

MILITARY AND POLITICS IN GHANA

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PREFACE

The ascendancy of the military in African politics as a political force since the 1960s is an indisputable fact. Military take-overs have considerably changed the character of African polity. There has lately been a surge of academic interest in this new political development of the post-Independence era. Ghana has witnessed a number of military coups; the military entrenched itself on the political scene for a long period; and recently there has been a recivilianization of the country's polity. Ghana thus provides an ideal illustration of the phenomenon of militarization as well as demilitarization. A case study of Ghana may serve as a guide for prognostication of African politics.

The present study "Military and Politics in Ghana" is not just a chronological study of the successive military regimes in Ghana's political system from 1966 till 1979. It attempts to examine the military's political role within the totality of Ghana's political system. It studies the pattern of military government and the various means and mechanisms that the military administrators used to acquire control over power. It highlights the linkages which the military forged from time to time with different civilian sections. It, further, shows how, underneath the divergent approaches, and policies and the ethos which the civilian politicians and the military rulers followed, there was a striking similarity

between the two. Both operated within the parameters of the given elite-based political framework and were careful not to overturn it.

Surprisingly, not much work has been done on the political role of the military in Ghana. There is no single book dealing with the post-Busia period, i.e. from 1971 onwards, a period which was marked by an intensification and prolongation of the military's political involvements, a period which witnessed the rise and fall of three military rulers. As there was no comprehensive and analytical work to help me in my research I drew primarily on the factual information available in journals like West Africa, the Africa Research Bulletin, the African Recorder, and the Africa Diary.

The present work is divided into five chapters. The first chapter traces the genesis and nature of the first military intervention, the eventual demilitarization of politics, and the highlights of the rule of the elected civilian government.

The second chapter deals with the advent of the second military rule. The National Redemption Council, its composition and character and its political and economic activities. It shows the interplay of societal forces and its fall-out for military rule. Chapter 3 is a survey of the factors accounting for the occurrence of a palace coup and the establishment of the rule of a new military faction

known as the Supreme Military Council (SMC). It examines the administrative political and economic changes ushered in by the SMC and their impact on the Ghanaian society. The fall of this regime in a counter-coup and the establishment of the rule of another grouping called the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) are also discussed in this chapter. Chapter 4 outlines the origin of the withdrawal process and its modalities. It examines the process of resurgence of the old political figures and the recivilianization of politics. Chapter 5 evaluates the performance of the military rulers on the basis of the foregoing study and summarises the impact of the recurrence of military take-overs on Ghana's political and socio-economic set up.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the debts I owe to others. I am deeply grateful to Professor Anirudha Gupta, my guide, for his learned supervision and constant encouragement. I am also indebted to Mr A.S. Hebbar for offering me valuable advice in the difficult task of drafting the dissertation.

I am thankful to my parents for their moral support.

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CHAPTER I

NATIONAL LIBERATION COUNCIL'S RULE, 1966-1969

Civilian rule in Ghana ended when the military staged a coup on 24 February 1966 and seized power. Military rule was installed when the coup leaders formed a National Liberation Council (NLC) under the leadership of I.A. Ankrah, consisting of four army officers -- Major General Ankrah, Major A.A. Afrifa, Colonel A.K. Kotoka, and Lt. Colonel A.K. Ocran -- and four police officers -- J.W.K. Harlley (Commissioner of Police), B.A. Yakubu (Deputy Commissioner of Police), J.E.O. Nunoo (Assistant Commissioner of Police), and A.K. Daku (Deputy Commissioner of Police).

In this chapter we propose to study the factors which led to the military's entry into politics, the nature of military rule, and the political and economic measures adopted by the military and their impact on the country. The military transferred power to civilian hands in 1969. Civilian rule, however, proved to be a transitional phase in Ghana's politics as military rule returned in 1972. As this is not of much significance for our study, we shall deal with it, though marginally, in this chapter itself.

The Ghanaian army had acquired many legacies from the British. It had inherited a tradition of abstention from

politics, adherence to a hierarchical pattern of command, high salaries, and privileged status. In the initial phase of his rule Kwame Nkrumah did not saddle in the army's affairs in line with the British principle: "Keep the army out of politics and politics out of army." In the post-1960 period, however, in the context of the intensification of his ideological propaganda, he sought to bring the military under the control of the Convention People's Party (CPP). The republican Constitution of 1960 made him Supreme Commander of the armed forces and strengthened his position considerably. The military resisted the CPP's interference. There was widespread resentment when a Government directive required every soldier to become a member of the CPP. A party branch was opened in the Military Academy, and it was made compulsory for the cadets to join it.¹ Nkrumah took over Military Intelligence by appointing his own nominee Hassan (who was promoted from the rank of Colonel to Brigadier), as its Director.² He also ordered the premature retirement of Major-General Otu, Chief of the Defence Staff, and Major-General Ankrah, the Deputy Chief, in 1965, without giving the country any official explanation therefor. This became another irritant in the military's relations with Nkrumah.

1 See Dennis Austin, Ghana Observed (Manchester, 1976), p. 105.

2 See Robert E. Dowse, "The Military and Political Development", in Colin Leys, ed., Politics and Change in Developing Countries (Cambridge, 1966), p. 235.

The biggest provocation for the military was the formation of a para-military force, the President's Own Regiment. Officers for this body were trained in Russia. Hence they remained distinct from the rest of the army, which was British trained. Besides, a considerable portion of the defence budget was earmarked for the President's Own Regiment. This cut into the share of the regular army officers. The military regarded the autonomous character of the regiment and its higher perks and privileges as a gross violation of its organizational pattern and procedures.³

When in June 1960 the Congo crisis erupted, Nkrumah decided to play an arbiter's role. He sent a number of army officers to the Congo in anticipation of the UN peace-keeping force. These officers were unwilling to get embroiled in the chaotic conditions of the Congo. To quote Afrifa: "Among our troops Nkrumah became unpopular.... They realized that he was sending them to war without proper equipment and adequate preparation. The moment they started complaining I knew that the days of the Convention People's Party were numbered."⁴ Though the Ghanaian contingent was supposed to operate under UN consent, Nkrumah wanted it to side with Patrice Lumumba. The officers disliked their Government's partisan stance because in their opinion, it would only obstruct UN operations.

3 Colonel A.A. Afrifa alleges that the President's Own Regiment was given better treatment than the regular army though he does not give details. See his book The Ghana Coup, 24 February 1966 (London, 1967), p. 100.

4 Ibid., p. 105.

Moreover, in order to get on the right side of Lumumba Nkrumah sent two emissaries, Djin and Welbeck, to the Congo. Their main task was "to buttress the position of the Congolese Prime Minister and to maintain his own [Nkrumah's] position with him".⁵ They tried to dictate terms to the Ghanaian army officers in the Congo, and this created tension between the two. In short, the military's experience of the Congo mission was bitter and contributed to its alienation from the civilian Government.

Also, the Government's relations with the police were none too harmonious. Police Commissioner Nadjitey was dismissed and several other police officers were arrested in 1964 for alleged involvement in an attempt on the President's life. This caused an uproar among police personnel. Besides, Nkrumah removed the Border Guard Division and the Special Branch from police control and placed them under himself. The police was incensed at this "encroachment" upon its authority.

Following the CPP's attempts to make the bureaucracy subservient to its authority, a feeling of insecurity grew among civil servants. Senior officers were called upon to join the Ideological Institute at Winneba to be indoctrinated in "Nkrumahism". A Civil Service Act was enacted which seriously undermined the autonomy of the bureaucracy. Previously the Civil Service Commission used to be in charge

5 W. Scott Thompson, Ghana's Foreign Policy, 1947-1966 (Princeton, N.J., 1969), p. 126.

of the appointment and dismissal of civil servants. The newly introduced Civil Service Act classified the services and put them in four different categories. It made Grade A officers, who included all Permanent Secretaries and Ministers, directly responsible to the President.

Another factor which made the military seize power was that Ghana's economy was in need of an overhaul. After 1960 the world price of cocoa, which accounted for 64 per cent of Ghana's foreign-exchange earnings, fell drastically. Economy at the domestic level too was in disarray. The private sector was denied all incentives or opportunities. Despite heavy investments State enterprises were running at a loss. The sharp decrease in Government revenue did not bring about a corresponding reduction in the expenditure on unproductive projects. So the Government had to depend heavily upon foreign capital. Under the Capital Investment Act of 1962 it offered favourable terms to foreign investors. For example, it announced that foreign investors would be exempt from tax till they had recovered the capital they had initially invested. In spite of this concession, foreign investors did not find it safe to invest freely in Ghana's tottering economy. As the flow of foreign capital started declining, the Government resorted to the use of suppliers'

credits.⁶ Between 1961 and 1966 foreign capital of the order of £160 million was invested. More than 90 per cent of this sum, £157 million, comprised supplier credits.⁷ Most payments had to be cleared within four to six years. This meant that Ghana had to incur heavy debt-servicing charges.

The above-mentioned factors caused a balance-of-trade-and-payments deficit. The adverse trade balance in 1965 was more than £110 million.⁸ Foreign reserves estimated at £170 million at the time of Independence were also depleted in an unsuccessful attempt to meet the deficit. The CPP Government finally resorted to a policy of controls, but this affected the economy. It led to the closure of some enterprises for want of raw materials in sufficient quantities. The budgetary deficits, the heavy external debts, and the low productivity resulted in an escalation of prices.

