

# GHANA: THE FAILURE OF A PETTY-BOURGEOIS EXPERIMENT

By

*Kwame Akon NINSIN\**

## INTRODUCTION

In the early hours of December 31, 1981 Ghana's People's National Party (PNP) Government led by Dr. Hilla LIMANN was toppled in a coup d'état initiated by 'rebel' forces operating from outside the military itself. The regime had been in power for barely two and half years (i.e. since September 24, 1979). In its place a Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) led by Flt.Lt. J.J. RAWLINGS was set up. Developments following this latest overthrow of a constitutionally installed civilian government appear to suggest the end to attempts since 1966 to rebuild and consolidate the petty-bourgeois social order. Yet there is the likelihood that this event will be explained away as if it were the result merely of economic difficulties (1). While this sort of explanation is relevant it nonetheless has the weakness of ignoring the primary role which political (class) forces play in effecting such changes. That is, it fails to elucidate the interconnections between the production process, class relations and the political process, and thereby is unable to expose the implications for the major class forces and for political trends of disturbances in the process of production and exchange. By this weakness, the effects of economic disturbances on the political struggle, and vice-versa are lost. Similarly, the centrality of the state in the political struggles is not appreciated and critically analysed. Accordingly the historical affinity between the event of December 31 and its predecessors cannot be grasped and exposed, thereby presenting December 31 as if it were a historical aberration. In what follows, I will attempt to show that (1) the coup of December 31, 1981 was possible because by then the pettybourgeois state had been weakened by its own internal contradictions; and (2) these contradictions had been sharpened the more since 1966 through the persistent mediation of the petty-bourgeois state which is an affirmation of its historic role of facilitating the domination of the national economy by imperialism.

The ousted PNP government assumed the reigns of office from the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) on September 24, 1979. At the time many world leaders congratulated the new leaders quite warmly. In fact, history seemed to be repeating itself within about one decade. In this the differences were slight indeed. In September 1979 a democratically elected civilian government has assumed office under a constitution that contained all the ingredients of liberal democracy. And in 1969 a party which derived its primary social support from the same class as did the PNP had also accepted power through the same electoral process and under an equally classical liberal democratic constitution. On that occasion

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\* *Lecturer, Department of Political Science, University of Ghana, Legon. The original draft of this paper was first presented at a Departmental Seminar on June 10, 1982.*

also the out-going government was a military junta – the National Liberation Council (NLC). But there were quite important differences between the two epochs as well. (i) In 1979 the Constitution combined «democratic elitism» with welfarism; but the 1969 Constitution could best be epitomized in the phrase 'Platonic elitism' (2). (ii) The 1979 government inherited power after a traumatic three month-rule of the quasi-leftist AFRC. Its predecessor of 1969 on the other hand received its mantle of power after a three year conservative rule by the NLC.

These differences were however significant, and bore the seeds of future developments in themselves; for between 1969 and 1979 there had been a clear shift in the balance of class forces in the country in favour of the masses and progressive forces. It was this shift which had been reflected in the 1979 Constitution in the form of a commitment to avoid the exploitation of the working people, and promote policies which would enhance the attainment and enjoyment of basic social and economic rights. (Ghana; 1979: Chapter 4). These progressive provisions of the 1979 Constitution contrasted sharply with those of 1969 which considerably strengthened the forces of order against those of change. The import of this point needs further elaboration.

## THE COMPRADORS RETURN

In February of 1966 the collectivist government of the Convention People's Party (CPP) was overthrown in a coup d'état which amounted to a rejection of the policy of building state capitalism and its consequent constriction of the private sector during the preceding fifteen years. (NINSIN, 1979) (3). In its place a massive programme of destatization of the economy, in the context of a so-called consolidation and stabilization plan, was initiated. During this period «public sector claims on resources were cut down» and «the centre of gravity (in the economy was shifted to the private sector (OFORI-ATTA, 1977)). Accordingly, several state enterprises of the early 1960's were either wholly or partially sold to the private sector, both Ghanaian and expatriate. Government expenditures were reduced by about one-third from their pre-1966 level; and development expenditure, which was particularly affected, dropped from C 859 million in 1966 to C 55 million in 1967 (1969 prices) – a decline of two-thirds (ibid:).

The immediate effects of these policies on wage and salary earners were the massive retrenchment, and rising cost of living that followed. For, as part of the usual IMF-World Bank prescription for deflating the economies of the developing countries, the public sector demand for labour was so drastically cut that by 1967 about 60,000 unemployed people had been returned to the labour market. Also the Ghanaian currency was devalued on July 8, 1967. And to crown it all, the new government decontrolled the prices of consumer items in the vain hope that the legendary discipline of the free market system would regulate prices for the mutual benefit of the producer, distributor and consumer. But the cumulative effect of these measures on workers was not beneficial: their purchasing power was considerably devalued.

In all this the thrust of the government economic policies was much less the promotion of an independent self-regulating and healthy national economy than strengthening the peripheral position of the economy in the international division of labour in which imperialism dominated. In other words the policy of destatization of the economy (internally) was also aimed at reversing that of state capitalism which had the potential of progressively reducing the country's dependence on imperialism and ushering in Socialism (4). As conceded by the Chairman of the NLC's Economic Committee, E.N. OMABOE who was also the Commissioner for Economic Affairs (5), the government's policy of substantially increasing the scope of import and exchange liberalisation meant, among others, putting a number of items on Open General Licence, and allowing foreign companies operating in the country to repatriate their profits and dividends without restraint. This, the Commissioner explained, was necessary to «re-establish our reputation among international capital markets» so as to attract foreign investments. In brief, the policy of promoting private enterprise at home (6) would proceed under the aegis of foreign capitalist interest.

This sudden reversal of public economic policy can be explained only in terms of the material interest of the fraction of the Ghanaian petty-bourgeois class that had taken control over the state apparatus. As I have stressed above the CPP government's policy of building state capitalism had checked the growth of the Ghanaian private capitalist class and threatened to reduce them to an appendage of the state capitalist class. The regime had done this by foreclosing all compradorial contacts with foreign private investors and further strengthening the control of the state in those sectors of the economy (e.g., commerce, construction, the timber industry) which are the traditional domain of the national petty-bourgeoisie (NINSIN, *op. cit.*). Thus by 1965 for instance, the share of the private sector in manufacturing enterprises had dwindled from 81.0 % in 1962 to 72.5 %. The remaining 26.5 % was shared by the state (17.2 %), joint-state-private (10.0 %) and the cooperative (0.3 %) sectors. At the same time though foreign private capital still dominated the economy generally with its fixed capital assets valued at 50.2 % in 1966, its share of manufacturing enterprises had shrank from 63.2 % in 1962 to 56.4 % in 1965. But for the Ghanaian petty-bourgeoisie the share of its commercial fraction in manufacturing had stagnated, and also its fixed capital assets dwindled to just 7.9 % by 1966 (7). It was therefore evident that the compradorial revenue which traditionally accrues to the petty-bourgeoisie was gradually drying up. It had been redirected for the benefit of the state capitalist class as the reports of the commissions of enquiry appointed after the 1966 coup amply document (8). That coup was an attempt to reverse this trend. But in all this it was just the form of the state that changed. The content remained the same: petty-bourgeois; and the economy, neo-colonialist. As such the post-1966 state of Ghana was simply continuing its historic role of guarding imperialist interest in classic style: that is, mediation with imperialism. The compradors had returned under protection by the military.

By 1969 the effect of these liberal economic policies were unmistakably clear: they had proved to be excessively inflationary and had accordingly intensified the crisis of the neo-colony. Contrary to official expectations, production had stagnated, and as such the private sector had not expanded to pick up retrenched labour from the public sector (AGAMA, 1966:5) L.O. Vol.3). Consequently, the unemployment problem not only persisted. It also got worse and the prospect for a political backlash became quite ominous.

These problems of economic stagnation, inflation and unemployment were compounded by recurring deficits in the country's external accounts. The gloom in official circles was revealed in a publication of the Ministry of Information, entitled «Ghana's Economic and Aid Requirements in 1967». In that document, it was revealed that the government's import programme for the ensuing fiscal year would yield an external deficit of N ¢ 95 or £ 48 (million) (1967 prices). This created the usual capitalist dilemma of how to stimulate economic growth without fueling inflation. In a periphery capitalist system where, above all, capital is very scarce this dilemma becomes almost insuperable without a massive infusion of foreign capital. The nature of the dilemma was that any further deflationary policies would be politically explosive as they would compound the already bad unemployment situation. Nor would any increase in public expenditure be compatible with the monetarist deflationary posture of the regime. The persistence of a massive external deficit was probably the major constraint. It was to escape this dilemma that the currency was devalued in July 1967. In fact, devaluation was regarded as the ultimate instrument for reactivating production and boosting export even though it has usually been ineffectual in this regard. The heart of the matter is however that in its blind adherence to its compradorial role, the petty-bourgeois class had mortgaged even its autonomy to take decisions beneficial to its long-term interest as a class: it had become captive of the capitalist ideology and puppets of the agents of capitalist interests, especially the IMF and the World Bank which in accordance with the norm had promised the regime stand-by credit in exchange for those politically suicidal policies.

