years while your villages rot and your people's minds sink into the morass of a subjective darkness. . . . Be merciful by being stern! If I lived under your regime, I'd ask for this hardness, this coldness. . . .

Make no mistake, Kwame, they are going to come at you with words about democracy; you are going to be pinned to the wall and warned about decency; plump-faced men will mumble academic phrases about "sound" development; gentlemen of the cloth will speak unctuously of values and standards; in short, a barrage of concentrated arguments will be hurled at you to persuade you to temper the pace and drive of your movement. . . .

But you know as well as I that the logic of your actions is being determined by the conditions of the lives of your people. If, for one moment, you take your eyes off that fact, you'll soon be just another African in a cloth on the streets of Accra! You've got to find your *own* paths, your *own* values. . . . Above all, feel free to *improvise!* The political cat can be skinned in many fashions; the building of that bridge between tribal man and the twentieth century can be done in a score of ways. . . .

You might offer ideology as an instrument of organization; but, evidently, you have no basis for that in Africa at this time. You might, by borrowing money from the West, industrialize your people in a cash-and-carry system, but, in doing so, you will be but lifting them from tribal to industrial slavery, for tied to Western money is Western control, Western ideas. . . . Kwame, there is nothing on

earth more afraid than a million dollars; and, if a million dollars means fear, a billion dollars is the quintessence of panic....

Russia will not help you, unless you accept becoming an appendage of Moscow; and why should you change one set of white masters for another . . . ?

There is but one honorable course that assumes and answers the ideological, traditional, organizational, emotional, political, and productive needs of Africa at this time:

AFRICAN LIFE MUST BE MILITARIZED!

for service; not for aggression, but for production; not for despotism, but to free minds from mumbo-jumbo.

I'm not speaking of a military dictatorship. You know that. I need not even have to say that to you, but I say it for construe my words. I'm speaking simply of a militarization of the daily, social lives of the people; I'm speaking of giving form, organization, direction, meaning, and a sense of discipline that will unite the nation, sweep out the tribal reality. I'm not speaking of guns or secret police; I'm speaking of and making them face what men, all men everywhere, must because they feared disrupting their own profits and global a state, you must do.

Above all, Africans must be regimentalized for the "long pull," for what will happen in Africa will spread itself out over decades of time and a continent of space. . . You know as well as I that what has happened in the Gold Coast is just the beginning; and there will be much marching to and fro; there will be many sunderings and amalgamations

of people; there will be many shiftings and changes of aims, perspectives, and ideologies—there will be much confusion before the final redemption of Africa is accomplished.

self-preservation alone would jolt Europeans out of their their conceptions of what Africans can do; but, in saying of help and understanding. . . . Of course, when this is and material, is in favor of it. In its fight against Comner, even though all the common sense of history, moral to be done, and that it was willing to help you to do it.... forth and admit that it didn't do the job, that the job has such measures unnecessary? Only a West that could come not have to think of such measures! Yet, what could make infantile dreams about Africa.... time: Communist time! It would seem that the issue of this, they forget that they are not free to indulge in such say that they have timed African development according to pointed out to Westerners, they shrug their shoulders and munism, Europe could bind Africa to her by such an act Yet, I cannot conceive of the West acting in that manfantasies. Western time today is being timed by another Do I sound gratuitously hard, cruel? How I wished I did

And in exchange for aiding honest Africans to shake their people loose from their tribal moorings, the West could have all the raw materials it wanted, a larger market for its products... And an Africa deliberately shaken loose from its traditional past would, for a time, be a more dependent Africa than the angry, aimless Africa of the present day. Such an Africa could menace nobody.

Why do I bring up the question of "menace"? Because the mere thought of a free Africa frightens many Europeans. Europeans do not and cannot look upon Africa objectively. Back of their fear of African freedom lies an ocean of guilt! In their hearts they know that they have long tried to murder Africa.... And this powerful Europe, with atom

bombs in its hands, is haunted by visions of an eventual black revenge that has no basis in reality. It is this subjective factor, among others, that makes the West brutally determined to keep Africa on a short chain....

Will the West come forward and head up these nationalist revolutions in Africa? No; it's a dream. If it comes true, I'd be the first to hail it. But since we cannot wait for dreams, let us turn to reality.... That is, the militarization of African life.

The basis, concrete and traditional, for the militarization of African life is there already in the truncated tribal structure. The ideological justification for such measures is simple survival; the military is but another name for fraternalization, for cohesiveness. And a military structure of African society can be used eventually for defense. Most important of all, a military form of African society will atomize the fetish-ridden past, abolish the mystical and nonsensical family relations that freeze the African in his static degradation; it will render impossible the continued existence of naïve people; it is the one and only stroke that can project the African immediately into the twentieth century!

Over and above being a means of production, a militarized social structure can replace, for a time, the political; and it contains its own form of idealistic and emotional sustenance. A military form of life, of social relations, used as a deliberate bridge to span the tribal and the industrial ways of life, will free and the degrading conditions attached to such money from the West, and the degrading conditions attached to such money. A military form of life will enable you to use *people* instead of money knew that this military regime was for their freedom, for their safety, for the sake of their children escaping the domination of foreigners, they will make all the sacrifices called for.

Again I say: Would that Western understanding and generosity make these recommendations futile.... But if the choice is between traditional Western domination and this hard path, take the hard path!

Beware of a Volta Project built by foreign money. Build your own Volta, and build it out of the sheer lives and bodies of your people! With but limited outside aid, your people can rebuild your society with their bare hands. . . . Africa needs this hardness, but only from Africans.

You know as well as I know that politics alone is not enough for Africa. Keep the fires of passion burning in your movement; don't let Westerners turn you away from the only force that can, at this time, knit your people together. It's a secular religion that you must slowly create; it's that, or your edifice falls apart.

There will be those who will try to frighten you by telling you that the organization you are forging looks like Communism, Fascism, Nazism; but, Kwame, the form of organization that you need will be dictated by the needs, emotional and material, of your people. The content determines the form. Never again must the outside world decide what is good for you.

Regarding corruption: use fire and acid and cauterize the ranks of your party of all opportunists! *Now!* Corruption is the one single fact that strikes dismay in the hearts of the friends of African freedom....

In your hands lies the first, bid for African freedom and independence. Thus far you have followed an African path. I say: So be it! Whatever the West or East offers, take it, but don't let them take you. You have taken Marxism, that intellectual instrument that makes meaningful the class and commodity relations in the modern state; but the moment that that instrument ceases to shed meaning, drop it. Be on top of theory; don't let theory be on top of you. In short,

be free, be a living embodiment of what you want to give your people....

You and your people need no faraway "fatherland" in either England or Russia to guide and spur you on; let your own destiny claim your deepest loyalty. You have escaped one form of slavery; be chary of other slaveries no matter in what guise they present themselves, whether as glittering ideas, promises of security, or rich mortgages upon your future.

There will be no way to avoid a degree of suffering, of trial, of tribulation; suffering comes to all people, but you have within your power the means to make the suffering of your people meaningful, to redeem whatever stresses and strains may come. None but Africans can perform this for Africa. And, as you launch your bold programs, as you call on your people for sacrifices, you can be confident that there enough into life to know and understand what you must do, what you must impose....