6 Suppliers' credits are loans advanced by the suppliers to the Government. Naturally the terms are generally tough. The quality of the goods supplied may also be indifferent. Ghana's Auditor-General said in his 1962-63 reports: "It has not yet been possible to obtain sight of all Foreign Credit Agreements nor has a solution been found to the problem of verifying goods and services received by the government under the agreement." Quoted in Trevor Jones, Ghana's First Republic, 1960-66 (London, 1976), p. 169.

7 Barbara Callaway and Emily Card, "Political Constraints on Economic Development in Ghana", in Michael F. Lofchie, ed., The State of the Nations: Constraints on Development in Independent Africa (Berkeley, Calif., 1971), p. 85.

8 West Africa (London), no. 2257, 4 June 1966, p. 617.

The Takoradi harbour and railway workers went on a strike in 1961. They were soon joined by the Sekondi and Kumasi municipal transport workers. The strike showed that the working class was badly in need of economic relief. The traditional ruling class of chiefs, as also the trading community, had their own grievances against the CPP, as we shall see later. The Government made a desperate attempt to tackle the threatening situation through ideological militancy on the one hand and coercive methods on the other. Instead of launching programmes of mass mobilization and mass participation Nkrumah started accumulating power in his own hands. He established a one-party system in 1964 and declared the CPP as the only de jure party of Ghana. He also used dictatorial measures like intimidation, arbitrary dismissals, detentions, etc. to subdue the opposition. The growing political instability and the economic malaise prevailed upon the military to oust the unpopular civilian Government and capture power.

Soon after assumption of power the NLC established four committees to deal with matters related to the economy, administration, publicity, and foreign affairs. Committees like the Political Committee, which was authorized to make recommendations regarding the decrees and policies adopted since the time of the coup, and the Economic Committee, which was enjoined to formulate economic policies, consisted overwhelmingly of civil servants. The main reason for according favourable representation to civil servants in Governmental affairs was that the military, being inexperienced in the field

transfer as much as 55 per cent of their shares.²⁹ These decrees were intended to Africanize the mode of production and prevent resources from being drained out of the country by foreign companies. Actually, however, the impact of these decrees was only nominal. Firstly, because of the intense fragmentation of the Ghanaian-held shares no local industrialist or shareholder was in a position to bring these companies under his control effectively. The shareholding was so patterned as to defeat the bid of the major Ghanaian shareholders to gain control. For instance, the Swiss firm Union Trading Company (UTC) had a total of 6,000,000 shares, Van Deutz, the Swiss owner of the company, reserved 3,600,000 shares to himself and offered 2,400,000 shares for sale as required by the decree of 1975. Half of these shares were given straightway to the Basle Mission in Ghana, which had old links with the UTC. The remaining shares were given to 1,789 Ghanaian shareholders, including 824 employees of the company.³⁰

In order to make his policy of "self-reliance" a success, Acheampong tried to boost local production. As we have already noted, he declared 1972-74 as Agricultural Years,

29 The United Africa Company, the Union Trading Company, Paterson Zochonis, and the two expatriated banks, Barclays and Standard.

30 See Eboe Hutchful, "A Tale of Two Regimes: Imperialism, the Military and Class in Ghana", Review of African Political Economy (London), no. 14, January-April 1979, p. 46.

and the Board of the Centre for Civil Education and Vice-Chairman of the Political Committee. In addition to civil servants and anti-CPP political leaders, the NLC was able to attract certain distinct professional groups such as judges, lawyers, academicians, *et al.* The Political Committee, headed by a judge, E. Akuffo Addo,¹¹ had six academicians as its members; the Advisory Committee had nine.

There were other beneficiaries too of NLC rule. The tribal chiefs, for instance, who had received a raw deal during the CPP days, were promised restoration of their traditional status. Eulogizing the role of the chiefs, Afrifa said: "In the institution of chieftaincy are enshrined basic democratic ideas that are as old as our people."¹² Those appointed chiefs under the patronage of the CPP were destooled, and those deprived of their stools were recognized as the legitimate authorities of their respective areas. Moreover, the Constituent Assembly set up under the aegis of the NLC guaranteed to them due participation in Governmental affairs through a constitutional provision. (A National House of Chiefs was set up and was invested with appellate as well as advisory jurisdiction (subject to further appeal to the Supreme Court) to deal with chieftaincy cases.) Regional Houses of Chiefs were given original jurisdiction. Finally, the position of the

11 Nkrumah dismissed Addo for his judgement exonerating Adomafio and others from the charge of involvement in an attempt on his (Nkrumah's) life.

12 Afrifa, n. 3, p. 115.

chiefs was strengthened in the local councils where they were to be in a two-thirds majority over the elected members.¹³ The NLC took pains to win the chiefs over mainly because they could serve as liaison between the rural masses and the military and thus help the military to acquire a footing at the grass-roots level.

The NLC's declared policy of promotion of private enterprise generated some hope among local business men. These had suffered during the CPP's rule because of Nkrumah's bias against the private sector. Nkrumah had introduced import licencing in 1961 to check the trade-and-payments deficit. As the economy started declining rapidly, he had imposed heavy taxes and stringent licence controls on the private sector. Also, many private business men had been dislocated by the State agencies. For instance, the Ghana National Construction Corporation had been given the bulk of Government contracts in spite of its being a losing concern. The United Ghana Farmers Co-operative Council had enjoyed a monopoly over internal cocoa transactions, and this had affected a large section of middlemen. Five thousand Ghanaian wholesalers and many more retailers had faced difficulties on account of their inability to obtain imported commodities without bribing the agents of the Ghana National Trading Company, another State

13 The new constitutional draft merely provided for a 3-tier system of Regional District and Local Councils. It did not deal with it at length. The details were to be provided by subsequent legislation.

enterprise set up in 1961.¹⁴ In other words, the Government's policies had led to collusion between the big magnates and the Government authorities. While the former had been able to extract benefits, the small traders had been pushed out of the market.

Thus, by co-opting important elements into its administration and assuring the aggrieved sections of redress of their grievances, the NLC gained their support.

The most complicated problem which required immediate solution was the economic depression. It was only by means of a boost to the economy that the NLC could have strengthened its position. Soon after its installation, therefore, the NLC reoriented the country's economic policies.

Ghana's total debts were of the order of £280 million in 1966. As we have already seen, these largely consisted of suppliers' credits which were unfavourable from both the interest and duration points of view. The uncompromising postures of the Western countries in general, and the United States in particular, towards Ghana's needs for better credit terms and investment guarantees and their manipulation of the world market prices of cocoa had made the situation appear irretrievable. A marked shift became perceptible when the NLC adopted a pro-Western stance. It devalued the cedi from 10s. to 7s. It regarded the liberal economic ideology of the West as an answer to Ghana's problems. The Western creditors

¹⁴ Callaway and Card, n. 7, p. 86.

reciprocated by rescheduling the country's debts. About 80 per cent of the debts were rescheduled for repayment over a period of eight years; the rest of the debts were made repayable between 1967 and 1971. The NLC received a loan of £13 million from the International Monetary Fund, a loan of £2 million from the Federal Republic of Germany, and smaller loans from countries like the Netherlands, Norway, and Switzerland for agricultural projects.¹⁵

The NLC took some stringent measures for cutting down Government expenditure. It reduced the number of Ministries from thirty-two to seventeen and slashed down expenditure on its embassies overseas. It also imposed a wage freeze.

The NLC evolved private-sector-oriented policies in line with General Ankrah's proclamation: "Expansion would for the most part be left to private enterprise."¹⁶ Nkrumah had done his best to ensure that the "public and co-operative sector of the productive economy" expanded "at the maximum possible rate".¹⁷

Enterprises controlled by the State had also been, as mentioned earlier, a drain on the economy. Government expenditure on these enterprises had gone up by three-and-a-half times within six years (1961-67).¹⁸ And yet the fifty-three

15 See William Gutteridge, The Military in African Politics (London, 1969), p. 119.

16 Africa Diary, vol. 6, no. 34, 15-21 August 196, p. 2998.

17 Dennis Austin and Robin Luckham, eds, Politicians and Soldiers in Ghana (London, 1975), p. 40.

18 Samir Amin, Neo-Colonialism in West Africa (London, 1973), p. 246.

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enterprises owned by the State, as also the twelve concerns owned jointly by the Government and certain private establishments had been operating "at a loss".¹⁹ The NLC drastically cut down outlay on Government undertakings. It would up the 7-year plan formulated by the CPP in 1963 to foster the growth of State-owned industries and agriculture. Its policy of free enterprise served the twin purposes of strengthening Ghana's ties with the West and appeasing the indigenous business community. The NLC abolished the restrictive controls that Government agencies had exercised over imports under Nkrumah's Presidentship. It also passed the Ghanaian Enterprises Decree in December 1966 to reserve some business undertakings exclusively for the Ghanaians (though it was implemented only by the subsequent Government).