This stagflation crisis of the economy was bound to exert a decisive impact on the internal class struggle, and vice-versa. In the first instance the cumulative effect of the government's liberalisation package on the bulk of the commercial stratum of the petty-bourgeoisie was not salutary. Members of this group found themselves unable to take advantage of the investment opportunities created through the government's destatization policy because they lacked the capital and other factors of production necessary for successful entrepreneurial activity of the magnitude which the state had undertaken during the past decade. In other words they were incapable of transforming themselves into an industrial class — the captains of industry. And even though they flocked in to take advantage of the government's trade liberalization policy by becoming petty importers, the devaluation of July 1967 and high custom's charges

sharply escalated the cedi value of most imports, and thereby threatened to annihilate a substantial number of them as members of the petty-bourgeois. Consequently they became increasingly vocal in their demand for a larger share of the commercial sector (JONAH, 1980:60). Such demands clearly contradicted the official policy of promoting the interest of foreign capital in the country. Yet it was such a mild anti-big capital, non-antagonistic contradiction that the government felt confident to resolve peacefully. The Ghanaian Enterprises Decree, 1968 (NLCD 323) was the government's response to those demands.

Workers were more active in their struggle against the government's anti-labour policies. For despite the increases in the minimum wage announced in July 1967 to mitigate the effect of the devaluation, and now salary awards effected under the Mills ODOI proposals, of 1968, the devaluation and continued inflation had wiped out these gains such that by the close of 1968 the real minimum wage for the Accra worker was 38.1 % less than its 1960 level (EWUSI, 1977 p. 35). It was under this sustained pressure of pauperisation that workers stepped up their agitation against the government. Accordingly between 1966 and 1969 there were not less than 100 recorded strikes. Some of these were quite violent. Such workers agitation so alarmed the government that in January of 1967 the second in command within the ruling junta had warned workers against further agitations in a specially organised radio and television broadcast.

The confidence and stability of the regime were visibly strained; and it attempted to cope with the situation through increased political repression of its opponents. For example, a special military court was established under the Armed Forces Act, 1962 (Amendment) Decree, 1967 (NLCD 131). Under it certain categories of subversion offences committed by non-military personnel were to be tried in these courts. And earlier on (in October 1966) the regime had found it imperative to protect itself by passing two decrees against rumour peddling (NLD Decrees 92 and 93). The repressive nature of those two laws had compelled the Legon Observer to describe them as «preventive detention without the Preventive Detention Act of 1958» (LO Vol. 1 (8) October 1966: 3). But perhaps the most eloquent testimony to the regime's sense of insecurity was the rise in defence spending – from 9.3 % (of current expenditure) in 1965 to 15.4 % by 1969. For, the regime had to be strengthened to deal more effectively with the enemies of order and stability at a time of rising opposition to its policies. This, rather than the claim by OFORI-ATTA (*op. cit.*: 28) that it merely reflected the recent change in the structure of power, is the true meaning of those increases in military expenditure.

On the whole, the petty-bourgeois state (now under the control of its military wing) was much stronger, and the masses still politically backward. Thus when the ban on party political activities was lifted early in 1969 the masses could not found their own political organization. Nor could any progressive popular organization emerge to express the discontent of the working people, except the People's Popular Party (PPP) which claimed the mantle of Nkrumahism. But even in this exceptional case of the PPP the fact that the successor civilian regime could legalise it without any protest from the masses in general and Nkrumahists in particular also

affirms the general political weakness of these groups. Therefore the successful organization of the 1969 parliamentary elections and the triumph of the Progress Party in it must be seen as the triumph for the petty-bourgeoisie generally. Even so the failure of the petty-bourgeois state to deal effectively with the growing crisis of the neo-colony once more underscored its inherent weakness. This would intensify the class struggle and finally bring the regime down after barely two years in office.

## THE NEO-COLONY AT BAY

When the PP government assumed office in the latter part of 1969, the economic crisis had not subsided. Severe balance of payment difficulties, industrial stagnation, rising unemployment, acute shortage of essential consumer goods and rising prices were some of the key features of the economy. This level of deterioration in the economy had had a visible effect on the material conditions of both the petty-bourgeoisie and the masses. The euphoria of the time was therefore typical of the illusions of the class that it had finally got the opportunity to build a solid basis for social progress. But it still remained captive of the capitalist ideology and could merely delude itself about its capacity to pioneer progress — which is nothing but a glorified petty-bourgeois ideology (9). In this ideological frame the new regime could not blaze alternative solutions to the continuing economic crisis. Typically, it opted to follow the monetarist prescriptions which has been the bane of its predecessor. It accelerated the trade liberalization policy of the past three years and imposed extra monetarist measures at home. In its policy toward capitalist investors the regime had evolved plans to allow 100 % foreign ownership of all new industrial projects established in the country (10).

Meanwhile, the policy of trade liberalization had suddenly added to the commercial stratum of the petty-bourgeoisie a substantial number of new-owners the majority of whom engaged in petty import transactions without any concern for either the country's external account position or the effect their trading activities would have on the domestic inflationary situation. Considering the fact that since this period the industrialized economies have been exporting inflation to the backward ones at an alarming rate, the behaviour of the commercial stratum of the petty-bourgeoisie was certainly subversive of the economy. It was largely as a result of this uncontrolled economic behaviour of this stratum that the balance of payments position continued to deteriorate so much that by the end of the 1970/71 fiscal year the trade deficit had reached ₵ 180.5 million. This negative trend was exacerbated by a steep drop in the world market price for cocoa to \$ 194 per ton — the lowest level in 5 years. Domestic economic activity was immediately depressed. The Central Bureau of Statistics' Economic Survey of 1969–71 for instance, projected that in the economic conditions of the time growth in per caput domestic product would stagnate, and inflation would continue to grow. Thus it had become clear that the Ghanaian economy had entered a vicious circle of current account deficits, high inflation rates and depreciating exchange rates (11).

The morbidity of the economy posed the most serious accumulation crisis for the Ghanaian petty-bourgeoisie as it continued to feel the predatory effect of the global economy. For the domestic economic depression had also contributed to the curtailment of the flow of foreign investments. The neo-colony under the leadership of the most liberal wing of the petty-bourgeoisie had ceased to be attractive to foreign investors. The government's policy of economic revival had proved futile, and the income of the petty-bourgeoisie continued to suffer. But unlike the bourgeoisie, the petty-bourgeoisie is totally incapable of containing such economic crisis, even if such containment measures have only a temporary effect. In desperation it opens up to fresh external dictates and rather deepens its captivity to the capitalist system than liberates itself. Thus for instance, the Standard Bank (Ghana) Ltd.'s Review of economic trends issued in Accra in November of 1970 could only urge that the depressed commercial sector could be revived only through further trade liberalization. While this foreign-owned bank was making such a call a resident representative of the World Bank, Peter REITTER, would soon be stationed in Accra (in November 1, 1971) to tele-guide the government in formulating fresh policies that would push the Ghanaian economy further under the weight of imperialist interests – through another currency devaluation and other measures. Accordingly, under the pretext of restoring balance to the economy, stimulating new investments and domestic production, the Ghanaian currency was again devalued, but this time by a massive 44.0 % in December of 1971. The effect of devaluation on the economy was instant and damaging: the economy incurred an unprecedented deficit of ₵ 146.4 million on current account. For the polity, it meant the intensification of the class struggle.

Just as in developed capitalist economies bouts of economic depression manifest themselves in very high rates of bankruptcies among business enterprises (FYODOROV, 1977: 133–139) so do they in periphery capitalist economies which are mere appendages of the former. Therefore the December 1971 devaluation, which in reality is a symptom of a more profound economic malaise, immediately threatened a host of Ghanaian business enterprises with bankruptcy as they were instantly called upon to pay 75.0 % more (in the cedi) for every dollar value of their imports. The 1968 economic trauma was indeed repeating itself. Business confidence was badly shaken; and in particular the stratum of small business concerns appeared to have lost faith in the capacity of the political leadership of their class to save them from imminent proletarianization. It was however the wage workers on whom the economic crisis took its greatest toll.

## THE CRISIS AND LABOUR

The economic crisis generated two distinct, and yet, contradictory developments. First, the state intervened increasingly to protect capital. This took the form of 'counter-insurgency' measures designed to weaken labour and strengthen capital. In concrete terms the state encouraged employers to lay-off more and more people so that unemployment stood

at about 20.0 % of the labour force at the end of 1971, and an unofficial wage freeze. Thus wages lagged behind inflation. For example, wage earnings went up by only 4.5 % on the 1970 level while the consumer price index shot up to over 90.0 % after a brief respite in 1970. And yet the government stubbornly refused to yield to labour demands for a wage increase from ₵ 0.75 to ₵ 1.50. Concurrently, commercial houses took advantage of the trade liberalization policy of the government to beat the effect of the crisis by charging more for their merchandise. Further to these the government removed subsidies on such social services as education and medical care so that they would no longer be offered free to the consumer. In a typical bourgeois conservative style the regime was saying 'far-well to welfare'.