You have demonstrated that tribes can be organized; you must now show that tribes can march socially! And remember that what you build will become a haven for other black leaders of the continent who, from time to time, long for rest from their tormentors. Gather quickly about you the leaders of Africa; you need them and they need you. Europe knows clearly that what you have achieved so far is not conhas radiated outward and as long as the influence of your teeming forests of West Africa, you can know that the ball of freedom that you threw still rolls...

With words as our weapons, there are some few of us who will stand on the ramparts to fend off the evildoers, the slanderers, the greedy, the self-righteous! You are not alone....

Your fight has been fought before. I am an American and my country too was once a colony of England . . . It was old Walt Whitman who felt what you and your brother fighters are now feeling when he said:

Suddenly, out of its stale and drowsy lair, the lair of slaves,
Like lightning it le'pt forth, half startled at itself,
Its feet upon the ashes and rags—its hands tight to the throats of kings.

O hope and faith!
O aching close of exiled patriots' lives!
O many a sicken'd heart!
Turn back unto this day, and make yourself afresh.
And you, paid to defile the People! you liars, mark!
Not for numberless agonies, murders, lusts,
For court thieving in its manifold mean forms, worming from his simplicity the poor man's wages,
For many a promise sworn by royal lips, and broken and laugh'd at in the breaking.
Then in their power, not for all these, did the blows strike revenge, or the heads of nobles fall;
The People scorn'd the ferocity of kings.

Time: The middle of the twentieth century.

Place: The hot and lush high rain forest of British West Africa.

Characters: Black students, black workers, black doctors, black judges, black knights of the British Empire, black merchants, black schoolteachers, black politicians, black mothers, black cooks, black intellectuals, detribalized and disinherited; and a white British colonial Governor, white merchants and businessmen, white British civil servants, white missionaries, white British army officers, and white CID men.

drama. But it's not quite that. Yet, in a sense, what I'm about to relate is a phase of the prime, central and historical drama of the twentieth century, the most common and exciting drama that we know. All of us are caught up in its stupendous and complicated unfolding; all of us play some kind of role, passive or active, in it; and yet most of us are totally unaware that we do so.

story would not have happened. and deeds of your fathers and your fathers' fathers, this historical attitudes and deeds, and the historical attitudes men acted. In fact, I'm sure that, had it not been for your would undoubtedly have acted more or less as these black to say that, had you been the personages in this drama, you the ardent hearts of Western man. Indeed, I'd go so far as emotional coloration reflect values that have long shone in attitudes mainly derived from your assumptions, decisions will be observing actions whose motives are akin to yours, whose resolutions partake of your will, and ideals whose unfold and roll toward its unexpected denouement, you external aspects of life alien to you. As you watch this story sense, your story—a tale of yourselves projected in a drama whose setting is fantastic and whose characters are draped in story involves you, you white men of Europe; it is, in an odd upon life differ drastically and markedly from yours, this curl of hair and whose accents of speech and whose outlook about life couched in a strange guise, though it's about men in the faraway depths of Africa's ferid jungles, though it is of it is that, though it deals in the main with black people a simple story. That is, the story is simple in outline, but Whose skin color and whose shape of nostrils and whose its scope and meaning and content are extremely intricate. What makes this story even more involved than the telling What I have to tell you shall be in the form of a story,

black lawyers, black businessmen, etc., who resided in an tionalist organization composed almost exclusively of the was then called the United Gold Coast Convention, a na-African jungle. All six of these men were members of what a separate, secret route, met at an agreed-upon spot in an black bourgeoisie, that is, black doctors, black merchants, men, each coming stealthily from his home and traveling by One swelteringly hot night, in 1948, a group of six black

> that it had yielded them, the "Gold Coast." christened, because of the fabulous booty in gold and slaves area of British West Africa which Europeans had fondly

Division of Scotland Yard) as Communistic or subversive. be characterized by the British CID (Criminal Investigation zation would be tolerated or at what point it would or could legally, though no one could really tell how long the organithe British permitted this organization to exist more or less ment. Under the justification that it was allowing the Gold Coast people to prepare themselves for eventual nationhood, The avowed aim of that organization was self-govern-

life of their country that most resembled Western mores the Western world considered those aspects of the tribal professors in British universities. These men knew that ter for their people than the cold, dry, abstract notions of most and they were convinced that their wisdom was bet-They wanted the right to choose what they felt they needed and pitch of their social, economic, and political progress. the thought of someone above them monitoring the pace outside what was "good" for them; they felt outraged at tics of divide and rule. They resented being told from the divisive Anglo-Saxon manners that facilitated British tacindividualism, of invidious class and social distinctions, of offensive to their hearts, that is, British values of extreme that it fostered values, attitudes, and standards alien and ship consisted entirely of black men, these six blacks felt of exclusive club. Though that organization's memberclass qualifications. In short, they felt that it was a kind too hedged about with property, educational, social, and tion was too snobbish, too British in tone and outlook, They were ex-tribal men and they felt that that organizaand passionate disagreement with that organization's aims. night, though members of the organization, were in deep The six men meeting clandestinely in that jungle that

as "good" and those aspects that differed from Western mores as "bad."

of freedom and democracy. the preachments and postulates of those British prophets sure, these six blacks had read attentively their John Stuart ated by racial, religious, and imperialistic motives. To be their kind who had been hand-picked by Britishers actuand they wanted that right for more than just a few of short, they wanted the right to control their total destiny, ancient names of their land, their towns, their rivers. In elite. These six black men were, therefore, as much opclass loyalties-and not just the black, British-educated rule should involve the whole population-every man, viction that the struggle to free their country from alien their racial, cultural, and blood kin. They were of the conhearts that made them detached from, and suspicious of, Mill, their John Locke; but there was something in their ing over their ancestral homeland, the right to restore the woman, and child in it regardless of religious, family, or British whites. They wanted freedom, their own flag flyposed to the rich British blacks as they were to the rich favor upon the naked, ignorant tribal masses that comprised learned—and did not wish to learn—to look down in dis-Though these men wore Western clothes, they had not

So the gathering together that night of these six men in secret constituted an act of treason not only toward the British, but toward a decisive section of their own people, the best qualified and wisest of their own leaders. What did the six men want? They were striving for a total transformation and redemption of the situation in which they found themselves. They were politicians, these men, but their policies, because of the situation in which they found themselves and because of their peculiar outlook upon life, bordered upon the intensity of the religious.

No record was kept of that meeting that night in that jungle, but, since I've talked to all of the men involved and feel I know them, I think I can paraphrase what they said. Will you allow me to state their case, using my memory and imagination to put words in their mouths?

Black man number one: "I want no freedom based upon the assumptions of the British. Such a freedom simply means exchanging a set of white masters for a set of black masters. If I'm against British rule, then I'm against the rule of her stooges."

Black man number two: "All day and all night they talk to us about 'sound and solid development, sound and solid education.' All right. The British, in 104 years, provided an abortive sort of education for less than 10 per cent of our people; that is, and badly taught knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Now, if that British educational timetable were followed by one thousand years to make our society partially literate. I say own philosophy, based upon our own needs.