The overall impact of the above-mentioned policies was, however, little. The devaluation of the currency and the heavy decrease in the allocations for Government projects resulted in a cutback in import consumption by 20 per cent in two years.²⁰ On the other hand the devaluation of the currency made commodities expensive. The reversing of the process of industrialization caused a drop in the tax proceeds. Though the Government offered tax relief for three years, foreign investors did not consider it worth while to invest their

19 Africa Diary (New Delhi), vol. 7, no. 16, 16-22 April 1967, p. 3345.

20 Amin, n. 18, p. 249.

capital in Ghana. No doubt the NLC received loans from the West, but it used them only to meet the country's urgent capital requirements and cushion its balance-of-payments problem for the time being. It failed to invest them in productive sectors and thereby mitigate the country's dependence on foreign aid. The various ad hoc measures taken by the NLC did not make much of an impact on the country's productive potential.

Right from the beginning the NLC projected itself, not as a contestant for political power, but as a reformist organization that had attempted a brief intervention to rid the body politic of its ills. Soon after it took over power, for instance, it announced its intention to retire from the scene upon the completion of its self-assigned task. This announcement gained credibility when the NLC proceeded to set up a Constitutional Commission in November 1966, and asked it to prepare the first draft of a constitution and then submit it for discussion to a Constituent Assembly.

The NLC's withdrawal programme was not an example of any high idealism on its part or want of interest in power. It was an outcome of some developments which underlined the danger inherent in any undue prolongation of its rule. An important landmark during the NLC's rule was the counter coup attempted by an officer of the Reconnaissance Regiment, Lieutenant Samuel Arthur in April 1967. This shook the

ruling caucus. It was an expression of the frustration felt by the junior officers over the arbitrary promotions²¹ which the senior officers enjoyed. The junior officers had been obliged to go through a long-drawn-out process for their promotions, a process which could not be circumvented except through a counter coup. Kotoka was killed and Ankrah had a narrow escape. The counter coup highlighted the fact that the military involvement in politics was eroding the institutional cohesion of the armed forces, that any extension of military rule was fraught with dangerous consequences, and that its preoccupation with administration was responsible for the neglect of its organizational matters. As a result the NLC associated more civilians with its rule. It set up a 14-member Executive Committee of civilian commissioners and vested it with ministerial powers.

Meanwhile the ruling nucleus got decimated: Kotoka was slain in the subversive attempt made in 1967. Ankrah, who had assumed the chairmanship of the NLC after vowing "to stamp out corruption and abuse of office",²² had to resign in the face of confirmed corruption charges against himself. Nunoo, who was Commissioner of Police and a member of the NLC, was dismissed for leaking out the secret proceedings of the Executive Council regarding Ankrah's

21 Following the coup, Major-General A. Ankrah, Colonel Emmanuel Kotoka, Colonel Albert Kwesi Ocran, and Major A.A. Afrifa had become General, Major-General, Brigadier and Colonel respectively. See Jon Kraus, "The Men in Charge", Africa Report (Washington, D.C.), April 1966, p. 16.

22 The Times (London), 13 April 1969.

case.²³ Otu was taken into custody for insurgency activity aimed at securing the restoration of Nkrumah. All this made the NLC hasten its programme to end military rule.

A factor which facilitated the NLC's disengagement plan was that it had an alternative political group to which it could hand over power and yet enjoy a privileged position. As this alternative political group was an adversary of the ousted CPP, the NLC automatically developed a relationship with it.

The NLC might have decided to review its political programme also because of its failure to revitalize the economy. Its channels of support too were contracting. Its relations with the trade unions were not exactly harmonious. The NLC turned down the demand of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) for certain amendments in the Industrial Relations Act and a virtual restoration of the right to strike. It reduced the number of the scholarships available to students and disqualified a number of those who were already in receipt of scholarships. This alienated the student community.²⁴ The subversive decrees issued by the NLC were regarded as repressive in nature and as constituting an infringement of individual liberty. They came under criticism especially at the hands of the judges and the lawyers.

23 See West Africa, no. 2710, 10 May 1969, p. 538.

24 West Africa, no. 2604, 29 April 1967, p. 561.

As stated earlier, the first step which the NLC took under its withdrawal programme was to institute a Constitutional Commission in November 1966. Its functions were to record the views of the different sections of society regarding the nature of Ghana's constitution and to prepare a draft. In January 1968 the draft constitution was published; in January 1969 an indirectly selected Constituent Assembly started its proceedings; and in July 1969 the Constituent Assembly endorsed the draft constitution without making any substantial modification.²⁵ A crucial provision of the Constitution (Article 71) thus adopted was that a candidate would be debarred from contesting elections if an inquiry commission had found that he had "acquired assets unlawfully defrauded the State, misused or abused his office or wilfully acted in a manner prejudicial to the interest of the State".²⁶ Through this provision the Constituent Assembly helped the NLC in weeding out such political actors as could either have emerged as potential opponents of the candidates that might be supported by the NLC or as harbingers of the deposed CPP. Here one may mention that the NLC had, after announcing its intention to return the country to civilian rule, passed an array of decrees disqualifying

25 The fundamental principle of the new constitution was the separation of powers specifically stipulating restraints on the Prime Minister and his Council of Ministers.

26 Africa Research Bulletin (Exeter), vol. 6, no. 6, 15 July 1969, p. 1433.

a number of its opponents from political participation. A decree passed on 20 April, i.e. a short while before the restoration of political parties, laid down that no one who was a member of the CPP at the time of the coup would be permitted to form a new party or acquire membership of such a party.²⁷

The Constituent Assembly bestowed upon the military rulers a constitutional safeguard against any punitive action that new political entrants might take against them for staging a coup d'etat. This provision encompassed all of the NLC's operatives. The only instance of the Assembly's intransigence was its rejection of a proposal that a triumvirate consisting of army and police representatives should be set up and vested with Presidential powers during the first five years. In order to win the Assembly over the NLC made a major concession to it. Previously it had empowered the Assembly only to approve and not to promulgate the Constitution. Now it passed a decree under which the Assembly enjoyed both the powers. However, the decree also included an injunction for a review of the rejected provision. The Assembly finally voted a 3-man Presidential Commission with a minimum 3-year term but authorized the Parliament to disband it even before the expiry of three years.

Thus the Constitution was on the whole an NLC-tailored document. Through the various Constitutional regulations the

27 For details, see West Africa, no. 3710, 19 May 1969, p. 523.

NLC indemnified itself against all possible political victimization and guaranteed itself a privileged status too. Thus, after minimizing the disadvantages that withdrawal might entail, the NLC went ahead with its demilitarization programme according to plan.

The ban that the NLC had imposed on political parties soon after the coup in 1966 was lifted on 1 May 1969. Soon there emerged no fewer than sixteen parties contesting 140 Parliamentary seats though, eventually, on account of alliances, five were left in the field.²⁸ The major rivals were Kofi Busia's Progress Party and Gbedemah's National Alliance of Liberals.²⁹

The election came off on 29 August. The Progress Party swept the polls by capturing as many as 105 out of the 140 seats. The NAL won only 28 seats. Busia's victory was in fact a foregone conclusion. The NLC looked upon him as the most reliable, and hence he was its most favoured candidate in the election. He had been assigned an active political role during military rule, and his appointment to such key institutions as the Political Committee, the Economic Committee, the Centre for Civil Education, etc. had given him an opportunity to establish himself as a political figure. In contrast the

28 The Progress Party (PP), the National Alliance of Liberals (NAL), the United Nationalist Party (UNA), the All People's Republican Party (APRP), and the People's Action Party (PAP).

29 See Appendix I.

opposition had been proscribed and pushed to the background. The chief political adversary, Gbedemah, who had for some time been Finance Minister under Nkrumah and who had been estranged from Nkrumah subsequently, was accused of illegally receiving a sum of £17,000, thus an attempt was made to tarnish his image. Even after he won from his constituency he was deprived of his seat because of the adverse findings of an inquiry commission against him in the embezzlement case. Moreover, the political parties which had been off the political scene for a long time were given very little time for organizing themselves and participating in the election.

Busia's victory can be attributed partly to votes cast on tribal lines. Ethnic constituents which had once been supporters of those opposed to the CPP rallied behind Busia's Progressive Party. The Akans, for example, lent support to him. Another major reason for securing Akan vote was that Busia himself was an Akan. Consequently he won all the seats in Ashanti Brong Ahafo and the Central Region. The anti-Ewe feeling, rampant since the coup, also militated against Gbedemah, who was an Ewe.³⁰

On 3 September Busia was sworn in as Prime Minister. Thus civilian rule took the place of the military regime.

30 Some of the factors responsible for the emergence of the anti-Ewe bias during military rule were the dismissal of an Akan-speaking commander of the military on conspiratorial charges, the detention of a large number of Ashanti people in connexion with the counter coup attempt of 1967, the removal of the two Ga members, Ankrah and Police Commissioner Nunoo, from the NLC, etc.

Busia derived strength from the same elements that had been the main allies of the NLC. In other words, the bureaucrats and the tribal chiefs lent support to him.

Very soon the nature of Busia's administration underwent a transformation. The Presidential Commission composed of Afrifa, Harley, and Ocran was abolished, and Justice Ollennu appointed as acting President. This step indicated that the civilian Government was itching to reduce the military to a political non-entity. Such a stance can only be ascribed to a discovery that the military's support was not indispensable for the continuance of civilian rule. Some formidable civilian sections were close to Busia. He, therefore, felt that he could afford to exclude the military from his political apparatus.