Second, as the state imposed these and other harsh economic measures on the working peoples, the labour movement became increasingly militant and uncompromising in its opposition to the government. Thus, for example, the incidence of strikes rose and sharply assumed a violent character. Similarly the state hardened its attitude toward labour and responded to a very aggressive labour demand with a greater measure of repression. Examples of such confrontations were those of the African Timber and Polywood (Ghana) Ltd. (ATP) at Samreboi, and the Ashanti Goldfields Corporation (AGC) mines at Obuasi. In other words, the class struggle intensified, and ineluctably divided labour from the ineffective and repressive petty-bourgeois state.

Meanwhile a shift in the political position of the labour movement was also occurring. Whereas in the preceding year the Trades Union Congress (TUC) leadership had even rebuked the workers of ATP (Samreboi) and AGC (Obuasi) for their militancy, thenceforth its public utterances and other activities appeared to encourage worker militancy. And ultimately, the TUC formed a Joint Consultative Council with the Nation Union of Ghana Students (NUGS), an implacable opponent of the PP government on both domestic and foreign policy, on May 22, 1971. The threat posed to stability by this alliance was so real that the pro-government newspaper, the *Daily Graphic*, in an editorial the following day, could not but warn «the nation of the potential power such a union would wield...». Following this, the TUC assumed a defiant posture. Against official displeasure, its leadership mounted a nation-wide campaign against the government for imposing the National Development Levy on Workers when they were already suffering untold deprivation. Furthermore, when the government passed the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act, 1971, (Act. 383) to dissolve the TUC as the central organ of the labour movement, the seventeen unions comprising the TUC met on the same day as the act was enacted (September 10, 1971) to reconstitute the TUC under its old leadership. And on that same day the NUGS (allies of the TUC) issued a strongly worded statement condemning the government for its anti-labour policies, and declaring support for the TUC in its confrontation with the government. Earlier on *The Spokesman* (the only newspaper that inclined to protect workers' interest) had called on workers to dispel «... any illusions about



prospects of collaboration with this (Progress Party) regime... (whose aim is to milk the workers dry and to do this with impunity». The paper had concluded its editorial by urging workers to oppose «the anti-worker conspiracy» of the government. But the labour movement was still too weak to translate its growing class consciousness into political consciousness, and therefore the sharpening class struggle into an attack on the petty-bourgeois state. For them as for the petty-bourgeoisie itself, a 'master-saviour' was the only practical solution to the crises of the petty-bourgeois order.

## THE CRISIS AND THE PETTY-BOURGEOISIE

For this class the deepening economic crisis was more than a crisis of accumulation. It was also a crisis of self-confidence as a ruling class; in other words, a political crisis as well. This in-built fear of an impending political suicide stemmed logically from the inability of the state to mediate effectively between national capital and imperialism. In particular, since 1966 this concern has been dressed in petty xenophobia (euphemistically called economic nationalism) which was directed at aliens engaged in petty commercial activities. And it had been concretized in a proliferation of new militant (i.e. nationalistic) business associations (JONAH, *op. cit.*: p. 60). The fruit of their agitations was the enactment of the Ghanaian Business (Promotion) Act., 1970, (Act 323).

But the deepening crisis thereafter had cleared the illusions about the efficacy of such neo-colonialist economic policies. It was this realization which impelled a generally conservative newspaper like *The Pioneer* to inveigh in its January 12, 1972 editorial as follows:

We refuse to accept any more temporisings about the needed action we should take on such debts to enable our economy to take off...

We must take quick action to save ourselves or whine, suffer and perish.

Earlier on (November 29, 1971), the same paper had warned the government that the country was «already getting to the brink of disappointment because we do not notice it clearly that the relevant practical plunge» was being taken to set the economy right. Under the pangs of the same economic crunch the Ghana National Chamber of Commerce had felt obliged to reject the main pillars of the economic policies of the government; namely, trade liberalization, devaluation, import surcharges, and so on (12). Yet barely two and half years ago it had commended the same Progress Party government for its liberal trade policies (13). Thus by the end of 1971 the petty-bourgeoisie had lost faith in its own political representatives for their inability to employ the power of the state effectively to secure for it unimpeachable positions within the production process. In particular, the drastic devaluation had undermined its material base so suddenly and to such an extent that it would need considerable state and foreign support to re-establish itself. Yet it did not abandon the state which had become a means of its rise and endurance as a class. MAMDANI (1976:244) explains: «... the ideological orientation of a class does not mechanically follow a shift in its material base. While it is true that a class produces its own

ideology, that this ideology changes over time, it is also true that the ideology can in turn capture the class, making it the victim of its own history». This was the condition of the Ghanaian ruling class in 1971; and it persisted in this bondage till 1981. In 1971 it expected and actually got a 'redeemer'. But in 1981 it could turn to no one: it had reached the end of its history.

## EFFECTS OF THE GLOBAL CRISIS

The crisis that had afflicted the Ghanaian economy must be seen in the context of the specific historical situation of imperialism. During the 1970's imperialism was generally on the offensive again in its bid to strengthen its domination of the rest of the world. For the capitalist system has since the late 1960's been experiencing grave internal economic crises. Beginning with the collapse of the international monetary system and the resulting realignment of the world's major currencies, the leading industrialized nations of the world have been going through a period of recession which is generally believed to be the worst since the Great Depression of the 1930's. This current crises hit its peak in the 1974-75 period. The principal features of the crises have been spiralling inflation, steep price rises, stagnant industrial production and currency instability. As LENIN has pointed out these trends in capitalist reproduction accentuates the 'market question' for capitalist economies and thereby unleashes an acute competition among them for new markets, investment avenues and sources of raw materials. Thus while it is true that recent investment trends indicate that two-thirds of all capital exports is from developed countries to other developed countries (KOSTYUKHIN, 1979: 100), it is equally true that the volume of capital exports to African and other Third World Countries has been increasing both qualitatively and quantitatively. For African countries it has increased from 11.9 % in 1969 of total exports to developing countries generally to 49.0 % in 1975; and the emphasis has shifted rapidly from official to direct private investments (TARABIN (ed.), 1978: 154-63).

The same trend toward increased penetration of the economies of the developing world has characterized the economy of Ghana. Tables 1 and 2 below show an interesting pattern about foreign private capital investments during the 1969-72 period. For instance, while purely foreign private investments declined both in numbers and value, joint ventures between Ghanaian and foreign private capitalist interests increased (Table 1). It is true that the value of ventures in the purely foreign private as well as foreign-Ghanaian private sectors declined in absolute terms (Table 2). Yet the value of the aggregate share of foreign capital in the approved projects during the 3 years, though unavailable, must certainly be high; for even at the height of the statist economic policies of the CPP regime foreign private capitalist interest controlled 50.2 % of total fixed capital assets and 54.4 % of total manufacturing enterprises, both by 1965 (HAKAM, *op. cit.*).

Table I – Ownership/Partnership Structure of Approved Projects  
Total Capital Involved (¢ m1.) % of Total

Ownership	1971/72	1970/71	1969/70	1973/72	1970/71	1969/70
100% Ghanaian (Private)	5.7	0.5	2.8	27.3	30.8	31.8
100% Foreign (Private)	2.0	0.5	8.5	13.6	15.4	31.8
Jt. Ghanaian/Foreign (Private)	12.2	8.0	5.3	45.5	46.1	18.2
Jt. State/Foreign	12.0	—	9.2	13.6	—	4.4
State	—	2.4	9.3	9.3	—	13.6
Total	32.0	11.4	35.1	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Table E (p.5), *The Capital Investment Board Annual Reports, 1971–72.*

Table II – Ownership/Partnership Structure of Projects

	Volume		Value ('000)	
	1970/71	1971/72	1970/71	1971/72
100% Foreign (Private)	10	9	15,000	3,000
100% Ghanaian (Private)	22	38	6,000	15,300
Jt. Foreign/Ghanaian (Private)	6	30	22,000	19,700
100% State	1	3	2,400	4,600
Jt. State/Foreign	2	1	2,500	1,000
Total	42	81	48,900	43,600

Source: *Ibid.*

But in terms of the dominant position of imperialism vis-à-vis the Ghanaian economy the size or value of capital exported cannot present a total picture of the reality. There are other factors such as the dependence on trade largely with the capitalist world for as much as one quarter of her gross national product, for over one quarter of the economy's absorptive capacity (AGOGO, 1975:62–73), and a heavy debt burden. The latter further obliges the country to commit a substantial fraction of her foreign exchange resources to debt servicing thereby imposing an inflexible constraint on the country's governments through the cooptation of her decision-making by imperialist powers as happened to the Progress Party government (LIBBY, 1976), and creating a critical shortage of convertible currency.

It is also important to note that Ghana's dependence on the capitalist world economy for over one quarter of her gross national product means that any economic crisis in these capitalist centres is bound to affect the country's production, employment, accumulation and national prosperity generally. Above all, this structure of dependence also ensures that an increase in the interest rate of any of the world's major currencies automatically deepens the crisis of the neo-colonial economy by multiplying her debt responsibilities. The foregoing simply affirms the claim that the growing crises of the capitalist world system has been exerting devastating effects on the Ghanaian economy.