"Who says that we black men must duplicate and ape the development of the white man? Aren't we in the position of studying the white man's mistakes, taking advantage of them, and making even faster progress than he made? To imitate the white man means that we are still slaves in our out our own road for ourselves, making our own mistakes and being responsible for them."

Black man number three: "Since more than 90 per cent of our people are illiterate, it cannot be said that Britain

has any loyal masses in the Gold Coast. Why, then, is she here? She wants the bauxite, the gold, the timber, the manganese, the diamonds. I say, let's so organize our people and so pool these raw materials that we can bargain them for what we need most from the outer world. Why in hell should white men come in here and take our raw materials at prices that they set, and then sell us imported European goods at prices that they determine?"

step toward a secular life, toward a new outlook." pit them in struggle against the British, and, in organizing our tribes to do that job, we launch them toward taking the first want. So let us do two things at once: Organize the tribes and gin to weaken, will be destroyed! And that is exactly what we their ancient traditions, those traditions must of necessity bement we start organizing our people to defend and protect a call for unity. So we must say to our people: 'Let's heave out who have been educated in the West, know well that the mothe British and save our culture and traditions.' But we, we ditions imply. But we have no other basis upon which to make such mumbo jumbo, and all the childish rituals that such tratraditions. Now, gentlemen, I realize that we do not believe in dom and of their being proud of their ancestor-worshiping ganize our people on the basis of a struggle for national freeis, in the long run, of little or no interest to us. I say let us orcally no industrial proletariat and, hence, Marxist ideology their people for revolution? Obviously not. We have practitheirs? Or as the Russian Communists organized and trained our people? As the European Socialist organizers organized Black man number four: "How are we going to organize

Black man number five: "I agree. We are outsiders in our own land. So let us stand outside of the tribal life, in which we do not believe, and organize it. That means that, in order

to go forward, we must go backward a step or two. We must all, from this night forward, doff our Western clothes and wear the clothes of our tribes. We must do this in order to go further than that; we must cut off the masses. But we must to the past so that our people will never go back, can never use the most modern methods in organizing. We are going to latch our tribal people directly onto the techniques of the twentieth century. We're going to change our people!"

tition from outsiders, from potential rivals, such as Communists. During the last fifty years there has not come from compact one volume dealing with the manner and techniques of organizing tribal men. So let us make our main slogan: peal to our people. One other thing. We must have an iron discipline. He who breaks the unity of for that is already in our tribal life. It is not only a political share and share alike in all things. So tight must our unity be of Britain cannot break a political unity based upon tribal brotherhood and cemented in blood loyalty."

That must have been how much of the discussion went. These men were desperately angry and serious. The hot emotions that bubbled in their hearts bordered upon violence, made them tense and anxious. Their impulses were turgid and blind. Yet, despite their fury, their manner was they were ardently seeking a home for their hearts.

But there were no fetish priests present. The traditional big black pot with a roaring fire beneath it, the kind of pot which white Westerners like to imagine that missionaries are parboiled in, was absent from that jungle meeting. These black men did not even believe in spirits; indeed, they didn't even lend credence to what is popularly called the "Other World." The truth is that these six desperate black men were all educated products of Western universities; upon all of them had been conferred degrees in law, literature, and political science from the universities of France, England, and America. Why, then, were they angry? Why were they meeting secretly in the dead of the night in a jungle where the only sounds were the muted cries of wild beasts?

These men were meeting to plot what they felt to be the freedom of their country, their nation. What? What "nation"? What "country"? When were there ever nations in Black Africa? History dimly tells us that maybe there existed some few Sudanic black kingdoms some hundreds of years ago, but surely no black nations in the modern sense of that term existed in Africa in historically recent times. Then what did these six black men mean by the "freedom of their country," their "nation"?

You can see that, from the outset, this simple story takes on historical, cultural, and psychological complexities and obscurities. From where did these six black men ever get the notion of building something that had never existed before in Africa? Were they irrational? Were they dreaming? Or were they merely wishing? It was infinitely more recondite than that. But, even so, did not their sanguine desire for nationhood clash mockingly with the impersonal, indifferent jungle density that lay all about them? Was not there something ironically incongruous in their yearning to belong to a modern nation when their black brothers and sisters, millions upon millions of them, lay sleeping a sleep that was

to these six black revolutionaries! fort? Don Quixote was a sane and balanced man compared had failed to change or modify during long centuries of efmissionaries and white social scientists of the Western world of challenging the deep-rooted traditions which even white known. What audacity did these six black men have to think serve to make their turbulent state of mind sympathetically haps; but surely not in terms of any concreteness that would how these men really feel. The psychoanalysts? Vaguely, persociologists? If so, I've yet to read an account from them of tariat to lead the revolution. Who understood them? The mantly decreed that there had to exist an industrial prolethe Communists, for the Communists had long ago ada-Catholic missionaries. And who were their allies? Surely not British, not the Western businessmen, not the Protestant or thousands of years! Who were their friends? Surely not the of pitting themselves against the mental crystallizations of lonely and glutted with bitter pride, to dare even to think them from day to day? How foolhardy were these six men, that earth which they tilled—that earth that sustained more powerful than the earth upon which they walkedwhich made their invisible fathers, long dead, more real and rious curtain?—a sleep of ancestor-worshiping religion sounder than that sleep of which dreams form the myste-

But, stop and think a moment. Their dreaming and plotting for the "freedom of their country" flew into the face of even sterner realities than the religion of their people. These men lived in the Gold Coast, an area about the size civil service behind which, protecting it, was the ever-present soldiers, police, etc. And, beyond this show of force, lurked a moment's notice, change the government or suspend the

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constitution. The stealthy British CID was omnipresent, smelling out the least vestiges of subversion.

How in the name of common sense, then, could these six black men, unarmed and penniless, even think of establishing a nation of their own in the teeth of British opposition and the stagnant traditions of their own people? What an absurdity! Were they not like unto children? One laughed at men like that. Or one pitied them. They would never succeed. Their situation was more than hopeless. Hadn't they better come to terms with their people, quell their hot passions, obey the wisdom of the British and live peaceful, useful, good, sound lives? Why attempt the impossible? Oughtn't they progress slowly, soundly, according to the way in which the Western world had progressed? Oughtn't they to think of taking decades to build a nation, yea, centuries even?

the white missionaries, the white military, the white mercethat hunger from the white men who had ruled them, from sonalities. They were hungering for something that had strange and compounded, that lay deep in their own perwait. They were being prompted and spurred by elements, they had long ago firmly decided that they could no longer Their outlook upon the world and their feel of life had been heart, they were really more akin to Europe than to Africa. cans at all. They were black and they lived in Africa; but, at were not really, in a strict sense of the word, traditional Afribearing their strange fruit. Hence, these men, though black, swept out of the orbit of influence of their tribal life and into call the three M's of imperialism. These six men had been nary—the three white groups which the Asians and Africans not come into reality and they had gotten the impulse of toned by Western values. At long last the colonizing efforts of your forefathers were the sphere, no matter how loosely, of the Western world Yes, these men knew all of these cogent arguments, but

If we are prepared to understand how Westernized these six black men were—and their Westernization would have to differ profoundly from yours, for they had become Westernized under corrosive conditions of partial servitude—then we are ready to understand something else about them that is even more surprising.