Busia's Government had harmonious relations with the West. It was, therefore, able to persuade Western creditors to reschedule most of Ghana's loans. However, the debt problem was just one among several maladies which afflicted the economy. A policy of liberal controls, subsequently replaced with stringent measures, failed to boost the economy. Under the Import Liberalization Policy of the Progress Party almost two-thirds of the imported consumer goods were placed on Open General Licence. In 1971 the current budgetary deficit shot up to £70 million, almost double that of the previous

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year.³¹ Hence Busia introduced an austerity budget. This included an increase in the surcharges levied on imports, subjection of imports to a high level of taxation, a 5 per cent "national development" levy on salaries and abolition of perks like the car allowance to civil servants. The cedi was also devalued by 44 per cent in December 1971. This resulted in a heavy burden on the masses as well as the salaried class. It also gave strength to the pro-Nkrumah trend in some quarters. Busia, sensing political turmoil, secured the passage of a bill which authorized the Government to imprison for five years any one suspected of pro-Nkrumah activity. Force, however, could not contain the public discontent over political and economic instability. Busia's growing unpopularity emboldened the military to topple his Government and re-enter politics.

31 Africa South of Sahara, 1973-79 (London), p. 400.

CHAPTER 2

RULE OF THE NATIONAL REDEMPTION COUNCIL, 1972-1978

Prime Minister Kofi Busia's civilian rule came to an abrupt end on 13 January 1972, when he was overthrown in a coup led by Lieutenant Colonel I.K. Acheampong. This represented the re-entry of the military into politics after three years of civilian rule.

Acheampong accused Kofi Busia of "corruption, arbitrary dismissals, economic mismanagement", etc. and announced that his Government would provide a viable alternative.

The military had been sure that by transferring power to Busia's elected Progress Party its interests would be served and its position safeguarded. Through incorporation of some provisions in the newly promulgated Constitution it had ensured an important position for itself. Things, however, did not turn out as expected. Busia soon deprived the military of the sheltered position it had created for itself. The Presidential Commission, as we have pointed out in the first chapter, had been empowered by the Constituent Assembly to discharge the President's

1 Africa Research Bulletin (Exeter), vol. 9, no. 1, 15 February 1972, p. 234.

functions for three years. Soon after his take-over, however, Busia disbanded it and thereby eliminated the military's influence on the polity.

Busia cut down the military's share in the budget from NC 49.1 million in 1969 to NC 45 million in 1970 and further to NC 40.4 million in 1971. Members of the armed forces were also required to pay taxes on goods ordered from abroad. This made replenishment quite expensive.² The measure inevitably antagonized military personnel since they were used to an affluent life.³

Civilian officers, who had made a major contribution to Busia's victory in the election of 1969, were also disillusioned by his administration. Busia arbitrarily dismissed a large number of civil servants (about 568 of them). His guiding principle was that "my Government will exercise its right to employ only those whom it wishes to employ".⁴ The austerity budget of 1971 had deprived the bureaucracy of many privileges it had previously enjoyed. This made him unpopular with the bureaucracy, which facilitated Acheampong's take-over.

2 Anos Perlmutter and Valerie Flave Bennett, ed., The Political Influence of the Military (New Haven, Conn., 1960), p. 348.

3 By suspending some senior police officials Busia lost their support also.

4 Africa Digest (London), vol. 17, no. 3, June 1970, p. 25.

Busia devalued the cedi, as we saw in the 1st chapter, from 98 US cents to 55 US cents. This led to an acute shortage of goods in the country. There was simultaneously a decline in production on account of Ghana's dependence on import of raw materials and food. The prices of foodstuffs, consumer goods, and finished products shot up and placed an increasingly unbearable additional burden on the common man.

Another factor which paved the way for the coup was the politicization of the military. The military had entered politics in 1956 in violation of its cherished principle, viz isolation from politics. After its voluntary withdrawal in 1969 it continued to watch Busia's performance and to judge it from the sidelines. It emerged on the stage again when it felt that the civilian Government had failed to deliver the goods.

On assuming power, Acheampong assured active participation in his Government called the National Redemption Council (NRC) to all sections of society. To afford economic relief to the hard-pressed middle class and to obtain its support, he resorted to a revaluation of the cedi by 42 per cent. The masses held Busia's economic policies responsible for their deplorable plight. They wanted a reversal (or abrogation) of Busia's policies. Revaluation of the cedi put some hope into them though this was short-lived.

The civil servants who had suffered as the result of arbitrary dismissals and interference in their functioning under Busia's rule were promised a larger measure of political independence and representation on the various Commissions and Committees. In order to rally the youth behind the NLC, Acheampong declared that "student power was one of the greatest phenomena of our time".⁵ He called upon the youth to support him so that the task of nation-building and mass mobilization might be accomplished.

Acheampong's first two years in office were comfortable for wide sections of society. The revaluation of the cedi by 42 per cent, together with the bountiful crops made possible by favourable weather conditions, provided considerable relief to the common man. Acheampong won over the farmers by increasing procurement prices, by declaring 1972-74 as Agricultural Years, and by initiating agrarian projects like Operation Feed Yourself. He restored trade union rights to labour. The trading community became hopeful of opportunities when the New Investment Policy Decree was passed.⁶ Acheampong's promise to grant academic freedom appeased the intelligentsia. By reinstating all the officials dismissed by Busia he gained the

5 West Africa (London), no. 2373, 7 July 1972, p. 878.

6 The New Investment Policy Decree gave a number of concessions to investors: guarantees against expropriation, exemption from import and customs duties, purchase tax, etc.

confidence of the civil servants. He placed the students by restoring to them their scholarships. Consequently the routine issues of legitimacy and withdrawal did not surface during the first two years of his rule.

The coup of 1972 was different from the coup of 1966, not only because it was the second coup, as Luckham argues,⁷ but also because the objectives of the two coups were at variance. Acheampong stated the fundamental difference between the National Liberation Council (NLC) and the NRC in the course of an interview granted by him to a correspondent of West Africa. He said:

NLC was more corrective. The people who organized it did not get down to work as seriously as they should have done. They set about to correct some of the wrongs but did not move to change our way of life. I would call theirs a coup and call mine a revolution. Our aim is to make a fundamental change in the attitudes, tastes, and general way of life in the country. ⁸

In other words, the leaders of the NLC intended their rule to be an interregnum in Ghana's politics. They regarded themselves as performing a remedial role. The moment they felt that their task of removing the cancerous part of the body politic was over, they were prepared to hand over power to civilians. The NLC thus performed a function which Lee

7 Dennis Austin and Robin Luckham, Politicians and Soldiers in Ghana (London, 1973), p. 3.

8 West Africa, no. 2366, 19 May 1972, p. 609.

had envisaged for the African armies: it undertook "a leading role in affecting the change-over from one set of civilians to another".⁹

The NLC's role was of a limited nature. It relied upon civilians to perform political functions. Most of the Commissions -- as, e.g., the Constitutional Committee, the Political Committee, etc. - consisted of civilians. In contrast Acheampong's policy was to keep civilians out of power. By co-opting a large number of military officers into his caucus he tried to make politics an exclusive preserve of the military. Moreover, whereas the NLC was a coalition of military and police personnel, the NRC was almost entirely a Government consisting of military officials. Among the twelve members of the NLC only one represented the police.¹⁰

Another striking difference between the NRC and the NLC was that the NLC considered its political involvement a violation of the military tradition. Consequently it was constantly haunted by the question of legitimacy. NRC leader A.A. Afrifa remarked: "I have always felt it painful to associate myself with a coup to overthrow a constitutional government, however perverted that constitution may be. It was painful therefore to come to the

9 J.M. Lee, African Armies and Civil Order (New York, 1969), p. 136.

10 J.H. Cobbina, the Inspector General of Police, was the sole representative of the police in the NRC. See Africa Research Bulletin, vol. 9, no. 1, 15 February 1972, p. 2348.

conclusion that the coup was necessary to save our country and our people."¹¹ Considering a justification expedient, he said: "The aim of the unconstitutional military action we took is to regain this freedom and to create the conditions and atmosphere in which true democracy can thrive. This is our defence."¹² In contrast Acheampong was far from looking upon his seizure of power as an unconstitutional act. He held: "Politicians are wrong if they think they are better citizens and better suited to rule the country."¹³ He held that the military was an accepted political participant and that his own Government was a viable alternative to the civilian rule he had overthrown. He planned to prolong his rule for the cause he had sought to serve by means of his coup, viz "to change the whole order of things and bring new blood into the confused political and economic scene of Ghana".¹⁴

Acheampong's perception of the role of the military in politics is only a part of the explanation for his not considering it necessary to fix a time-limit for his eventual withdrawal. A more significant reason is that the issue of disengagement had become complex unlike in 1966. The military

11 A.A. Africa, The Ghana Coup, 24 February 1966 (London, 1966), p. 39.

12 Ibid., p. 124.

13 Africa Research Bulletin, vol. 11, no. 1, 15 February 1974, p. 3104.

14 West Africa, no. 2856, 19 May 1972, p. 609.

had already ousted two significant civilian political groupings having different ideological leanings. With those two major political groupings out of the picture, there was no reliable political organization of any significance left in the field -- a reliable political organization to which the military might safely transfer power and be assured of favourable treatment under its rule. The NRC in 1966 could after overthrowing the Convention People's Party (CPP) count on the political group opposed to it and nurture it into a potential ruling group.