As is the case with the capitalist system, the crisis of the Ghanaian system has generated grave political effects as well. However beyond the intensification of the class struggle, the economic crisis forged the formation of new alliance without corresponding modifications at the ideological level. Those changes emphasised two broad trends in the Ghanaian political economy: they (i) implied a further weakening of the petty-bourgeois state; and (ii) emphasized the need to reappraise the relationship between foreign capital and local capital with a view to increasing the material gains for the latter. In both instances however the solution lay in strengthening the petty-bourgeois state. The triumph of the Bonapartist state and the extreme economic nationalism of the post-1972 period were the direct result of this crisis.

#### THE BONAPARTIST STATE (14)

It would seem therefore that the 1972 coup d'état that brought to power the Bonapartist regime of Colonel ACHEAMPONG was a historical necessity because it was an attempt to respond to two complementary social imperatives. On the one hand it was «the political expression of the neo-colony in crisis», and on the other it was a concrete response to the repeated failure of the political representatives of the petty-bourgeoisie to successfully deal with the crisis (HUTCHFUL, 1979). But the 1972-79 regime must be distinguished from its 1966-69 predecessor if we are to grasp its import fully. The latter did not merely represent the failure of the preceding petty-bourgeois regime. It more significantly represented a conjuncture in which both the petty-bourgeoisie and the working classes had moved into a position of «relative stabilization» (p.60), following the recent crisis which threatened to undermine the stability and well-being of each of these two major social classes, and which thereby stressed the need for a «master/saviour» (Ibid) that will preserve the existing social order and promote national progress. For even though the petty-bourgeoisie had demonstrated its weakness as a ruling class, the working classes were themselves still too weak to take the political initiative and overthrow the former. Therefore their respective weakness, politically, stressed the mutually beneficial nature of a strategic alliance of the two classes in waiting for a saviour. The alliance through the Bonapartist regime of two historically antagonistic classes constituted the inner strength, the reality, of the «strong state» which HUTCHFUL identified but failed to expatiate.

To the extent that the rise of the Bonapartist regime expressed both the frustration, and determination of these two major social classes to deal with the economic and political crises of the moment, it must be understood as an advanced form of the petty-bourgeois state. And to the extent that solving the flaming economic crisis would require a new and stronger alliance with foreign capital (imperialism), Bonapartism further marked a new phase in the domination and exploitation of the local economy and the working classes, respectively. Accordingly, the failure of the Bonapartist regime by 1979 to deal with the crisis, and consequent collapse, must be understood to be the signal for the ultimate collapse of the petty-bourgeois state as a whole. For as I have pointed out (above) the economic crisis was a political crisis for the ruling class as a whole. Accordingly, the imminent fall of the reigning political stratum must mark the beginning of the end of the entire social formation.

The Bonapartist nature of the government of the National Redemption Council (NRC) (later Supreme Military Council – SMC) was quick to expose itself during the first few months of its coming into power. At his first press conference, the head of the new regime, Col. I.K. ACHEAMPONG, did not only deplore the previous regime's lack of «will to act decisively on this (economic) crisis». He further attacked «the system that exploited the ordinary people, the workers and the farmers on whose sweat and toil the wheel of the economy turns...» and also castigated multinational companies for subverting the economy. At a meeting with representatives of the business community, almost one year after being in office, he justified the intervention of the military as follows: «We acted in the name of the harrassed...»

In order however to give full expression to the representative role of the regime, Col. ACHEAMPONG met a cross section of the Ghanaian people: workers, farmers, students, chiefs, women traders, and the business community. To workers he affirmed that the armed forces had «taken upon themselves the responsibility to be the vanguard of the people...» in the crucial task of building an independent national economy. To the business community he promised that Ghanaian domination of the economy would replace foreign domination which had resulted in «drastic distortions» of the economy. And workers were as much the «greatest force for change» and capable of bringing «failure or victory to our Revolution» as much as businessmen and women did «represent a vital part» of the «grand democratic coalition between Government and private business, between workers and farmers» which would ensure that Ghanaian domination of the national economy would be achieved.

These attempts at consolidating the Bonapartist coalition of contradictory social forces transcended the limit of rhetoric. They were expressed in specific instances. For example, to save the commercial and industrial strata of the petty-bourgeoisie from economic collapse, the currency was immediately revalued by 43.0 %, surcharges on imports were removed, and the producer price of cocoa was increased from C 8.00 to C 10.000 per ton. Workers also had the benefit of the repeal of the controversial Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act, 1971 (Act 383), the minimum

dialy wage increased from ₵ 0.75 to ₵ 1.00, and the National Development Levy abolished. Furthermore, all future redundancy exercises that had been planned against workers by private enterprises were stopped immediately. To win the support of the higher civil bureaucracy, their car maintenance allowance and other perquisites which had been either reduced or cancelled by the PP government were fully restored. And to cement it all, the regime assumed a significant anti-imperialist stand on the country's external debts. On February 5, 1972 the regime dramatically announced the repudiation of certain of the country's external debts and unilaterally rescheduled the repayment arrangements for others.

But as HUTCHFUL has observed the return of the armed forces into Ghanaian politics must be seen as the failure of the petty-bourgeois regime to mediate successfully with imperialism (*op. cit.*). The immediate task of the new regime was therefore to strengthen the state in order to enhance the effective performance of its mediatory role rather than to destroy the imperialist presence in the country. This task of the regime was succinctly stated in answer to a question by Anthony HUGHES (Editor of *Africa Magazine*, Paris) in April of 1972:

I am reluctant to talk in terms of labels, but I do believe that the state is bound to play a forceful role, a leadership role in the development of the economy. I have said that a country with our limited resources (sic) cannot leave everything to the market forces, and *I have said that we have to use state power to capture the commanding heights of the economy for Ghanaians*. We can do this without curbing the entrepreneurial spirit of Ghanaians. Our concern is to infuse a sense of economic patriotism under the direction of the state. (italics mine).

Essentially what this meant was the renegotiation of the terms of the unequal partnership that had bound local and foreign capitalist interest together in order to enhance the size of the material rewards accruing to the former. In the same breadth, the regime felt obliged to assure foreign investors that its policy of state control of the economy did not contradict private participation in the economy (15). The government's goal, it was explained later, was to forge an economic partnership between local and foreign capital based on the same mutual interests as those underpinning the political partnership concluded between Ghana and Britain in 1957. The Head of State had declared: «It has happened in the political arena... What we seek in 1972... is the extension of the same principle into the area of the economy». Thus even though the 1972 coup was a victory for the Ghanaian petty-bourgeoisie (as will be shown below) over its historic weakness vis-à-vis imperialism, that victory was very temporary. The renegotiation of the partnership with imperialism will eventually exacerbate the political crisis rather than help in transcending it.

The Investment Policy Decree, 1975, (NRCD 329) was in fact the highest point of expression of this renegotiated partnership. Under this law only manufacturing and commercial enterprises which involved very meagre capital outlay and in which Indian, Lebanese and Syrian nationals dominated as petty-commodity producers and distributors were reserved for Ghanaians. Big capitalists, which had dominated the commanding heights of

the economy all these years were either directed merely to sell a fraction of their shares to the Ghanaian public or made to sell majority shares of their capital to the government. In other words the decree left the dominant position of foreign capital in the economy unchallenged: it was rather strengthened (JONAH, 1980: Chapter 3). It is also noteworthy that the decree failed to achieve its goal of harmonising the interest of local and foreign capital through the partnership. The events following 1975, especially, showed clearly that the «encircling gloom» resulting from imperialist domination of the economy which the Head of State, Colonel ACHEAMPONG, had complained of earlier in the life of the regime, as threatening the socio-economic position of the petty-bourgeoisie, had not in fact been dispelled. The indications were that what appeared to be a reconciliation of local and foreign capitalist interest achieved under the economic partnership amounted to only a temporary containment of the contradiction between the two interests, rather than its resolution.

But perhaps the greatest significance of the Bonapartist regime was its mediation between capital and labour in attempting to contain the class struggle that had resulted from the intensified exploitation by the former under the guardianship of the Bonapartist state itself. It must be recalled that before the accession of the Bonapartist state workers' struggle against capital had attained its highest level ever – as symbolised by the bloody confrontations mounted by the workers of OBUASI and SAMREBOI. In the face of this mounting threat to the position of capital there was an urgent need for preemptive measures. The formula was found within the framework of the grand democratic coalition whose 'counter-insurgency' manifestation in so far as the struggle of the workers is concerned took the form of democratizing capital (which is currently in vogue in West Germany – ZAIKINA, 1981: Chapter 12). And the state became the leading proponent of the fraud, the illusion, that this policy amounted to the development of a people's capitalism. This is the form it assumed: In January 1973, Col. ACHEAMPONG had admonished the business community to sell token equity shares in their enterprises to their workers. This, he explained, «should create a greater sense of belonging and promote a higher sense of responsibility among the workers». In furtherance of this illusion Section 13 (5) of the Ghanaian Enterprises Development, 1975 (NRCD 330) provided for the participation of workers in enterprises which had been affected by NRCD 329.

Obviously the goal of this policy was not to destroy private ownership of the means of production – especially foreign capitalist interest – but to strengthen it in a manner consistent with the regime's posture of collaboration with imperialism. The implementation of NRCD 329 went in a direction that was supportive of the charge of fraudulence levelled against the policy of developing people's capitalism. Workers were not only sold very meagre shares in those enterprises which had been affected by the NRCD 329. They also experienced greater degrees of exploitation: reductions in salaries, job insecurity and loss of benefits (JONAH, *op. cit.*: 131–43).