These men were caught in a psychological trap; they were living in a situation in which they did not really belong. They had been plucked by the hand of the white man out of their tribal societies, educated in Western institutions, and then thrown back into the jungle to sink or swim. They knew the West from the outside; and now they saw and felt their own yet clearly defined point of view.

I iving the defined point of view.

Living the daily life of the tribe and with their heads filled with Western values, these men saw the Gold Coast open your minds and imagination. Though the guns of the British navy and the tanks of the British army were pitted of their people loomed as an almost insuperable barrier to of vision afforded by their unique position, saw something made the task that they had in mind much easier and simpler than you would suppose.

True, they knew that they could not face the invincible might of the British army, navy, and air force and win. That was out of the question. And they knew well that the antrenched. But these men, as I have said, were Westernized. They had analyzed the relation of Britain to their analyzed the relation of Britain to their anstrong and where she was weak, how British minds worked

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and what British values were. They knew how to distinguish between what the British said and what they really meant; standing *outside* of Britain, they knew the sharp difference between British professions of idealism and British behavior. They had long grown used to hearing the British say one thing and do the opposite. They knew, at bottom, that the British respected only strength, would react, in the main, only to a *fait accompli*. They were no fools, these black men; they were hard, tough; and they were willing to sacrifice their very lives to test the validity of the reality that they had discovered through Western instrumentalities of thought.

in the social structure, and only a few Africans even, seemed aware of it. kind of void, emotional and psychological in nature, existed mercantile, and military interests of the West. In sum, a day to day, had been dealt a mortal blow by the religious, intact as a functioning frame of emotional reference from revolutionary. And the traditional tribal structure, though that constituted an ironic British gift to the black national anything-masses that were free to be organized-masses individuals who owed no deep allegiances to anybody or ignorant of it. Hence, there existed large masses of tribal had wrought this atomization of family life, seemed happily disorganization of family tribal life, and the British, who to Western influence, there had set in a deep and chronic 90 per cent illiterate. In the urban parts of the colony, due As we know, the population of the colony was more than

But, ah, you may say, you are overlooking something of vital importance. Britain is strong in Africa because of the work, sacrificial and dedicated, of her many missionaries. Christianity has friends among the masses of Africans.

Well, maybe yes and maybe no. Let's take a quick and close look and see how Christian values resided in the tribal heart. The first thing to be noticed is that the very essence

of the African drive for nationalism stemmed from the influence of Christianity itself! Had the missionary not gone meddling in Africa, the mores of the millions of blacks would have remained intact. What the missionary failed to rican heart. That void that he had torn out of the Afall of its terrible intensity only by the African who endured toward setting his emotional house in order.

Before the coming of the missionary, the African's tribal life had been wholly religious; the introduction of Christianity had reduced the volume, if I may be permitted to put it contact with Christianity had freed him for action. But what kind of action? That was the question. So these black Christian friends of Britain were filled with ambivalence; they felt by her, and now they hated her as much as they loved her.

Coast people didn't feel anything for or against Britain; they terms of unrealities. The truth is that the masses of the Gold Population was loyal or disloyal to Britain was to talk in existent, in their minds. Even to say that 90 per cent of the Britain was an image, dim and misty, or completely nonon Mars as far as the native Gold Coaster was concerned. from the British. Psychologically, Britain existed somewhere more than 90 per cent of the native population lived remote native population. Thus, upon the most casual inspection, ified blacks participated, also quarantined itself from the brothers. The white British civil service, in which a few qualrated with the British also lived aloof from their own black of social equality. And the few educated blacks who collabothe natives, refusing to live or mingle with them on a basis mercenaries, because of racial antipathies, kept apart from The white missionaries, the white military, and the white

lived, labored, procreated, and died. This stagnant state of affairs was called *Pax Britannica*, and it had been most carefully, deliberately, and profitably arranged.

contradiction in Britain's attitude toward them? They were. of Britain's role. Were these black men, then, aware of any had enabled them to arrive at this negative interpretation One African explained his bafflement about the British by to them that Britain should do this, and a British education ful thing was that they were calm about it; it seemed natural and cynical fact with any degree of hate or bitterness; the awcolony. These six black men did not contemplate this bald there to get what she could of the natural resources of the and pagan, insurgent and conservative, was that Britain was of the black life in the Gold Coast, Left and Right, Christian why Britain was there. The absolute consensus of attitude what those six black revolutionaries thought and felt about my answer will make many of you bristle. And I'll tell you and remote? I'll answer that question, though I know that relationship to the bulk of the population was so tenuous Why was Britain, then, in the Gold Coast at all, since her

"They send us to universities and urge us to study, but the moment they grant us a degree, they become afraid of us."

Another young African expressed himself as follows:

"They continuously stress that we become qualified, but when we become qualified, they tell us that they like the uneducated native better, that the naked tribal man is noble and unspoiled."

But why had Britain bothered to educate a few Africans in the Gold Coast at all? Should not these blacks have felt grateful for that British effort? Strangely, they felt no such thing. They had intuitively grasped that there was something odd about the desire of the British missionary to remold their minds into the patterns of white men's minds.

The missionaries had explained that their preoccupation with the native was prompted by "love," and the African, living a deeply communal existence, had never been able to fathom that aloof, nervous, and condescending "love." They sensed that it was a self-centered concentration of the white man upon himself rather than upon them that caused him chological selfishness and guilt in the white man. Now, you but I'm only informing you what the blacks felt about it, and your view and the blacks are certainly entitled to theirs.

not have been done. But life is more complicated than even need have such confidence, or your empire building could do you think you are masters of reality, of men? You must were weapons, techniques. Ah, you British Prime Ministers, system of ideas as creeds in which one had to believe; ideas Britain had liberated them. These men did not regard any that these men were free in their hearts? By enslaving them, tool to be used and then cast aside. Need I remind you again they could drop it. Marxist ideology was a tool to them, a useful, the time when it no longer applied to their problems, moment they felt that that Marxist thought was no longer analyze reality, to make it meaningful, manageable. (But the outside of it, so to speak; they used it as an instrumentality to They handled Marxist thought self-consciously, standing important to remember that they were not really Marxists. possible. These six black then knew their Marxism, but it is that task was difficult and improbable, it was not at all imof Britain to the Gold Coast quickly revealed that, though niless men to execute. Yet, a further analysis of the relation terials from the colony A tall order, that, for six black pento take was to deny to Britain the right to take the raw ma-The first step, therefore, that these six black men resolved

a British Prime Minister thinks! You set out to civilize men and you produced personality types never hinted at even in your nightmares.) The Achilles' heel of Britain in the Gold Coast was, according to the analysis of these black nationalists, economic, and, if they could only somehow bruise that economic heel, half of their battle would be won.