The NRC consisted of twelve members. There were, besides, a 16-member Executive Council and nine Regional Commissioners for the Ministries. Only one civilian and one police officer were given membership of the Government.¹⁵ Acheampong kept civilians out with a will. Indeed, within four days of its being sworn in the 9-member Civilian National Advisory Committee, which consisted of prominent Ghanaian judges, lawyers, business men, professors, and civil servants and which the NRC had

¹⁵ Justice S.H. Moore was the only civilian commissioner; J.H. Cobbina, a police representative, assisted by Major A.H. Selorney, was given the Internal Affairs Ministry; all other portfolios were given over to army officers. Acheampong himself held charge of all key portfolios such as Defence, Finance, and Economic Affairs. See Africa Research Bulletin, vol. 9, no. 1, 15 February 1972, p. 2351.

appointed during the first month of the coup, was disbanded.¹⁶

In 1975 a series of reshuffles within the military took place. In order to eliminate the possibility of any powerful section emerging within the military, Acheampong removed some members who had formed the leadership of the coup in 1972. These members included Lassen Cobbina and Bernasko.¹⁷ Another important step taken by Acheampong was the establishment of a Supreme Military Council (SMC). The SMC replaced the National Executive Council of the NRC and was made the highest legislative and administrative organ of the state. It consisted of Acheampong, the heads of the three military services, the Inspector General of Police, and the head of the Border Guard and Chief of Defence Staff. With the SMC as the highest legislative body the military became a powerful institution. It not only concentrated all legislative and executive powers in its own hands but by abolishing the Supreme Court took over judicial power as well. The existing Court of Appeal was designated the highest court of appeal. The reason advanced was rather flimsy. The SMC argued that the Supreme Court

16 The reason given was that the "Committee was irrelevant to the problems of the day" inasmuch as it consisted of "tired old men" some of these men represented powerful vested interests. See Maxwell Owusu, "Economic Nationalism, Pan-Africanism and the Military: Ghana's National Redemption Council", Africa Today (Denver, Colorado), vol. 22, no. 1, January-March 1975, p. 36.

17 See Africa South of the Sahara 1973-74 (London: Europa), p. 403.

had been set up under the Constitution of 1969 mainly to interpret the Constitution and that, with the Constitution having become defunct, the Supreme Court had automatically lost its relevance.

Thus the NRC/SNC abolished the political framework and the various auxiliary institutions set up during civilian rule. The Constitution promulgated under the aegis of the NLC, which had provided the necessary structure for Busia's rule, was rendered null and void. Its underlying principle of separation of powers was thrown overboard. The institution of political parties became another casualty under the SNC. The Supreme Court, which had been charged with powers of judicial review and assigned the role of guardian of Parliamentary Government, was dismantled. The abolition of these institutions at a stroke resulted in a political vacuum.

Apart from banning political parties, the Government made the holding of political meetings and indeed political involvement of any kind an offence punishable by a fine of a thousand cedis. By another decree it made it unlawful for people to hold a public meeting or take out a procession within five hundred yards of any meeting-place of the NRC/SNC, the Executive Council, or any Committee of the NRC.¹⁸

¹⁸ Africa Research Bulletin, vol. 9, no. 5, 15 June 1972, p. 24/6. The NRC froze the bank accounts of the deposed Prime Minister and ordered the arrest and detention of some Cabinet Ministers, Secretaries, and prominent members of the outlawed Progress Party.

A subversive decree was issued in 1972 making certain offences, including attempts to oust the Government, subject to the death penalty. The decree provided for a military tribunal which had the final say, and there was to be no appeal.

From time to time the NRC/SNC alleged that attempts at a counter-coup were being made. It did so obviously to justify the enactment of stringent laws. A.A. Afrifa, the former head of State, was arrested for allegedly plotting to bring Busia back to power. Soon after the NRC's accession to power some were sentenced to death for allegedly conspiring to overthrow Acheampong.¹⁹

On the one hand the NRC tried to forestall opposition through the aforesaid dread decrees; on the other it adopted a number of measures for establishing effective control over the administration. For instance, it followed

19 Nine Ghanaians, five soldiers and the rest civilians, were charged with, and found guilty of subversion and were executed in 1972. The civilians included Emil Adziam, who had been Press Secretary to Busia, and George Ofusu Amash, Director of the Special Branch under Busia. West Africa, no. 2383, 22 September 1972, p. 1252.

The NRC declared a state of public emergency and set up a National Security Council. It made this organization responsible for the maintenance of national security, public safety, and public order and empowered it to take any measure for dealing with a threatening situation. Public safety actually meant absence of any threat to the SNC's own office.

a policy of including army officers in key political bodies. It is important to note that even when they were assigned to serve in public corporations the officers retained their ranks within the military hierarchy. A striking case in point is that of the head of State and Chairman of the NRC. As Commander-in-Chief he still retained his position as a Colonel and, like any other member of the NRC, continued to occupy his pre-coup accommodation in the barracks.²⁰ Acheampong used his power of patronage to secure the loyalty of army officers. He granted them rapid promotions. For instance, he promoted members of the SMC on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Ghana's Independence. As the result, Major-General F.W. Akuffe, Chief of the Defence Staff, became a Lieutenant-General, and Brigadier Robert Kotey, Army Commander, became Major-General.²¹

Soon after assuming office, Acheampong reversed the economic policies followed by the NRC. A major economic shift became perceptible when he repudiated all debts and other

20 See Owusu, n. 16, p. 46.

21 The newly established SMC in 1973 announced promotions for many of the newly appointed Commissioners. For instance, Colonel Robert Kotey, the new Commissioner for Information, became a Brigadier, Lieutenant-Colonel David Iddisah, the new Commissioner for Transport and Communications, Lieutenant-Colonel Roger, the new Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, and Lieutenant-Colonel Sack, the new Commissioner for Economic Planning were made Colonels. See Africa Research Bulletin, vol. 9, no. 9, 15 November 1975, p. 3799.

obligations arising from contracts "where there has been a fundamental breach of such contract on the part of the contractors".²² The contracts signed before February 1966 were subjected to "a thorough and rigorous review".²³ Acheampong repudiated contracts worth some US\$94.4 million made with four British companies, saying that they were vitiated by corruption. He subjected the remaining debts to rescheduled terms of payment. They were to be paid on International Development Association terms -- i.e., ten years of grace; 10 per cent to be repaid over the next twenty years; and the rest within the next thirty years. This policy stood in sharp contrast with the NLC's decision to repay all foreign debts, including the doubtful ones.

Acheampong revalued the cedi by 42 per cent so that the prices of essential commodities might come down to the pre-devaluation level.²⁴ He did so on the assumption that "the shortage of goods was a direct result of Busia's December devaluation".²⁵ Busia had liberalized imports, and there had been a rising demand for more imports (because of slack indigenous production). At the same time there had been a decline in the cocoa price in the world market. (It dropped

22 Ibid., vol. 9, no. 1, 29 February 1972, p. 2272.

23 Ibid., p. 2272.

24 Busia devalued the cedi by 44 per cent in 1971.

25 West Africa, no. 2374, 17 July 1973, p. 917.

from £330 a ton in 1970 to £230 in 1971.)²⁶ This contributed to a decrease in cocoa production. Besides, there had been an intensification of competition in the world market. The outcome of these factors was that whereas in 1970 Ghana's total export earnings were of the order of \$467.4 million, its total earnings through cocoa export were \$300.4 million. In other words, earnings through export of cocoa constituted 64 per cent of the total export earnings. In 1971 the total export earnings came down to \$203.5 million, thus constituting only 57 per cent of the total export output.²⁷

Under a policy of self-reliance Acheampong issued a decree providing for Government participation in the operation of mining companies. Another decree empowered the NRC to acquire 40 per cent of equity shares in all foreign banks, and 50 per cent of equity shares in the breweries.²⁸ Yet another decree passed in 1975 required foreign companies to transfer a fixed proportion of their shares to Ghanaian ownership. The larger expatriate commercial firms were made to transfer 40 per cent of their shares while other companies were obliged to

26 Africa Recorder (New Delhi), vol. 11, no. 2, 12-25 February 1972, p. 3039.

27 See Thomas K. Morrisson, "The Political Economy of Export Instability in Developing Countries: The Case of Ghana", Journal of African Studies (Berkeley, Calif.), vol. 6, no. 3, fall 1979, p. 161.

28 Owusu, n. 16, p. 49.

transfer as much as 55 per cent of their shares.²⁹ These decrees were intended to Africanize the mode of production and prevent resources from being drained out of the country by foreign companies. Actually, however, the impact of these decrees was only nominal. Firstly, because of the intense fragmentation of the Ghanaian-held shares no local industrialist or shareholder was in a position to bring these companies under his control effectively. The shareholding was so patterned as to defeat the bid of the major Ghanaian shareholders to gain control. For instance, the Swiss firm Union Trading Company (UTC) had a total of 6,000,000 shares, Van Deutz, the Swiss owner of the company, reserved 3,600,00 shares to himself and offered 2,400,000 shares for sale as required by the decree of 1975. Half of these shares were given straightway to the Basle Mission in Ghana, which had old links with the UTC. The remaining shares were given to 1,789 Ghanaian shareholders, including 824 employees of the company.³⁰

In order to make his policy of "self-reliance" a success, Acheampong tried to boost local production. As we have already noted, he declared 1972-74 as Agricultural Years,

29 The United Africa Company, the Union Trading Company, Paterson Zochonis, and the two expatriated banks, Barclays and Standard.