The democratization of capital enhanced the interest of capital against that of labour in another respect. Under NRC 329 and 330 monopoly capitalist interests in the country could mobilize the meagre savings of the working peoples for further investments and thereby enlarge the scope of exploitation of the latter. For persuading workers to purchase shares in foreign enterprises means that they (the workers) had to reduce consumption in order to be able to buy those few shares. This meant extended destitution of the working peoples. Also, while it did not entail any improvements in the wage income of workers, it deprived them of access to their little savings thus invested in capitalist industry for a long time. The capitalist owners of such enterprises however still retained unlimited freedom of access and utilisation of such capital assets. Furthermore, it imposed additional fetters on the freedom of workers to fight for better conditions of work. This took the form not just, of the illusory belief by the worker of being part of the ownership structure of capitalist enterprise. But more significantly, even where and when they felt inclined to struggle against capital they were confronted by not just the power of monopoly capital but an alliance of this and the colossal power of the state. The policy of democratizing capital was therefore a major anti-labour instrument wielded by the state; the Bonapartist regime had betrayed one of its allies.

It appears however that the contradictions embodied in the Bonapartist regime were, from 1974, becoming increasingly obvious to the working class, both inside and outside the state bureaucracy. The statistics on workers' strikes in the state sector from 1974 to the early part of 1979 for instance, show a dramatic increase in frequency and also in militancy. In most cases workers' grievances centred around poor working conditions and certain management decisions as well as government decisions related to management and working conditions which the workers found unacceptable. On the whole, strikes escalated from a total of 8 (in 1974) to 11 (in 1976), 10 (1977), and 23 (1978). The lowest point in this frequency curve was 1975 when there were only 3 strikes in the public bureaucracy; that is, apart from the lone one recorded in January of 1979, just before these statistics were compiled.

The two years which recorded the lowest incidence of strikes are significant, and require some comment. On the one hand, the January 1979 strike occurred just before the new Head of State would announce a programme of returning the country to civilian rule; it lasted 11 days, and was one of the longest recorded for the period under consideration. Coming, as it did, from the labour union with the longest record of militancy (the Railway Workers Union) it would seem to be suggestive of the mood of the labour movement at the time — which may be described as one of determination to continue to struggle against the government until concrete results were achieved. And on the other, 1975 (with 3 strikes) was the year in which the government gave legal form to its new pact with imperialism (in the Investment Policy Decree). That would seem to suggest that after the 1974 upsurge in workers' agitation, it had become necessary, in view of government's assurances, to relent awhile in expectation that concrete



benefits would come out of them. It must be recalled that during the same period the state had intensified its campaign to sell the 'new economic partnership' with foreign capitalist interests to important socio-economic interests which had been brought together in the Bonapartist alliance. Thus inaugurating the Investment Policy Implementation Committee and the Ghanaian Enterprises Development Commission at a joint ceremony, Col. I. K. ACHEAMPONG had emphasized the point as follows:

It is the interest of the Ghanaian which we seek to promote... The Investment Policy Decree seeks to avail the Ghanaian, i.e. the worker, the farmer, the fisherman and the self-employed, the public officer, the opportunity to acquire shares in some of the large companies which operate in the country. Such participation will... enable Ghanaians to share in the prosperity of these foreign-owned companies...

The success of this policy of deception accounts for what appeared to be workers' docility in that year (1975).

Even so the economic partnership (despite the Investment Policy Decree) was by 1976, showing signs of failure. The economic crisis continued fiercely. Accordingly workers' strikes escalated not only in numbers but especially in duration which is a sign of militancy. For example, from the lowest of 4 days long (in 1974) and 3 days (1975) workers' strikes could last as long as 25 days (1978), 20 days (1977), 14 days (1976) and 11 days (1979). It is equally remarkable that these prolonged strikes involved workers in either strategic or sensitive sectors of the economy; namely, Ghana Rubber Estates (Bonsa-Abura): 14 days in 1976; Ghana National Manganese Corporation (Nsuta): 20 days in 1977; Electricity Corporation of Ghana (Nation-wide): 10 days in 1978; Ghana Oil Refinery Company (Tema): 11 days in 1978; Ghana Railways Corporation (Nation-wide): 11 days in 1979; and the Ghana Registered Nurses Association (Nation-wide): 25 days in 1978. It is also noteworthy that these were industrial action emanating from the public sector alone. Undoubtedly, if those from the private sector, which enjoys unbridled freedom in exploitation, are added to these the unmistakable conclusion will be that the knell of the Bonapartist regime was chiming audibly and surely.

But perhaps the most prophetic affirmation of this anti-climax for a regime, which had begun from a position of strength and inter-class solidarity, was that dangerous challenge to its legitimacy and moral strength posed by its most faithful servants, the salariat of the civil service (17) which apart from the police and the military constitutes a thoroughly socialized and dependable coercive arm of the state. Largely out of the political need to increase its fighting power against the state which since 1967 had disorganized (18) and systematically reduced it to penury (Ghana, 1978: 7-19), the Junior Civil Servants Association had dramatically transformed itself into the Association of Civil Servants of Ghana on March 1, 1977. «This change was primarily for the purpose of enabling the Association to retain its 'dynamic leaders' when they got promoted into the senior grades; and additionally 'to make it possible for senior officers to become members and join hands with us in achieving our goals'.» (Ghana, *ibid.*) Consequently after several fruitless negotiations with the government aimed at improving

their service conditions, the Association staged a successful 6 day strike in March of 1978 – probably the first in living memory to be organised by civil servants. The political significance of this lay in the fact that the strike action occurred just before the controversial referendum on the Union Government proposals came on, and 7 days after their representatives had met the Head of State, on March 1st. This was followed in November of the same year with a 5 day strike that crippled the regime so much that out of nervousness it terminated the appointments of the striking civil servants en masse and set up a recruitment bureau to recruit new personnel for the service – steps whose futility was exposed in their abandonment as unceremoniously as they had been announced. The November strike had followed the government's austerity 1978–79 budget (announced in September), and after the Association had presented a long list of demands from its Kumasi Conference of September 12–14. Some of the demands had totally rejected aspects of the regime's budget proposals – a clear case of political impudence to which the regime responded by merely counselling patience.

From the foregoing one could conclude that the level of political consciousness of workers had risen substantially, and that worker docility had become a thing of the past as during the 1966 – 79 period industrial strikes and disputes had become a major weapon of the labour movement in confronting the state and private employers. LENIN (19 Vol. 23: 241) was therefore right when he wrote: «Only struggle educates the exploited class. Only struggle discloses to it the magnitude of its own power, widens its horizon, enhances its abilities, clarifies its mind, forges its will». Despite these political advances the working class was still backward in terms of its awareness of the need to engage in independent political action for attaining the ultimate for itself as a class. In particular, the movement lacked coordination and central direction. This is not to argue that their agitations were aimless and apolitical. For not even those strikes which were staged with definite economic demands in view could be dismissed as such. As MARX has pointed out, all conflicts occurring at the level of production are political struggles as all class relations are political relations, relations of power (n.d. :166). But the inescapable fact is that quite a number of the strikes of the 1977–78 period bore an unmistakable political stamp as they attacked management and government for decisions and actions related to the management of enterprises and to worker's rights. Above all, the period marked a visible growth in workers' assertiveness and aggressiveness, as borne out in the frequency and duration of strikes, to back up their demands. This caveat should however not conceal the critical political weakness of the class. Hence the need for a 'political facilitator' in 1979 (the ARFC) and in 1981 (the PNDC) to prepare the way for the eventual exercise of political power by workers and other progressive forces of society.

### **THE KNEEL OF BONAPARTISM**

In spite of the economic partnership, the neo-colony was unable to transcend its internal crisis. After a brief cooling off period during the

1973–74 fiscal year, the crisis picked up again. The budget deficit rose sharply from C 154.9 million in 1974 to C 1,141.6 million in 1979. Inflation reached 116.4 % per annum in 1977 and continued to rise. The country's external reserves also declined precipitously in 1978. By September of 1979 they stood at C 133.5 million. For a country whose manufacturing enterprises depend on external sources for 65.0 % of its inputs the situation was certainly precarious. Thus domestic output which had dropped by 13.0 % in 1975 continued to decline – by a further 4.7 % in 1976; and after a brief recovery thereafter, it fell again in 1979 by 8.0 %.

The persistence of the economic crisis entailed rapid devaluation of the incomes of a mass of small entrepreneurs and also of wage earners. Thus even though the grand democratic coalition had been forged not only at the level of specific enterprises but more especially at the level of classes, it soon began to break up under the weight of its own contradiction. First, the structure of ownership of capitalist enterprise had revealed the continued domination of the economy by foreign capitalist interests. Second, within the internal class structure the trend was clearly in the direction of concentration of capitalist property in the hands of fewer families (JONAH, *op. cit.* Chap. 4). This unevenness in the distribution of the means of production did not simply emphasize the familiar dictum that uneven development is a law of capitalist development. Rather, it emphasized another fact which is that the minority of owners of capitalist property (both foreign and local) who dominate the economy would appropriate a larger share of the national income. The economic law enunciated by Jesus CHRIST (LUKE 19: 26) that «... to every one who has will more be given; but from him who has not even what he has will be taken away» was being vindicated. Private property in the means of production indeed determines the distribution of incomes and leads further to the concentration of private property (ZAIKINA, *op. cit.* : 531). In other words, the economic partnership had worked against the interest not only of workers but also of the small entrepreneurial stratum of the petty-bourgeoisie.