Oh, do you suspect the cunning hand of Moscow here? If you do, you only confirm that your conditioning and reactions are traditional, popular, and natural. When the British—to anticipate my story a bit—heard of what these six black men proposed to do, they sent in their CID spies to rout out all the Red cells that could be found. For long months the CID searched, questioned, censored the mails, imposed curfews, and probed, but not a single Red cell did it discover.

ministrators would then be faced with a mass of four and were loyal to the white British administrators, and those advious: Knock out the few educated bourgeois blacks who had control of the native masses. So the strategy was obwhether they liked them or not, who had organized and thus to depend upon those tough-minded revolutionary blacks, so simple as to be startling. The British would be compelled influence and favor, what would happen? The answer was men were discredited, were driven from their positions of that. Suppose, then, that those few score black bourgeois functioning loyalty of these few score. It was as delicate as the relation of Britain to the Gold Coast depended upon the blacks in the colony was some few score. In the last analysis, but few of them. And the actual number of loyal, educated the mines and timber mills to the seaports, and there were relation of the British to the native revealed fatal weak spots. that she wanted? Well, again, a most casual analysis of the The only good roads that existed in the colony ran from life of the Gold Coast and deny to Britain the raw materials But how could these six black men paralyze the economic

a half million tribal blacks many of whom could not even speak English and whose loyalty was more to their dead fathers than to the power of Britain. The British would then be faced with a choice: They would either have to deal with the new spokesmen of these four and a half million tribal-minded men, or shoot their spokesmen and then rule the black masses by sheer naked force.

But can bombs produce cocoa? Can machine guns cut timber? Can bayonets dig the gold out of the mines? Can was the crux of what those six black men had to decide that night in the jungle, and they decided that Britain badly, guessed right. For, when the chips were down, the British upon poor Jesus Christ hanging there upon the Cross and the black revolutionary leaders and began to add, divide, subtract, and multiply.

Now I come to an odd part of my story. Those six sweating black men in that jungle, discussing and planning and plotting the freedom of a nation that did not exist, resolved to bind themselves together; they agreed to call themselves: The Secret their ancestors to avoid women, alcohol, and all pleasure until over their land. They swore fetish to stick together.

What? Ferish? Ah, you will say: "These black men were not as Western as you claimed." Yes, they swore fetish. Well, why not? They were scared of the British. They were scared of their own people—their brothers and sisters who would

^{*} In Black Power (Harper & Brothers, New York: 1954), in which the author rendered an account of the nationalistic revolution in the Gold Coast, all mention or description of this highly interesting and indigenous African political cell was mature would confuse it with Russian Communism and call for the suppression of the African's first modern hid for franchom p w

and single world that they really wanted. were manipulating aspects of both worlds to create the one So, while standing outside of both worlds, so to speak, they REALLY AND DEEPLY BELIEVE IN EITHER OF THOSE WORLDS. THE THE HOME OF THEIR HEARTS, HAD NOT YET COME INTO BEING. WORLD THAT THEY REALLY WANTED, THE WORLD THAT WOULD BE thought African. They lived in two worlds. BUT THEY DIDN'T when they had to deal with their own emotions, they felt and ternal and objective aspects, they thought and felt Western; of Africa. When they desired to see reality in terms of its ex-Thus their world was compounded half of Europe and half life and they reacted to ancestor-worshiping values each day. ized. They were. But they lived amidst tribal conditions of plicated still. I have contended that these men were Westernin my story, a zone that will make the reality here more comnot to betray one another. We now come to a twilight zone Westernized, these men swore a blood oath to stick together, them would either be killed or imprisoned. Hence, though ber informed the British of what they were planning? All of they were scared of one another. Suppose one of their numnot understand what they were trying to do. And, above all,

he issues the order to drop the atom bomb on Hiroshima. United States gets on his knees and prays to God just before mission to seize the Suez Canal, or when the President of the white men cross themselves just before they send a bombing one another; it is no more astonishing than when Western about our six black men swearing a blood oath to be loyal to into what he is to be. So there is really nothing so astonishing an nor African. The truth is that he has yet to make himself African, when educated in the West, is really neither Europecan goes only skin deep. All of this is much too simple. The African, he talks like a European but feels like an African still. White racists contend that a Western education with an Afri-Now I know that you've heard that, when you educate an

> of life shape our attitudes and give us our values. Easterners and Westerners, have our blind spots. Conditions our lack of imagination. We all, both black and white, both his devil. What makes other men seem outlandish to us is and partly irrational: that is, all men are somewhat infantile. The other man's God is our devil, and our God is usually Both the African and the white Westerner are partly rational

port it; try to grasp this strange transition of politics turning into a passion whose intensity partook of the religious. in a jungle where no working-class ideology existed to supwith Puritanism; marvel at the sprouting of socialist thought with their tribal religions; contemplate polygamy blending dernity; study these Western blacks dealing self-consciously you. Watch this curious intertwining of tradition with moues, runs like a red thread through the whole story I'm to tell This incongruity, this mixing of tribal and Western val-

story, if you don't mind, from the black man's point of view. give birth to such movements toward freedom. I'm telling this trast to that approach, I emphasize the primal impulses that mankind are gradually beginning to resemble them. In conat all times, and everywhere, tell you how the lower orders of who feel that only their assumptions are valid for all people, principles of democracy, etc. In short, you'll hear Westerners, of this sort, you'll hear descriptions of constitutions, of the nationalism was forged. In most discussions of movements of emotion, idealism, and self-vindication out of which this for I'm reasonably sure that you sense or feel the substratum My story of Gold Coast nationalism can now run swiftly,

the educated black elite. Resolved now upon a course of most strongly to the snobbish and reactionary leanings of Convention to act as secretary, and it was he who objected he had been sent for by the heads of the United Gold Coast named Nkrumah. Educated both in Britain and America, One of the men who comprised The Secret Circle was

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would have killed him. Do you recall the story of the Dying God? Gods must serve men, or they are killed. say yes or no. These masses needed someone upon whom There came moments when, had he refused to act, they they could project their hopes, and Nkrumah was chosen. for leadership were captured by his followers. He could not material involved. We can say that Nkrumah and his talent to be The Leader stems from the very nature of the human ity" was not invented in Moscow. The longing for someone tion throws up such phenomena. The "cult of the personaldictatorship governments. The concrete nature of the situainto the tendencies toward, and origins ot, authoritarian or to what I'm explaining and perhaps you'll get some insight was lifted to the position of almost a deity. Listen carefully but, by his colleagues fastening their hopes upon him, he for this role by his superb organizing and speaking abilities; followers declared him leader. Naturally, he was qualified himself as leader and impose himself upon them? No. His of The Secret Circle. How did that happen? Did he declare tion, Nkrumah launched a drive to broaden the basis of the United Gold Coast Convention. Nkrumah became the leader bold action to organize the energies of the entire popula-

Nkrumah's labor to strengthen the popular basis of the United Gold Coast Convention coincided with the spontaneous efforts of a subchief (of a tiny state called Ga) to lower the price of imported goods. Early in 1948 a colonywide boycott was launched against foreign merchants. Now, let me explain that the boycott against foreign merchants and the efforts of Nkrumah were not allied. They were independent ventures, but both were heading in the same direction. This is not going to be the last time that I shall call your attention to spontaneous factors leaping up from the life of the Gold Coast natives and coinciding with the leadership of Nkrumah. More than anything else, these sponta-

neous features of support proved to *The Secret Circle* that they were headed in the right direction, that their analysis of Gold Coast reality was correct. One had only to give a determined push against the structure of political and economic rule of the British and that rule went toppling.