30 See Eboe Hutchful, "A Tale of Two Regimes: Imperialism, the Military and Class in Ghana", Review of African Political Economy (London), no. 14, January-April 1979, p. 46.

and said that "every Ghanaian must think agriculture important because on agriculture hinges the success of the economic war we have launched".³¹ A significant feature of the agrarian programme was Operation Feed Yourself. The main objective of this operation was to promote production and effect fair distribution of local foodstuffs such as maize, rice, groundnuts, vegetables, etc. for local consumption. A secondary objective was to accelerate production of exportable commodities like coconut, palm oil, sugarcane, groundnuts, etc. The Government gave incentives to farmers to grow more through guaranteed minimum prices, better credit facilities, and regular supplies of fertilizer and the various kinds of agricultural equipment.

[In spite of increased investment in agriculture, Operation Feed Yourself did not yield the desired results. No doubt there were plentiful harvests in the beginning, but this was due to favourable weather conditions, not due to Operation Feed Yourself. Food distribution and marketing problems were left unsolved. Smuggling and hoarding caused artificial food scarcities. In spite of surplus crops the prices of agricultural products rose sharply as they had done during the famine which hit the Ashanti Region.]

Production did record a rise in the Northern Region and the Upper Region as Acheampong claimed. This, however,

31 African Recorder, vol. 11, no. 26, 16-31 December 1972, p. 3289.

was owing to mechanized farming carried out largely by the rich farmers, especially the Northerners (Dagombas) and the inhabitants of Tamale. A host of army officers and other civil servants had also acquired farms because of their influence and profited by the Governmental subsidies and concessions actually meant for the poor farmers.

Another economic measure taken by Acheampong was the imposition of restrictions on imports in order to relieve the economy of mounting indebtedness, ease the balance-of-payments problem, and introduce austerity in public consumption. He placed a total ban on the import of a hundred commodities under an import-licencing system in 1972. He ordered all imports to be "strictly"³² controlled. To promote exports he revived the export bonus scheme, which had been abolished by the NLC in 1971. Also he set up an Essential Commodities Committee to supervise the import of certain "essential commodities" and ensure their fair distribution.

(The success of the policy of controls was dependent on the rate of growth of production, agricultural as well as industrial. However, there was a great shortfall in indigenous industrial production mainly because of the restricted import of raw materials. Since most of the production inputs were not being manufactured locally, the shortage of inputs led to

32 West Africa, no. 3134, 1 August 1977, p. 1576.

decline in production.³³ The decrease in agricultural production was due to the failure of Operation Feed Yourself, as also to unfavourable weather conditions in the later period. The outcome was the disappearance of all essential commodities from the market.

The Government had announced a subsidy of 30 million cedis for the import of items like beef, matches, sugar, soaps etc. to lessen the burden of the poor. However, far from achieving its purpose, it only led to hoarding by traders who sold the goods subsequently at hiked-up prices. When the subsidy was finally withdrawn in 1974, the Government increased the prices in order to make smuggling and hoarding less profitable. This added to the economic hardships of the poor. Even the benefits accruing from the price boom in the cocoa market did not percolate down to the poor farmers. Only those who managed to smuggle goods outside Ghana received a fair return.

The NDC abandoned the aforesaid economic policies in 1976 on account of their manifest failure and introduced a system called the Special Unnumbered Licences System (SUL). Under this system it permitted importers to use their individual foreign exchange. This measure only exacerbated exchange of

33 "The structure of the economy is such that growth in output tends always to require corresponding and sustainable increase in related imported inputs. The five year development plan (1975-80) estimates that in order to realize annual growth in output of 5.5 per cent imports will have to increase more than 6 per cent per annum." See Africa Guide (England), 1979, p. 147.

money by importers at high black rates in order to import commodities. To recoup their costs, importers shifted the burden eventually to consumers.³⁴

To cope with the scarcity of raw materials, the SMC followed a multi-tiered policy. It completely waived controls on the import of the raw materials needed for certain industries.³⁵ It liberalized controls on the import of the raw materials needed by the other industries. The criterion was the nature of the manufactured goods. Liberalization caused a heavy burden on the exchequer and on the balance of payments. To ensure that the industries concerned gave the Government a share in the profits, it was stipulated that they should show clear indication of exporting some of their products through formal, i.e. Governmental, channels.³⁶

The success of the liberalization policy aimed at a speedy procurement of raw materials depended on the Bank of Ghana's capacity to collect enough foreign exchange for financing imports, and also on the ability of exporters to earn the required foreign exchange through "formal channels". The implementation of the policy centred on how the Bank of Ghana was going to finance the liberalization. No solution

34 West Africa, no. 3135, 8 August 1977, p. 1620.

35 Food-processing, soaps and detergents, textiles, agricultural machinery and implements, pharmaceuticals, spare parts for vehicles, household goods, etc.

36 West Africa, no. 3134, 1 August 1977, p. 1576.

could be found. The main reason was that though cocoa was fetching a substantial price in the world market, Ghana could not build up its foreign-exchange reserves primarily because of its diminishing cocoa output and also because of increasing competition with other cocoa-producing countries.³⁷ Besides, the selective nature of the policy of liberalization (i.e. full liberalization in the case of a few industries, partial liberalization in the case of a few others, and denial of the facility altogether to the rest) hampered market competition. Moreover, in 1977, in the wake of a number of strikes by workers, who were the worst victims of the increasing prices, Acheampong stepped up minimum wages by 48 per cent. Many firms which were producing much less than their capacity owing to paucity of raw materials but which were not recipients of the liberalization concessions found it difficult to cope with this wage increase.

After a brief period, therefore, Acheampong was obliged to revise his liberalization policy. He did so through an increase in the foreign-exchange tax from 10 to 30 per cent. To protect the non-traditional export sector he allowed an increase in export bonus from 20 to 50 per cent. However, for the import sector, an increase of 30 per cent in the foreign-exchange tax meant a corresponding increase in the prices of all imported goods. Under the revised scheme imported goods which carried a duty less than

37 Ivory Coast and Brazil in particular offered tough competition.

35 per cent previously were charged more, i.e. about 65 per cent, and imported goods which carried a duty more than 35 per cent previously were charged less, i.e. about 30 per cent. Apparently this scheme exempted import of raw materials because previously these carried duties ranging from 35 to 60 per cent. Under the new system they were to be charged only 30 per cent. This meant a benefit of 15 per cent. The benefit, however, was nullified by the 30 per cent increase in the foreign-exchange tax.

Thus Acheampong, starting from a revaluation of the cedi and economic liberalization, ended up in 1976 with policies similar to those he had nullified soon after his assumption of office.

The economic policies, viz. Operation Feed Yourself, the policy of liberalization of controls, etc., thus failed to yield positive results. The vital sectors of the economy -- agriculture and industry -- were in depression. There was a rise in the prices of local foodstuffs from 15.7 per cent in 1974 to 30.6 per cent in 1975. By June 1976 the prices were 62.6 per cent higher than the prices that had obtained a year before.³⁸ The budgetary deficits which shot up to £807 million in 1976-77 were plugged in by the Government through heavy borrowing from banks.³⁹ This led to

³⁸ Africa Diary (New Delhi), vol. 17, no. 7, 12-13 February 1977, p. 8340.

³⁹ Africa Guide, 1979, n. 33, p. 147.

runaway inflation. The following table shows the rate at which money supply multiplied during Acheampong's rule:

MONEY SUPPLY IN GHANA

Money Year	Annual Supply (£ million)	Increase over the previous years (in terms of percentage)
1971	280.6	
1972	380.0	35.4
1973	467.7	23.1
1974	586.8	25.4
1975	669.7	13.4
1976	1168.9	75.6
1977	1761.1	50.6

Sources: New African (London: International Communications Publication) no. 157, October 1980, p. 43.

The result of these grim conditions was that dissatisfaction spread among the masses, particularly the working class.

Acheampong stepped up the use of force and repressive legislations. The subversion decree (enacted in 1972) was made more stringent and comprehensive in 1976.⁴⁰ It, however, only stoked the fire of popular discontent.

⁴⁰ An addition made to the subversive decree stipulated as follows: "A person who, knowing or having reason to believe that any other person has committed or has been convicted of subversion, conceals or harbours or in any of way aids such persons shall be guilty of subversion under this decree." See West Africa, no. 3073, 24 May 1976, p. 740.

In May 1977 university students protested against the price rise and went on a strike to press their demand for the disengagement of the NRC/SNC. The Government responded by closing down all the three universities -- Legon, Cape Coast, and Kumasi. These universities reopened after some time but only to be closed down again. Acheampong stationed the police on the campuses. This exacerbated the tension. The Ghana Bar Association called on the NRC to hand over power to a Presidential Commission pending finalization of a plan to return the country to civilian rule. Demands for demilitarization reached a culmination point when the Association of Recognized Professionals went on strike in June 1977 and issued an ultimatum asking the Government to resign.⁴¹ Acheampong tried to hamstring the Professionals' Association by abrogating the Professional Bodies Registration, but the measure failed of its purpose.