By 1977 it had become evident that the true essence of the Bonapartist regime was the consolidation of imperialism in alliance with state capitalist and local big private capitalist interest for the super-exploitation of the country's human and natural resources. In the process the «small capitalists» stratum of the petty-bourgeoisie lost out despite the rapid rise of a handful of them up the capitalist ladder through various corrupt means. The Bonapartist state had betrayed yet another of its allies – the stratum of the petty-bourgeoisie which constitutes a majority, and among whom were most members of the professional elite.

These developments produced clear political effects. They took the form, initially, of violent student agitations. Then members of the Professional Bodies Association threw in their support behind the students in confronting the regime. They questioned its claim to continue to govern the country and rejected the regime's proposal for a Union (no-party) Government. The failure of The Ad Hoc Committee on Union Government (1977) to secure a nation-wide consensus on the proposal and the inconclusive (or rather controversial) Union Government Referendum underscored

the tension within the system. Similarly, the failure of the AKUFFO led SMC government (that had replaced the ACHEAMPONG phase) to deal effectively with the current economic and political crises exposed the decadence of the petty-bourgeois state generally.

The fact is that the sustained attacks on the regime had exacerbated the weakness of the state. That is, the defection of substantial sections of the petty-bourgeoisie, including even its technocratic stratum which is located primarily in the civil bureaucracy weakened the state while the class as a whole grew stronger in its struggle against the regime; for out of that struggle the class had forged considerable unity and strength (18). This growing strength of the petty-bourgeoisie generally was expressed first in its ability to engage in sustained acts of civil disobedience; strike action, issuing ultimatum to the regime, and negotiating with the regime from a position of demonstrated strength. Second, it was clearly articulated by the President of the Greater-Accra branch of the Ghana Bar Association when the parent body met in Accra in September, 1977. At that meeting he defended the Bar Association's strike action as the weapon of all civilized peoples against dictatorship and urged his professional colleagues to sustain the momentum of their struggles through unalloyed unity and commitment. Therefore, by the close of 1978, (the year that witnessed the two civil servants' strikes) the regime seemed to have lost the political initiative. It was obliged to give in, however reluctantly, to the demands of those forces which had organized in confrontation with it; and those were some of the regime's best allies — like students, workers, civil servants and members of the professions. Consequently, its freedom and ability to find a political solution to the crises had been restricted. Yet it had to persist as a force with a historic mission.

It was out of this imperative for survival that the regime took steps to deepen its dependence on imperialism. It is noteworthy that this effort to strengthen its political links with global capitalist interest came after the failure of internal mobilization (to rebuild the Bonapartist coalition) behind the Union Government proposals, and the fall of the epitome of Bonapartism, Col. ACHEAMPONG. The new leader, Gen. AKUFFO immediately turned to a consortium of international financial institutions led by the IMF, and on their advice implemented a package of austerity measures; namely, massive reduction in government expenditure, devaluation of the currency by a massive 58.0 % (in March 1978), relaxation of controls over the retail prices of consumer items, demonetisation of the economy to reduce excess liquidity in the system, and so on. In return the IMF had promised to give the government a standby loan of \$ 90.0 million. Despite these the economic crisis deepened further, and, the political crisis also continued; and so did the position of the regime and the state generally remain precarious.

It was in the midst of these crises that the regime hurriedly completed arrangements for holding parliamentary elections under a new constitution. That connoted immediately that all the seething contradictions: inefficiencies, corrupt practices, and injustices of the system would be plasted over in a typical bourgeois ritualistic fashion; that is, through the

agency of the ballot box and a constitution. It also meant that the regime was on the threshold of successfully reconstructing fresh alliances with leading strata of the petty-bourgeoisie in a manner that would confer constitutional respectability on those iniquities. In short the crises had so undermined the legality of the regime that it wanted to take refuge in the uniform of bourgeois constitutionalism.

It was this final act of deception that provoked the military uprising of June 4, 1979. While that event did not seek to overthrow the petty-bourgeois state it nonetheless gave ample indication of the growing crisis of the petty-bourgeois state: that the potential for organized opposition from the masses against the dominance of the petty-bourgeoisie was growing rapidly. The spontaneous and violent actions launched during those three and a half months against the beneficiaries of the economic partnership with imperialism marked the beginning of the final phase of the struggle against the petty-bourgeois order. In short the failure of the Bonapartist state made the failure of the petty-bourgeois state as a whole inevitable. For where its advanced type had failed its archetypal version cannot prevail.

## THE AFRC AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE

The most significant gain of the AFRC period, in so far as the class struggle is concerned, was the opportunity it gave for the working class and progressive forces in the country to get organized and assert themselves once more against the rule of the petty-bourgeoisie. By the end of their three and a half months rule a number of progressive organizations, of which some were adherents of the proletarian line, had sprung up. They included the June Fourth Movement, the new Democratic Movement, the People's Revolutionary Youth League of Ghana, and the Movement on National Affairs. The NUGS which may be described as the hot bed for militant politics among students, also retained its militant posture. Within the labour movement itself several cadres of these progressive organizations who were also members of various workers organization — like the Public Utilities Workers Union (PUWU) had tried unsuccessfully to take over their branch unions. It is true that workers and progressive forces still remained divided organizationally and on petty ideological grounds. Yet the situation among them was one of growing confidence and strength as well as a sharpening political consciousness. It was in this highly turbulent political situation that the AFRC handed over the political administration of the country to the PNP in September of 1979. At the time the consensus among the 'Left' was: 'the masses were waking up, and bourgeois democracy was in crisis'. And there was also the constant reminder that any compromise with imperialism and the internal forces of reaction would certainly be met by the concerted action of all patriotic forces (19). These forces therefore expected that the PNP government would continue the 'revolutionary programme' of the AFRC.

The period was politically fluid also because the petty-bourgeoisie as a whole had consolidated its unity and determination to fight the «enemies of society» who had so suddenly threatened to undermine the foundations of the petty-bourgeois order. The brief period of the AFRC had made them acutely aware of the price of disunity and internal squabbling. The first sign of their determination to unite to defend the existing order was the formation of an All Party Consultative Committee which succeeded in putting pressure on the AFRC to hand-over political power to them without undue delay. On the other hand, the masses generally were still politically backward and so were unable to seize the political initiative from the advantages created by the coming into power of the AFRC; that is, in spite of the democratic gains of the period. Therefore the hand-over of power to the PNP symbolised the defeat of the June 4 insurgents and the masses, and a victory for the forces of law and order. The elections of the year, and that they were allowed at all, conferred enormous moral strength on the claim by the petty-bourgeoisie to govern. It must be emphasized however that while that defeat prepared the ground for the rebirth of the petty-bourgeois republic in a new constitutional uniform, the uprising had nonetheless established beyond doubt that the challenge facing the petty-bourgeoisie went beyond the consolidation of «flag independence»; and that it involved the translation of 'legal democracy' into social and economic democracy. However, the Ghanaian petty-bourgeoisie could not consolidate its hegemony: it had become victim of its own political weakness which was deeply rooted in its neo-colonial economic base.

### THE LAST DAYS

The real index of a dependent economy's strength is its external financial position. Where this is according to President LIMANN himself «perilously close to bankruptcy» the state of the entire economy could be described simply as fragile. (The President, in his inaugural address, had described it as «abysmal»). This is the type of economy which the PNP government inherited. The success of the regime could therefore be measured only in terms of its ability to remove the sources of this fragility which lay in its continued dependence on imperialism. CABRAL has described imperialism as «a violent usurpation of the freedom of development of the national productive forces» (1972:102). The real challenge facing the government was therefore whether it could successfully negate this imperialist «usurpation» of the country's freedom to develop, or be chucked out of the stage of history together with its entire class base. And quite perceptively the President had himself described the state of the economy as putting «our very existence as a nation on trial». But as I have pointed out (*supra*) the true nature of the petty-bourgeois state is to mediate between imperialism and national capital (which is controlled partly by the state and partly by a fraction of the national petty-bourgeoisie) to entrench the domination and exploitation of the neo-colony. The PNP regime's policies would therefore seek rather to promote this than the liberation of the neo-colony; and this would intensify the contradictions of the system and sharpen the class struggle against the petty-bourgeoisie and the state.