hundred and thirty-seven were injured. the colony. Twenty-nine people were killed and about two ing the following days, violence gripped the southern half of the foreign firms. Arson and street fighting ensued and, durthis killing spread, and an infuriated populace began to loot ans of British campaigns in India and Burma. The news of refused. The police opened fire and killed three black veter-The police ordered the demonstrators to disperse and they nor's castle in Christianborg to present their grievances. of February 28, 1948, a delegation of ex-servicemen, chanting slogans and waving banners, marched on the Goverretail prices, they found the old prices intact. A mounting against the firms selling European goods. In the afternoon anger swept the colony. Spontaneous demonstrations flared imported goods and naively expected to find a reduction in of the Government and the heads of European business when the populace went shopping in the stores that sold prices of imported goods. But, during the days that followed, European business firms were on their knees. The members firms met and pledged an immediate reduction in the retail The boycott was effective and, within one month, the

From this it seems that the analysis of the reality of the Gold Coast made by *The Secret Circle* was sound. They had not discussed democracy; they had not talked of trial by jury; they had not debated the merits of free speech. They had assumed that they and their people were being cheated, that the whole of their lives had been caught in an economic trap which allowed the British to buy from them at low prices and sell to them at high prices! And the moment the

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finger of The Secret Circle touched that sore spot, an explosion resulted.

prit! They, the British, were doing good, saving the heathen, and violence of that magnitude. Therefore, find the Red culmeddling with their civilizing mission! uplifting fallen humanity, etc. So find the devils who were bility of their intentions could not set off reactions of hate sponsored by the men in Moscow, of course. Surely the no-And what did the British think of all this? It was all a plot

were not loyal, so they imported troops from Nigeria. alarmed, and feared that the local black soldiers and police ish were oblivious of its reality and power. Yet they were invisible, had come to exist in the Gold Coast and the Britthe British. Another government, as yet unrecognized and with one another and their followers. The tribal brothertheir black guards and established instant communication hood forged by The Secret Circle was proving too much for the black leaders immediately called upon the loyalty of derstood the mentality of the people they were governing; would meet and plot. But the British had never really unwhere they were incarcerated separately for fear that they tion and banishing them to the barren Northern Territories an interim government. The Governor countered this move by arresting the leaders of the United Gold Coast Conventhe underlying causes of the disorders; they also demanded lonial Secretary to create a commission of inquiry to study vention sent cables to London petitioning the British Cowas imposed. The leaders of the United Gold Coast Con-The Governor declared a state of emergency. A curfew

and to recommend constructive measures. The commission to investigate the causes of the sudden flare-up in violence ish Colonial Secretary in London appointed a commission leadership, the core of which was The Secret Circle, the Brit-As a result of the appeals made by the new revolutionary

> Coast reality that had been made by The Secret Circle. Thus, the commission confirmed the diagnosis of Gold government patterned on those obtaining in the dominions. aspirations of the people, and endorsed a ministerial type of tution outmoded, urged a new constitution embodying the the commission issued a report that declared the old constileased so that they could give evidence. In June of that year testimony in April of 1948; the arrested leaders were rewas named after its chairman, Aiken Watson, and it took

aims and feelings of the masses. But Nkrumah hesitated. He and set up a rival organization that would embody the real ing urged him to leave the United Gold Coast Convention did not wish to split the unity of the people. them again in a new manner. Nkrumah's immediate followpletely ignored. The pattern of British class snobbery that The Secret Circle so loathed was about to be saddled upon younger nationalist elements of the population were comcomposed entirely of upper-class chiefs and lawyers, and the sey, apprehension set in. The constitutional committee was manship of a famous black jurist, the now Sir Henley Cousconstitutional committee of forty Africans under the chair-But, when the Governor, in December 1948, appointed a

and (3) collective ministerial responsibility. fully elected legislature with a fully representative cabinet; to raise three demands: (1) universal adult suffrage; (2) a youths, and sent a team of young men touring the country representatives. Nkrumah hastily organized a committee of launched a vehement protest against the exclusion of their women traders of the streets, and the nationalist elements the twentieth of January 1949, trade unionists, students, the When the constitutional committee began its work on

Gold Coast Convention. And Nkrumah had been pushed by beyond the aims of the black bourgeois leaders of the United The fat was in the fire. Naturally these demands were

plumbing, and public opinion shape the deeds of men. unknown to us where wages, parties, newspapers, printing, in these non-Western societies proceeds in a manner quite enacted-rests upon it or will be influenced by it. Politics for all else in this story—and its aftermath has yet to be sions of his people. This is an important point to remember, really a kind of captive, a prisoner of the hopes and pastake it or forfeit his leadership; though the leader, he was his followers to take this extreme step. He had had either to

Nkrumah, urged by his supporters, resigned from the United disdain for the masses. The differences could not be bridged. a democratic constitution. The rich blacks reaffirmed their been launched in September 1948, he vehemently demanded tures. In his newspaper, The Accra Evening News, which had people, countered by going even further into radical deparhis agitating, and Nkrumah, deciding to cast his lot with his only good and valid ones. They enjoined Nkrumah to stop they felt that even the sun agreed that their ideas were the blacks were the psychological prisoners of their assumptions; absurd! But they failed to take action against Nkrumah in in a fatherly manner, he would change. These rich and sedate time, for they were convinced that, if they only talked to him boys of the streets of the disorganized harbor towns? How the mighty British? A tramp like Nkrumah and his wild-eyed would dare gainsay the august wisdom of the savants of land great as proof of what Mill and Locke had said? Who John Stuart Mill and John Locke said so? And was not Engknew, how dependable and responsible you were. Hadn't you had, for money and property indicated how much you ought to be conditioned by how much money or property politics and government. The right to vote, they argued, rumah, doing? The naked ignorant masses had no part in with fury, as was to be expected. What was this man, Nk-The rich black doctors, lawyers, and politicians reacted

> political stroke that fitted the mood of the country. tion of staging "Positive Action" based on non-violence-a gust 1949, the Convention People's Party and stated his inten-Gold Coast Convention and launched and announced, in Au-

by pounding his tom-toms with wild frenzy. greeted the dawn of the twentieth century in his community and danced and sang in the streets. The Gold Coast African regarded as chattels, came out of their compound kitchens intention of giving up their many wives.) Women, hitherto the number of their wives to only one! (Yet these men had no and saluted and endorsed a social order that would reduce the name of socialism! Men with six wives came forward upon the earth as they recited libations to the departed in under their brilliant umbrellas, dribbled palm wine and gin slain to appease the spirits of the dead ancestors! The chiefs, pamphlets, and mass meetings where oxen were sacrificially in terms of fleets of trucks with loudspeakers, brass bands, struggle for national freedom and socialism were couched country. And yet the methods of urging the population to worn with a new pride now in every village and street of the Coast, togas draped about the body in Roman style, was with bewilderment. The ancient national dress of the Gold them! No wonder the British and the rich blacks were dizzy ing organized toward goals that would eventually nullify were emphasized at the very moment when they were beout illiteracy. A mixture, eh? It was. The tribal traditions co-operatives, and a campaign of mass education to wipe eration of women from traditional fetters, the building of ing, health measures to reduce infantile mortality, the libsocialistic aims: Housing, technical education, road buildthe same time, Nkrumah announced the following modern people's continuity of being in its traditional form. But, at hood, sacrifice, and a rebirth of the ancient sense of the It was a gesture that called for tribal unity, brother-