As civilian pressures mounted, the only alternative left with Acheampong was to woo a civilian segment not associated with the overthrown progress party. He organized a State funeral for Kwame Nkrumah, released a book of Nkrumah's speeches with a "Foreword" of his own, and expressed his faith in pan-Africanism. These were clearly overtures

41 The Association included the Ghana Medical Association, the Ghana Institution of Engineers, the Ghana Institute of Bankers, the Ghana Chartered Accountant Association, and the Ghana Veterinary Association.

to the CPP. Of course he had no plan to forge an alliance with the whole of the CPP. All that he wanted was to win over some of the figures whose loyalty he could count on.

Acheampong attempted to entice into his fold some non-committed sections, as also those not keen on following a hard line. He offered key Government posts to some notable figures like the Catholic Archbishop of Cape Coast, the Secretary-General of the Trade Union Congress, and some influential chiefs. It is ironical that Acheampong, who had adopted at the outset a strict policy of exclusion of civilians from his Government, was ultimately obliged to seek civilian support for his own continuance in office.

Eventually, unable to ignore the vociferous demand for disengagement, Acheampong announced a programme of military withdrawal. He invented a new proposal for future government called the Union Government. It was envisaged as a coalition Government of the military, the police, and civilians. Its chief characteristic was to be absence of political parties. The argument given was that since political parties were the root cause of political acrimony, the Union Government was a viable plan for the promotion of consensual politics.

Various stages of the disengagement plan, the outlines of the Union Government, and the related controversial issues raised by the opponents would be discussed in the fourth chapter.

Suffice it to note here that in spite of the various campaign techniques and the widespread rigging of the referendum Acheampong won only by a low margin. The campaign techniques ranged from financing those saboteur groups which disrupted the meetings of the opposition, use of government controlled public media for its own propaganda, the highlighting of the Koranteng Addow Committee's report as constituting an approval of the Union Government plan, and the deletion of all inconvenient clauses of the original report in publications purporting to carry a summary of it.

The opposition dubbed the whole exercise of referendum as fraudulent. Thus, instead of gaining legitimacy through the referendum, Acheampong earned unpopularity and public distrust. Before he could go ahead with his Union Government proposal after his manipulated victory in the referendum, he was replaced by Lieutenant General Federal Akuffo on 5 July 1978.

CHAPTER 3

RULE OF THE SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL, 1978-1979 AND THE ARMED FORCES REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL, JUNE-SEPTEMBER 1979

Unlike the coup of 1972, which Acheampong effected to secure redress of the military grievances against civilian rule, the coup of 1978 that William Akuffo effected was a major revolt by certain constituents of the army against Acheampong and his caucus. In fact it was no coup; it was an internal arrangement made by the army to change its leadership. Various reasons can be said to account for this change of leadership.

As we have seen already, Acheampong made overtures to a faction of the Convention People's Party (CPP) to win its support for his continued rule. This aroused other army officers. Secondly, while adopting significant policies or even in the normal course of his administration Acheampong never cared to take his associates into his confidence. His decision to create the Supreme Military Council (SMC) to overshadow the National Redemption Council (NRC), to pack it with his own hand-picked officers, and leave out key figures like Bani and Selorsay (considered to have been Acheampong's close allies in the seizure of power

in 1972) angered many senior army officers.¹ The immediate provocation for the coup of 1978 arose when Acheampong devised the proposal for a Union Government independently of his Council and sought to implement it. Being bypassed, the officers removed him from power before the fruition of the Union Government. To quote Akuffo: "The channel of communication between him and the rest of his colleagues had virtually broken down, and the whole of government activity had become a one-man show."²

✓ Besides, under Acheampong the army as an institution was seen to lose its reputation. The Union Government proposal and the rigged referendum made the army appear to be a dubious institution in the eyes of the public. Some officers, therefore, felt that any further prolongation of Acheampong's rule would cause irreparable damage to the army's institutional interests and decided to overthrow him. ✓

Akuffo dismissed Acheampong's chief associates from the SMC and banned four organizations which had been the main vehicle of his propaganda in favour of his proposal for a Union Government.³ He inducted seven new members into the

1 Africa Research Bulletin (Exeter), vol. 12, no. 10, 15 November 1975, p. 3785.

2 West Africa (London), no. 3183, 17 July 1978, p. 1403.

3 They were the Patriots, the Organizers' Council, the Friends and the Ghana Youngsters Club. Ibid., no. 3187, 14 August 1978, p. 1612.

Military Advisory Council, a body instituted by Acheampong in 1973.⁴ He freed the people arrested during the referendum period, granted amnesty to political exiles, and liberalized the restrictions imposed on the Press. He opened up the universities too. These measures reflected a departure from the discredited policies of the previous ruler and eased the tense situation.

✓ Akuffo planned to win public acceptance by an early declaration of his disengagement programme. He abrogated the much-criticized Union Government plan and came out with a new proposal called the National Government. His plan provided that the military would hand over power in July 1979 to a National Government which would not be based on political parties and which would remain in power for a transitional period of four years. After the expiry of this period of four years the electorate would decide on a permanent form of government. (An important feature of the National Government as distinct from the Union Government was that the army was not to be "institutionally represented" on it. Secondly, the membership of the Constitutional Commission set up by Acheampong was enlarged from 25 to 55 members.

4 The new appointees -- viz Colonel I.K. Amah, Colonel G.K.K. Asemah, Lieutenant Colonel Gunoil, Captain Obimpah, Major G. Brock, Major Donkor and Major A. Suleimana -- describe how the middle-ranking officers came to the apex as the result of the series of counter-coups.

It was required to submit a draft constitution to serve as a basis for the National Government and not for the Union Government.

Akuffo next turned his attention to the economic revitalization of the country. A crucial problem which called for immediate attention was the rampant inflation. The main cause of this inflation, as we have already seen in the previous chapter, was the use of deficit financing by the Government. The Government had been borrowing heavily from banks and had done nothing significant to fill its empty coffers. In 1973 the Government borrowed \$47 million from banks to bridge budget deficits. In 1975-76 it borrowed \$719 million. An all-time high borrowing took place in the first six months of 1977-78, when the Government's debts totalled \$735 million.⁵ Deficit financing compounded by low productivity over the years made inflation a chronic economic malady. We have already seen how between 1971 and 1977 the money supply rose from an average of \$230 million to \$1,761 million at a staggering rate of over 500 per cent per annum.⁶ Widespread smuggling also added to the strain upon the economy. If even in 1972 an estimated 50,000 to 50,000 tonnes of cocoa was being annually smuggled out to neighbouring countries, especially to Togo and Ivory Coast,⁷ one can

5 West Africa, no. 3193, 25 September 1978, p. 1867.

6 See Chapter 2.

7 Africa Diary (New Delhi), vol. 19, no. 45, 5-11 November 1972, p. 9742.

understand by how many times smuggling must have increased by 1978.

To curb the inflationary trend Akuffo slashed down the expenditure proposed by the Ministries from ₵3.2 billion to ₵2.9 billion.⁸ In the budget for 1978-79 the import bill was restricted to the same level as had obtained during the previous year, i.e. to ₵900 million.⁹ Akuffo devalued the cedi by 38 per cent. It was meant to be an anti-inflationary and anti-smuggling measure.

The SMC planned to stabilize the cedi by mitigating illegal currency holdings. The policy adopted was that the old currency notes would be exchanged for new ones at the rate of seven new cedis for ten old ones for deposits up to ₵5,000. For sums exceeding ₵5,000 the rate was five new cedis for ten old ones. This exercise hit the middle class hard. Military personnel got away lightly as they had allegedly converted their money into cars and property before the exchange scheme came into effect. The scheme was actually intended to be a wealth tax on the affluent, but it did not turn out to be so. Since bank deposits were not covered by the scheme, it turned out to be a levy on the poor. Banks deposits too form part of liquidity, and in Ghana under Akuffo they constituted 54 per cent of it. According to an estimate,

⁸ West Africa, no. 3193, 25 September 1978, p. 1369.

⁹ Africa Research Bulletin (Ruester), vol. 16, no. 6, 31 July 1979, p. 5162.

the redirection in money supply was of the order of \$740 million, which is not more than an increase of three months in money supply.¹⁰

Akuffo entered into agreements with the Western countries for aid, food supplies, and better trade relations. A \$10 million agreement was signed with the United States for the import of 38,000 tons of wheat and 10,000 tons each of maize and rice.¹¹ The SMC received \$6 million from the International Monetary Fund (IMF); \$30 million from the IMF Special Trust Fund; \$40 million from the United Kingdom, and \$6.8 million from the United States. These sums were to be used for the stabilization of the economy.¹² In spite of cuts in financial allocations and relaxation or abolition of controls on the economy like the suspension of the Special Unnumbered Licences System in the case of imports, the economy did not show any indication of looking up.

The policy of devaluation failed to lend buoyancy to the economy. Devaluation can make exports more attractive in foreign markets and thus minimize difficulties of foreign exchange. However, since there was a shortage of imported raw materials and consequently a slump in indigenous production,

10 New African (International Communications Publication), no. 157, October 1980, p. 46.

11 Africa Report (Washington, D.C.), vol. 24, no. 3, May-June 1979, p. 38.

12 *Ibid.*

the country was cheated of the gains that could have been made otherwise.