Thus within barely one year of its assumption of office the regime had abandoned its undertaking to continue the quasi-revolutionary policies of the AFRC government, and also to protect the 'gains' won for the people during the tenure of that junta. Rather it had declared its commitment to a policy of building confidence in the country within international financial and investment circles in order to attract development aid. It is worth recalling that in 1967 the military junta had enunciated the same neo-colonialist economic policy. That policy was continued by the PNP government which thereby exacerbated the internal contradictions such that it prepared the ground for the victory of Bonapartism. In effect therefore the petty-bourgeois state had come full circle in its fruitless search for solutions to the crisis of the neo-colonial economy. The bankruptcy of bourgeois economic prescriptions which have been the Deity of successive regime of this country has been clearly stated by Paul SAMUELSON, a leading bourgeois economist: He said:

Whatever government policy does to help handle the 'flation' part of our stagflation inevitably worsens in the short run the stagnation part of the problem. That stubborn reality will not go away... Likewise, whatever government policy does to help handle the 'stag' part of stagflation will ineluctably worsen the inflation part of the stagflation (20).

Commenting on this futile policy circumgyration and the mobility it bred generally within the economy a certain Special Correspondent for the Legon Observer (LO, Vol. xii, 5 1980) felt the situation was rather «depressing». And yet from his numerous contributions to the Legon Observer this Special Correspondent seemed to be another trained disciple of liberal economics and therefore sympathetic to the broad outlines of the regime's economic philosophy and policy options.

But the petty-bourgeois regime of the PNP government had become captive of the ideology and history of its own class; and so when it found itself at the centre of a stormy economic crisis it could not muster the will to liberate itself and the rest of society. Accordingly the government's 1980/81 budget initiated a programme of trade liberalization which was finally embodied in the Imports and Exports Act, 1980 (Act 418) in August of 1980. It further abandoned price controls and reduced government spending. Finally, it effectively devalued the cedi (through the back door) by between 40 and 45 per cent. Again, this Special Correspondent (*supra*) lamented concerning this budget that the immediate effect on the unemployment situation would be deleterious while the short-term growth benefits would themselves be slight. On the whole he regarded that budget as being «highly monetarist (and) partially structuralist... largely inegalitarian (and hence politically explosive), and overwhelmingly anti-growth oriented» (pp. 102–3). Even so those monetarist-structuralist prescriptions could not cure the neo-colony of its accumulation crisis. The economy continued to perform so poorly that even the less satisfactory growth rate of 20 % in 1980 was expected to be followed by a decline in 1981 (EWUSI, 1981: 6). The inflationary spiral continued; and by June of 1981 the national consumer price index had risen by an average of 102.4 % from June of 1980 (according to the Central Bureau of Statistics Newsletter released in September 1981).

It soon became clear however that those liberalization policies favoured big and 'kalabule' commercial interests who saw in them an opportunity to neutralize somehow the effect of the economic crisis by increasing the market price of a wide range of consumer items including locally manufactured and agricultural commodities. The political representatives of the petty-bourgeoisie in Parliament also took advantage of the crisis to award themselves extraordinarily high emoluments – C 4,050.00 per month. Furthermore, Business houses began to retrench labour, and fight labour demands to negotiate new collective agreements which would have enabled them (workers) to secure improved working benefits. Obviously the aim of employers was to keep their profit levels from declining further; but the government, in a typical colonial style, assumed an impartial posture as if to say that a conflict between labour and capital is not political. But its weight was certainly behind employers, however circuitous that might have been; for the capitalist investment climate had to be favourable, i.e. conducive to high profit levels. Coupled with these anti-labour policies was a sustained campaign of villification, retrenchment, terror and imprisonment mounted against the leaders, cadres and other active persons (both civilian and military) of the June 4 – AFRC period. The result of these was the widening gap between the regime on one hand, and workers and the progressive organizations on the other. Thus in June of 1980 workers of the Ghana Industrial Holdings Corporation (GIHOC) could express their anger with the regime by invading Parliament House. Earlier on the People's Revolutionary Youth League of Ghana (PRYLOG) had also marched on the same House, the symbol of bourgeois democracy, and had issued a number of peremptory demands including asking for «blood to flow», that is, revolution. In the same anti-government mood, the usually conciliatory leadership of the TUC, had felt compelled to demand a C 30.00 minimum wage for workers – a figure which was later scaled down to the equally impressive level of C12.00. During the same year (1980) the NUGS had warned at its 16th Annual Congress that all those who were manoeuvring to subvert the sovereign rights of the people and trying to destroy the 'gains' of the June 4 – AFRC period would be «fiercely resisted». It was in this milieu of growing inter class suspicion, acrimony and confrontation that a correspondent of the Legon Observer (LO, Vol. xii, 2, 1980) could warn that the springing up of various radical movements some of which were openly calling for the overthrow of the government was destabilizing and therefore alarming (p. 34).

By the beginning of its second year in office therefore, the PNP regime was faced with a deepening crisis of confidence and survival. Obviously, the President's claim «that out of our present wreck we can build a new» made during his inauguration had not materialized. But this unfolding failure stressed the urgency of trying hard to save the tottering regime from the inevitable – that is collapse.

FRANK has argued that the «richer the reserves of raw materials, such as copper and particularly petroleum, and the more attractive the potential market, the greater the effort and the sooner the success in forming and stabilizing a dependent neo-colonial state that economically



organizes and politically guarantees metropolitan access to these resources and markets» (1981:237). It however seems from the recent Ghanaian political economy (and that of MOBUTU's Zaire) that the need to stabilize such states is not a condition for ensuring such access by multinational capital. Rather what is necessary is that the dependent state (that has abundant strategic resources and potential markets) should be internally weak in confronting internal opposition or ineffective in dealing with such enemies of law and order. This will immediately impel the direct involvement of external powers and economic interests with high stakes in maintaining the regime to attempt to re-establish stability. Again, this is imperative if the neo-colonial state is to perform its function of promoting imperialist interest in the neo-colony (FRANK, 1981: Chapter 7). It is also important if the petty-bourgeoisie which depends on state mediation to accumulate will be able to function productively.

By the middle of 1981 the main thrust of investment policy of the PNP Government was clearly toward collaboration with imperialism. An international seminar on «Ghana's Gold Endowment» has been held in Accra on January 6 of that year; and it had been followed by another seminar on bargaining with multinational firms which might be disposed toward investing in the extraction of gold and oil. At the first seminar a United Nation's Technical Adviser on minerals was quoted as saying: «The gold potential of Ghana is very good indeed and I can see a great future for the country». But he had also added: «However the existing investment code is the main problem. But I believe if the Government is able to come out with a new code then the sky will be the limit.» (Ghanaian Times January 7, 1981). Earlier, President LIMANN had passionately implored foreign investors to invest in the «geological miracle» (i.e. Ghana) without delay. That there was a community of interest between the current Ghanaian political leadership and foreign investors cannot therefore be doubted. The investment Code, 1981 (Act 437) gave legal expression to this. In a more general sense this Code also marked the culmination of efforts to consolidate (again) the historic links with imperialism after they had been disturbed by the AFRC government. In a memorandum accompanying the draft bill it was admitted that the purpose of the instrument was to attract large foreign investments for the mutual benefit of Ghanaians and the investors. In concrete terms foreign investors were granted super-liberal concessions. Thus for example, the Code reduced the share that the state could keep in each new investment in the vital sectors of the economy, like mining, to what the Investment Centre could agree upon with each prospective investor (2nd Schedule, Parr 1A). In addition to this, the Act conceded wide ranging exemptions to investors in the priority areas of agriculture and mining, as well as certain manufacturing areas (Third Schedule). These advantages included such confiscatory repatriation rights as those contained in Clause 16 and the 3rd Schedule, Part II. For example, Clause 16 provides as follow:

Notwithstanding the provisions of any other enactment —

(a) there shall be no restriction on —

(i) The remittance of capital, to the country of origin of an investment approved under this Code...

- (ii) the transfer of profits to the country of origin of the investment...
- (iii) the transfer of payment in respect of principal, interest and financial charges where a loan has been granted to an approved enterprise by a non-resident...
- (iv) the transfer out of Ghana of fees and charges prescribed by regulation...

The greatest attack on the sovereignty of the people of this country was however embodied in Clause 14 which forbade the nationalisation of enterprises established under the Code: «no enterprise approved under this Code shall be subject to expropriation by the Government» (Clause 14 (1a)). This clause immediately deprived the people of this country the right to determine the manner in which their resources are exploited. It nonetheless conformed with the regime's commitment (as declared in the preamble to the Investment Code, paragraph 3) «to operate a policy of liberalization and an open economy and assure to the Foreign and Ghanaian investor protection of his investment and a fair return». As Ghanaian investors in these high technology areas are extremely rare this Code was nothing but an instrument for promoting the further penetration of the Ghanaian economy by foreign capital. The petty-bourgeois state was indeed performing its historic role; that is, mediating with imperialism, and doing it best at a time when the global economy was going through another grave crisis. (FRANK, 1981: *ibid*). Internally the sharpening class struggle (*supra*) had also rendered this race to give imperialism such a fatal embrace quite inevitable.