did happens tics of children. What else could have happened but what at this disorder, this irrationality, this foolishness, these an-British in sheer horror and fear. But let us take a closer look and no wonder the rich black nationalists sided with the dren? No wonder the British recoiled with consternation, Disorder? Irrationality? Foolishness? The antics of chil-

what Nkrumah had decided to do. tions, is not important. We're acting." And that is exactly "Whether we are ready or not, in accordance with your nothe inhabitants of the Gold Coast is: "You are not ready for self-government!" And the Gold Coaster can reply: and had made no effort to establish any such foundations all honesty, has to be admitted. But, in 104 years of British for democracy. Hence, the easiest criticism to hurl today at Portugal had held sway over the people of the Gold Coast fifteenth century, France, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, and rule, and during a stretch of historic time dating back to the one God, only one Jesus, and only one Holy Ghost. That, in of literate property owners who believed that there was only if one defined democracy only and merely as a voting choir dations for classical democracy in the Gold Coast; that is, In terms of Western assumptions, there existed no foun-

ment was more than merely a scheme to grab selfishly at the whom they were pointed. Nkrumah's drive for self-governvery foundations of the personalities of the people toward the name of public order, were weapons that intimidated the and that the guns of the British, though they were there in more impoverished, emotionally and materially, each day, had trapped them in a manner that rendered them more and dered the lives of his people meaningless, that the merchants his people had been smashed, that the missionaries had renproceeding upon the assumption that the subjective lives of Nkrumah was-and all the basic facts were with him-

> tutors to intimidate them with guns while monitoring their ging behind in the race for progress, they needed no outside encouraged his people to believe that, though they were lagand held abjectly as economic hostages for centuries. He customs and outlook did not justify their being conquered fered drastically from those of the Western white man, their though their outlook upon life and their tribal customs difin them. More, Nkrumah gave sanction to his people that, an implication that British rule had long sought to implant present condition of life was, to the rest of the human race they were not intrinsically inferior, no matter what their reins of political power. It was a mandate to his people that

sciousness to manipulate that world in the interests of his own deepest humanity. in which it existed; and, at the same time, incite that conthat consciousness onto the brute, stark, workaday world emotional consciousness of his tribal brothers and fasten ing to empty out the rich increment of the overburdened and techniques of the twentieth century. He was attemptinspiring them to believe that they could master the ideas from their Eden-like allegiances to their dead fathers and merely to drive out the British. He was calling his people must hint at it. Nkrumah's task was much, much more than question is to step beyond the confines of this story. But we What was, then, Nkrumah's task? Merely to ask that

Nkrumah and his aides that their people were back of them, the streets. This act, more than anything else, convinced of hours, the sum was raised voluntarily by the people of supported by penniless tribal people. But, within a matter suits, charging him with contempt of court. He was fined £300, a truly staggering blow for a newly created movement entered the fight against Nkrumah by filing a series of libel On September 15, 1949, certain British officials actively

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and they intensified their drive for self-government.

obedience and non-co-operation if the British refused these elected. The mass meeting advocated countrywide civil discomposed of fully elected members instead of, as the reage limit being set at twenty-five; it demanded a legislature port recommended, some being nominated and some being ing included in the cabinet; it protested against the suffrage ex-officio members representing British vested interests beattended that meeting. The vast crowd objected to the three what extent they were acceptable, More than 80,000 people announced and Nkrumah called a monster mass meeting in Accra to study the constitutional proposals and decide to In October of 1949, the Coussey Committee's report was

twenty-four hours later, Nkrumah announced that "Positive Government indicated a ruse to stall for time; accordingly, Action" would begin. take. Nkrumah felt that such an attitude on the part of the ence until the Government had time to study what course to alist leaders to postpone their campaign for civil disobediconstitutional change. The Government asked the nation-Péople's Party to a conference to discuss their proposals for 1950, the Government invited the leaders of the Convention During the first days of January of the following year,

civil disobedience held away in the Gold Coast. When it bethe Governor again ordered the arrest of Nkrumah and the came evident that such action could continue indefinitely, emergency powers of the Governor, "Positive Action" and martial law, warnings, curfews, and the full evocation of the one days, despite threats of dismissal of workers from jobs, and medical services, were allowed to function. For twentyportation trucks stood still; only water, electricity, health, paralyzed the Gold Coast: not a train ran; buses and trans-On the morning of January 8, 1950, a colony-wide strike

> viction of all the leaders and their being sentenced to prison tion. The trial lasted two months and ended with the conleaders of the Convention People's Party on charges of sedi-

for terms varying from three months to four years.

to make those sacrifices? They were. BUT THEY HAD TO PROVE IT WITH SACRIFICES! Were they willing signed to guard the prisoners! These men were Already free! toilet paper were smuggled out to the public by the men asfrom the leaders' prison cells political orders scribbled on Put up candidates in all of the country's constituencies. And brothers. Hence, the Convention People's Party was able to second, they were bound by tribal loyalties to help their own they hotly wanted to see their land free of alien domination; prisoners' messengers! They could not refuse to serve; first, assigned by the Governor to guard the prisoners became the rumah had established in his organization. The black jailers sible? It was easy in the kind of tribal brotherhood that Nktheir campaigns from their prison cells! How was that posannounced, the imprisoned leaders organized and conducted they had candidates running. When general elections were party swept the polls, gaining decisive majorities wherever three largest cities of the Gold Coast: Accra, Kumasi, and Cape Coast. Though in prison, the leaders of the condemned During 1950, elections for town councils were held in the

eventually be sung by the newly freed nation. himself, while in his cell, wrote the party's song that would the-right-palm-fronting-outward was invented. Nkrumah ceived and the salute of the elbow-resting-on-the-hip-and-It was in prison that the greeting of "Freedom" was con-

new government men who were in prison cells and the British had a new headache on their hands. The people of the Gold Coast had elected as heads of the the nation, winning thirty-five out of the thirty-eight seats. On February 8, 1951, the Convention People's Party swept

A few days later Nkrumah and his aides were told to dress in civilian clothes, an order that aroused their suspicions, for they thought that the British did not want the populace to see their newly elected leaders being transferred to another prison. But, no. It was freedom, an act of "grace," as the British quaintly called it for public consumption. But, privately, when speaking to the nationalist leaders themselves, the Governor admitted: "You chaps out-organized us." That was all. There was no mention of virtue; no talk of metaphysics; he didn't charge the African leaders with having progressed too fast. In short, his attitude said: "Well, you proved you were men. All right, you have the government." It was as simple as that.

Though Nkrumah had branded the constitution as being "bogus and fraudulent," he decided that his party would take a leading role in the new government for the following reasons: "We are going into the Government to show the world that the African can rule himself. We want the chance to fight for the political, social, and economic improvement of the country from both within and without the government."

This is a happy note upon which to end this story, but if I terminated my remarks here, I'd not be true to you or to the efforts of the Gold Coast Africans. Soon after he had taken over the government, Nkrumah had trouble. Some sections of the once-powerful tribes of the Ashanti and a few elements among the backward natives of the Northern Territories, incited by disgruntled political leaders, threatened secession. Self-government and freedom were proving to be a hard and lonely road, a cold and anguishing life. They suddenly longed for the father-image of the white man, for their warm and ancient days. They rebelled, rioted, shouted slogans against the new government, and called for a federal constitution that would enable them to follow their ancient folkways. Nk-rumah stood firm against these new onslaughts from his own

people and insisted that they march ahead. After much agitation, elections were held, in 1956, on the issue of whether there should be a strong central government or a loose federation of small local states, each with its own autonomous folkways. The idea of a strong central government, oriented towards an industrial future, won, as it should have.

In March 1957, the Gold Coast, under the leadership of Nkrumah, assumed independent status with full responsibility for its present and future, and its name was changed to Ghana.

Let us pause here and glance back over this story. In one sense, it is a glorious tale of men succeeding against almost impossible odds. But in another sense it is a stupid and tragic story, What was the fight in the Gold Coast that one is almost ashamed to mention it. One set of men, black in color, had to organize and pledge their lives and men, white in color, that they were human beings! What a of human dignity comes about when men must consecrate human beings. Suppose all of that energy had been put to gains there could have been!

But the black men involved had no choice. To maintain their position of psychological luxury stemming from the cheap and vulgar superiority of race domination, the white British had branded the black Gold Coasters as inferior, and before they could do anything else. This useless struggle of ism, is the blight that the Western white man has cast upon the colored masses of Asia and Africa.

niques of science and develop a spirit of objectivity? attitudes and learn to doubt the evidence of his senses as Africa? Can the African overcome his ancestor-worshiping Descartes taught the Europeans to do, and master the techmaster for centuries? Can the African get Africanism out of the European to enter his land so easily and remain there as drive out of himself that religious weakness that enabled pean has been driven from power there, but can the African But the struggle in the Gold Coast is not over. The Euro-

the white man's concept of what is "good" for him. does not need is bossing, white masters, racial snobbery, and dustrial disciplines and scientific facts of the world. What he the world; he needs the learning of the world; he needs the innow knows what he needs most to do. He needs to trade with I can say one thing with certainty: The Gold Coast African

For the simple reason that it had never been done before. declared impossible, unsound; but it was immoral. Why? so many disparities which Nkrumah forged into so masterful a whole? None. What Nkrumah did had not only been merely imaginatively, to envisage the confounding unity of spokesmen of the Western world would have dared, even accomplished that miracle. What politicians or academic giving African solutions to African problems, could have and effectively? The answer is a categoric no. Only Africans, British, could they have won their independence so quickly the people of the Gold Coast had accepted the advice of the Let us pause here and ask some pertinent questions. If

happens in the Gold Coast, the Africans there are stoutly deterof human relations. It is for this reason that, no matter what wrong; and especially is this the attitude they hold in the sphere mined to decide for themselves what is good or bad for them. ings, that which has never happened before must somehow be have their mysticism, their superstition? According to their feel-Do you know that even scientists and academic people, too,

> stupid industrial growth of the Western world? the people of the Gold Coast repeat the slow, costly, and Present tribal structure and all. Well, why not? Why should launch itself directly into the twentieth century, with its it for atomic piles! In short, the Gold Coast is planning to do they plan to do with the aluminum? They want to swap of which there is enough to last two hundred years. What electric power to manufacture aluminum out of bauxite, of the world's largest inland lakes. The idea is to use the droelectric project by damming up rivers and creating one The new government plans to construct a gigantic hy-

have been added to our stock of human knowledge. something, and a few new facts about man's life on earth will Even if failure attends the enterprise, one will have learned honestly and intelligently conducted, one cannot really lose. right to plunge ahead and experiment. If such experiments are "right" or "wrong" in such matters. I say that Nkrumah is wrong. I say that, as yet, the world does not know what is wrong. Why? Well, it has just never happened before, so it's Of course, the academic people have declared that that is

been deluged with questions from Western whites: Whenever and wherever I've explained this problem, I've

will accept you if you can work with them in the spirit of work with them? Will the Africans accept us?" Yes, you can work with and help the Africans, and they "How can we help the Africans? Can we go to Africa and

civil servants rather than civil masters.

living there in poetic dreams beckon seductively to the white dangerous psychological trap. The millions of naked blacks fervently long to go to Africa, I say, beware. Africa is a most people what they have done to Africa. To those of you who in the heart of the Western world, explaining to his own erner can give Africa is by becoming a missionary right But, in my opinion, the greatest aid that any white West-

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misfits, the white failures, the white psychological cripples of the Western world. If you can't adjust to the exacting conditions of life in New York, or London, or Paris, or Berlin, then go to Africa and play God to simple-minded men. Only a mentally stunted and botched white man would want to obtain that kind of cheap salvation. Every white man desiring to go to Africa ought to be subjected to a most rigorous psychoanalytic examination to determine whether he is really emotionally fit to do so. Until today, the most tenacious enemies of Africa have been emotionally deformed white men hanging like millstones about Africa's neck.

while to find himself and rebuild his shattered existence. name of a superior god or race. And that assurance would upon a ridiculous delusion, attempt to conquer lands in the it would mean that the white man would not again, acting the West even more than it would help Africa. For one thing, leave the newly freed African in psychological peace for a thing to ask, and, even if the West could give it, it would help thing that the white West can give Africa. It's too human a to be frank-men being what they are-is about the last white West of what it did. And that terribly human gesture, can use, Africans need a simple acknowledgment from the they need, more than loans and gifts, which they need and techniques, which they need, more than Point Fours, which who caused that catastrophe do not know it. More than now, in part, what has happened to them, but the white men part of others of what has happened to them. They know What Africans need, above all, is an understanding on the

Can this happen? Is the West free enough of its own fears to let these people know that they will not be resubjugated? That is the question.

The Secret Circle that launched this revolution looked at their people through Western eyes, or they could not have pitted their puny strength against the might of Britain and

rightfully impatient; they wished to move ahead fast and create that world that would make them feel at home; they wanted to know that the earth upon which they lived and can understand these nationalist Africans if racial jealousy can be purged from their sensibilities.

If my words have any weight with you, I say, when you selves in another guise. But need that fact upset you? Need it alien guise, one must have a clean heart, or else one's life in an to project out upon that alien life one's own dirt, one's own Too long has Africa been made into a psychological garbage they did not like. A free Africa will not only mean a chance centuries, but it will be a sign, too, that at long last the white others in order to feel normal. In sum, a free Africa presupposes a free mankind.

But, let me repeat one word of warning: The white man the most vulgar, and the least worthy road that the African would mean that the African has learned his lesson too bitterly and too well. To steer clear of the foul road of racism upon him can take him down that road, and, if he goes, and the white man helped to sow in this world, will grow and bear its blighted fruit.

We have it within our will and power to see that that does not happen.

Would it not be better to have continents of Asians and Africans wedded to practical goals than have them arming and mobilizing to make the world accept them as men? We make the world in which we live. So far we've made it a racist world. But surely such a world is not worthy of man as we dream of him and want him to be.