But rather than silence or contain internal opposition to the regime, the regime's policies gave new impetus to them. The Left and other progressive groups stepped up their anti-government activities, including grassroot organization. For instance, when the Investment Code Bill was gazetted some of these groups organized public platforms from which they denounced it. Meanwhile the petty-bourgeoisie as a whole had lost its sense of unity as a result of the continuing economic crisis and was becoming increasingly divided, an indication of a general state of decadence, and of the loss of moral strength within its ranks, because at the same time the state was not getting stronger either. For instance, on 23rd of July, 1981 the government's budget statement was defeated, after an acrimonious debate, by a Parliamentary vote of 54 to 51 in spite of the regime's continued majority in that House. Furthermore, charges and counter-charges of corruption were being thrown at each other by members of both government and opposition parties; e.g., concerning the distribution of imported farm tractors, the importation of Tata Buses from India, and the award of currency printing contracts to a United Kingdom firm. Getting to the end of the lunar year the general thrust of dissensions bickering and confusion had become centred in the PNP itself. Its leaders struggled to out-shine each other in accusations of corruption, and the leadership of the party itself became enmeshed in a quagmire of power struggles. In all of this the President who was also leader of his party (the PNP) remained almost lethargic, and ineffective even when he finally acted. Thus encircled

by its own contradictions and yet impotent to liberate itself from these contradictions the regime and its class base were, on December 31, surprised in a dawn attack by 'rebel' anti-government forces numbering less than 20. But as MARX did observe in connection with the French coup of December 2, 1851. «A nation and a woman are not forgiven the unguarded hour in which the first adventurer that came along could violate them» (MARX and ENGELS, 1968: 100). It had become evident that the petty-bourgeoisie and their political representatives had reached the limit of their ingenuity (or rather capacity). Beyond that they could not proceed any further. Nor could they turn back; for that would have been unhistorical. Trapped by its own mistakes (which were political) in rejecting the quasi-revolutionary policies of the AFRC regime, and abandoning NKRUMAH's populism for a so-called pragmatism, it had deprived itself of a political solution to the crisis whereby it could have remobilized the people to confront the «enemies of society» in a manner that the ACHEAMPONG SMC regime had sought vainly to do. And so it is that Ghana's ruling class, with its dependent state, now finds itself being gradually swept off the stage of history; and being supplanted as the maker of history by the People. Its impending decapitation as a dominant class was heralded not by the suspension of its Constitution (of 1979). The real harbingers of doom have been the Chairman of the PNDC's call to the People for «a revolution to end all revolutions», the directive that People's Defence Committees be set up to serve as the vehicles for the democratization of political power, and the disclosure that People's Courts would be set up to oppose bourgeois legality with popular justice and thereby establish the institutional framework for the development of popular law and morality.

In brief, the petty-bourgeoisie seem to have failed to consolidate its hegemony by the end of 1981. The latest indications of this failure were (i) the persistent inability of the petty-bourgeois state to negate the imperialist domination of the economy which would have led to the construction of an internal capacity to cope with and finally transcend the instability which inhere in its present state; and (ii) the increasing fragmentation of the ruling class itself which is in fact its weakness, and stems directly from the weakness of its material base. In other words, the retention of the colonial political and economic structures has been a source of unsurmountable weakness. For a neo-colonial economy is by nature a weak economy, and is prone to severe crises. Each bout of the crises jeopardizes the dominant position of the ruling class economically and politically. In the first instance, it becomes weaker as its material base contracts progressively and becomes increasingly unstable; and in the second, it becomes more and more fragmented as the dwindling economic base seems to return it ineluctably to a Hobbesian state of nature. As an Akan (Ghanaian) proverb puts it, when the elephants fight among themselves, it is the ants (that suffer). And so the lower classes have continued to suffer immeasurably as the crises of the economy burst out of manageable limits and factions within the ruling class struggled with the support of foreign interests to grab as much as each of them could get. In the event of this conjuncture the ruling class had to be led off the centre of the stage of history.

The December 31 action which toppled the PNP regime seems to mark the beginning of this exit, a process which is expected to prepare the ground for the birth of a new society. In the words of a correspondent to the Legon Observer (Vol. XIV, 5, May 1982):

Now the tempestuous wind has blown sweeping away corruption and ignominy. The blackboard is being renovated for new writings to appear. Happiness is our aim. Although we have only just begun the omens foretell a promising future, a future of harmony and natural freedom... (p.115).

## NOTES

1. For a typical example, see Ola (1973: 233–54).
2. Note the dedication in this 1969 Constitution which reads: «The punishment which the wise suffer who refuse to take part in the Government is to live under the Government of worse men. — Plato».
3. The class nature of the CPP regime and its policies is also discussed in Ninsin (*Ibid*).
4. According to Lenin (1964, Vol. 25: 363) «... state monopoly capitalism is a complete *material* preparation for socialism, the *threshold* of socialism, a rung on the ladder of history between which and the rung called socialism *there are no intermediary rungs.*» (emphasis, original). See also Nkrumah (1964:73) for a similar formulation.
5. See his Press Statement of July 8, 1967.
6. See the Government's Policy Statement on the matter broadcast by Lt. Gen. J.A. Ankrah on Radio & T.V. on March 2, 1966.
7. The foregoing figures have been extracted from Hakam (1972).
8. See the Reports of the following Committees and Commissions of Enquiry: Jiage Commission (Ghana: 1968); Blay Commission (Ghana, 1968b); Abraham Commission (Ghana, 1965); Ollenu Commission (Ghana, 1967).
9. See Poulantzas (1979, 237–246) for a discussion of the class character and ideology of the petty-bourgeoisie.
10. Announced by Dr. Kwame Fordwor, then Executive Chairman of the Capital Investment Board, during a visit to India, Quoted in *West Africa*, Nov. 15, 1971.
11. Marian Bond (1980: 27–31) discusses this problem basing her conclusions on a theoretical and empirical analysis of why vicious circles occur and whether some economies are more prone to it than others.
12. Refer to the Chamber's Memo to the government of the Supreme Military Council and the Economic Advisory Committee of the same government in February of 1972.
13. Speech by the President of the Chamber at the Chamber's 8th Annual General Meeting, December 4, 1971.
14. The theoretical observations in this section are based on Poulantzas (*op.cit*: 57–78) unless otherwise stated.
15. Acheampong (n.d.: 314–320).
16. Based on information provided in Ghana (1978).
17. Civil Servants Act, 1960 (Amendment) Decree, 1967 (NLCD 134) which removed the service personnel out of the umbrella of the TUC.

18. Frank (1981: 232–234) sees the strength (that is, autonomy) or weakness of the state in the third world primarily as a function of their dependence on the capitalist centre. This it seems to me, ignores the dynamic internal relationship between the petty-bourgeoisie and its dependent state. Hence I incline (*mutatis mutandis*) toward Marini whose position is: «due to a general law of capitalist society, according to which the relative autonomy of the state is in inverse relation to the capacity of the bourgeoisie to exercise its domination... a strong capitalist state is always the counter part of a weak bourgeoisie». Quoted in Frank (*ibid.*:232). This formulation, I think, applies more to the relation of the petty-bourgeoisie to their state than to the relation of the dependent state to the metropolitan state. The latter relationship is never inversed however dynamic it is. Here the changes are such that they only give the dependent economy a temporary autonomy to develop, as Frank himself (1967) recognises in the case of Latin America. It may be best described as a *dynamic equilibrium* with its centre in the metropolitan capitalist economies.
19. See for example Kpetekple (Central Organ of the Revolutionary Youth League of Ghana). Accra, Vol. 1 (3) 1979.
20. Quoted in Frank (1980: 56).

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## RESUME

*Dans cet article, l'auteur cherche à expliquer les raisons de l'échec des différents gouvernements à créer et maintenir au Ghana un ordre social petit-bourgeois depuis 1966, date de la mort de Kwame NKRUMAH. Il estime qu'il faut chercher les raisons de cet échec non seulement dans les difficultés économiques qu'a connues le pays pendant la période 1966-1981, mais aussi dans les changements intervenus entre les rapports de forces politiques en présence ainsi que dans le rôle fondamental qu'a joué l'Etat dans les luttes politiques. L'auteur se fixe deux objectifs principaux: il veut montrer d'abord que le Coup d'Etat du 31 Décembre 1981 était bien prévisible parce qu'à ce moment l'Etat petit-bourgeois d'alors était miné par ses propres contradictions internes et qu'ensuite ces contradictions ont été rendues plus aigües depuis 1966 par l'Etat petit-bourgeois qui, conformément à sa vocation historique, a toujours facilité la domination de l'économie nationale par l'impérialisme. C'est ainsi que l'auteur a étudié l'évolution de cette expérience petite-bourgeoise depuis le retour de la bourgeoisie comprador de l'après-NKRUMAH jusqu'aux derniers jours de cet ordre social en analysant tour à tour les derniers soubresauts de la «néo-colonie», les rapports crise-main d'œuvre, crise-petite-bourgeoisie, l'Etat Bonapartiste, le glas de cet état Bonapartiste, et le CRFA et la lutte des classes. A chacun de ces points l'auteur a noté les éléments nouveaux qui ont marqué la période dans le cadre de la déchéance de l'état petit-bourgeois. Parmi ces éléments, les plus récents et les plus décisifs ont été :*

- le refus catégorique de l'Etat petit-bourgeois à reconnaître la domination de l'économie du Ghana par l'impérialisme. Cette reconnaissance aurait permis la mobilisation de capacité interne susceptible de s'accommoder de cette situation et de finalement transcender l'instabilité qui la caractérise ;*
- la dislocation progressive de la classe dirigeante qui constitue d'ailleurs sa faiblesse et qui est le produit direct de la faiblesse de sa base matérielle.*