The policy of cutting down Government expenditure and introducing fiscal controls also resulted in a contraction of public services and amenities. It placed an additional economic burden on the common man, whose woes were already past insurance on account of the exorbitant price rise. In an attempt to narrow the deficit the SNC resorted to taxation. This further pushed up the prices of the necessaries of daily life. To a hard-hit consumer it appeared to be a queer way of checking inflation and revitalizing the economy. Although the masses were thus living in increasingly rigorous conditions, the military showed no signs of austerity. There were no cutbacks when it came to the salaries, allowances, and other privileges of the army officers. Interestingly, the SNC did not publish the military budget.

The turning-point came when the working class could no longer stand up to the economic pressures. It lost its confidence in the SNC and adopted a confrontationalist posture. The SNC granted a 10 per cent dearness allowance to the lowest-paid workers as a concession. This grant was too meagre and came too late. A large number of employees-- oil-refinery workers, electricity workers, breweries workers, post and communications employees, et al. -- struck work to

demand a substantial wage increase. The administration was paralysed when around 8,000 workers at the Ghana Industrial Corporation went on a strike and protested against the corruption of, and the misappropriation of funds by the corporation officials and demanded an inquiry. The SMC resorted to repressive measures like dismissal and replacement of the striking workers, but this failed to deter other recalcitrant workers from raising their voice.

While the working class thus demanded an increase in their wages, allowances, and other emoluments, the professionals and the politicians demanded a precipitous withdrawal of the military in addition to economic benefits. They questioned the bona fides of the proposed National Government. They found the National Government distinct from the Union Government only in name and not in substance. The postulate of an apolitical system for a term "not less than four years" made them suspect the sincerity of Akuffo's intentions. Commenting upon the removal of Acheampong and his Union Government proposal, they quipped: "They [i.e. the military] have changed the number plates but it is the same car."¹³

The journalists called upon the SMC to hasten the demilitarization process and asked for the replacement of the military officers with civilian appointees in the meantime. The Bar Association asked the SMC to cut down the expenditure on defence and to publish the military budget. The University

¹³ West Africa, no. 3486, 7 August 1973, p. 1527.

Teachers' Association called for the abolition of the Constitutional Commission instituted by Acheampong and asked for a new one to be set up. Thousands of civil servants went on a strike in support of their demand for a pay hike. Much hue and cry was raised over the corruption rampant in State corporations. Instead of confessing that the military was involved in these malpractices Akuffo held the Lebanese, Syrians, and Indians totally responsible for them.

When the opposing forces heightened their anti-SMC activity Akuffo proclaimed a state of emergency.¹⁴ To control the increasing spate of strikes he passed a decree providing that "strikes and other protests to secure redress outside the framework of normal procedure shall be regarded as criminal acts against the security of the state".¹⁵

The National Government proposal became as disreputable as the Union Government proposal once had been. Akuffo's hypothesis that the displacement of Acheampong would automatically dispel controversy proved to be erroneous. The activation and consolidation of the anti-military forces made the situation much more complicated than Akuffo had bargained for. Without any base at the grass-roots level, with no mass support forthcoming, and with the major constituents of society

14 In the very speech in which he proclaimed a state of emergency Akuffo himself acknowledge that there had been over eighty strikes involving some seventy thousand workers. Ibid., no. 3200, 13 November 1978, p. 2264.

15 Ibid., p. 2269.

poised against it, the SMC found itself caught up in a whirlpool. Realizing his Government's vulnerability, Akuffo finally had to make concessions to the civilians. On 1 January 1979 he lifted the ban on political parties.¹⁶ The rebirth of political parties was a turning-point in Ghana's politics. After a long period of apolitical politics Ghana returned to a system based on party politics. To check the re-emergence of the old political parties and seasoned politicians and to forestall a possible revival of the old rivalries between them and the military, Akuffo passed a Political Party Decree disqualifying persons who had occupied political positions or who had been associated with the political parties in the period prior to the military take-overs of 1966 and 1972.

As the election tempo rose, many political parties emerged. The significant ones were: the United National Convention, the People's National Party, and the Popal's Front Party. We shall see in the next chapter that it was only theoretically that the old politicians were prevented from staging a comeback; in effect the regulation was circumvented.

Secondly, to ensure that Acheampong and his leading associates were incapacitated from entering politics Akuffo issued a decree making it obligatory for those who were members

¹⁶ West Africa, no. 3204, 11 December 1978, p. 2471.

of the then military council of Ghana, as also for those who had been members of the previous military councils, to get their assets examined and their incorruptibility certified in order to qualify to contest elections. Another decree laid down that persons found guilty of corruption or misrule by the commissions of inquiry set up since 1966, were not eligible to hold any political or party office or even to contest in the forthcoming elections. What is important to note is that whereas some prominent civilian and military personnel were exonerated subsequently, Acheampong and his close associates were defamed, and the clear adverse findings pronounced against them widely publicized. A committee called the External Loans Committee established in 1978 went into all the loan contracts negotiated between 1 July 1977 and 31 July 1978. It found that Acheampong and Appiah, Commissioner for Finance, had contracted a loan of the order of a one billion dollars from one Gafoor, alleged President of La Communauté Musulmane Universelle of Paris, in a manner detrimental to national interests.¹⁷ While Acheampong was thus being exposed to the public, some civilian and military political participants like Victor Owusu, A.A. Afrifa, and F.O. Bernasto were absolved of all charges of corruption.¹⁸

17 Africa Diary, vol. 19, no. 28, 9-15 July 1979, p. 9585.

18 Victor Owusu, the Presidential candidate of Popular Front Party (PFP), along with some Ministerial secretaries, had been found guilty by the Taylor and Aidoo Assets Commission, was cleared subsequently by the review Tribunal. Another committee, the Sowah Assets Commission, reported that Afrifa (the former NLC ruler), and F.O. Bernasto and Nabadah, both Commissioners of State during the NRC regime, had acquired their assets legally. See Africa Diary, vol. 19, no. 26, 25 June-1 July 1979, p. 9567.

In view of Akuffo's determination to put key civilian figures in cold storage it might seem strange that he should eventually have made the aforesaid concessions to them. The reason for this volte-face on Akuffo's part was that there was a rising tide of opposition to him. His Government was weak vis-a-vis the forces arrayed against him; so much so that he thought it expedient to yield to some of his powerful opponents. Secondly, Akuffo used the concessions to soften the opposition and to obtain its approval for the immunities and privileges he had granted to himself and to the SMC. All members of the SMC, for instance, were indemnified by the Constitution. The Constituent Assembly sanctioned payment of pension and other allowances to the head of State and the Chairman of the SMC on their retirement.

Akuffo in this way evolved a disengagement policy which was intended to pacify the opposition and which at the same time afforded him a sufficient guarantee of safety. However, in July 1979, before the process of military disengagement was finalized, he was overthrown in yet another coup by Flight-Lieutenant Rawlings.

Ghanaian politics took a new turn with the advent of Rawlings. Akuffo and his SMC were toppled, and a new, 10-member council called the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) was installed.

The immediate cause of the coup was Akuffo's disengagement policy. When Akuffo made major concessions to the politicians, revived party politics, and gave absolution to some civilian notables from corruption charges in return for their approval of the scheme for payment of pension, gratuity, etc. to himself and other members of the SMC, the junior ranks became suspicious. They felt that Akuffo and his senior army officers had entered into an unholy alliance with the politicians to ensure the protection of their own sectional interests. They thought that the top officers had sufficiently feathered their nests and that they had, even while handing over power, made sure that they would not come to harm at the hands of the successor regime. On the other hand the junior officers were wholly unprotected. This provoked them to rebel and to shift the locus of power from a coterie of elitist groups to a broad-based formation. They also felt the need to restore prestige to the discredited military. The ruling top brass had, by their corruption and their reckless use of patronage made the army an ill-reputed institution. The junior officers, therefore, sought to cleanse the army in order to enable it regain its pristine image.

In his broadcast to the nation Rawlings enumerated the imperatives that had dictated his take-over. He declared that "the nation needed a moral revolution to solve her

problems" and "a strong man" to carry out such a revolution "not a benevolent dictator".¹⁹ He said that he regarded the "house-cleaning exercise" as his main task. It was important, in his view, to refurbish the tarnished image of the military.

✓ Public reaction to Rawlings' assumption of office was not confrontationalist but sympathetic. It may seem paradoxical that the masses should on the one hand have declared their want of faith in the military rule and expressed their intense desire for a change-over to civilian rule and that on the other hand they should have welcomed Rawlings' accession to power. Perhaps the explanation lies in the fact that Rawlings was a comparatively junior officer; he was no prototype of the elitist and exploitative military rulers that the masses had seen till then. Rawlings projected himself as a totally new type of revolutionary administrator. He was no apologist of the existing order but an advocate and catalyst of change. The common man saw in his emergence the birth of a new kind of politics and lent him his support.

∩ Besides, apart from passing through an apparently interminable period of political turmoil, the Ghanaian public had witnessed a painful process of erosion of social ethos. Corruption, profiteering and reckless patronage by the rulers had made politics seem almost irredeemable. Rawlings

19 International Herald Tribune (Paris), 7 June 1979.

immediately set to tackle this problem and thereby won the support of the people concerned.

The means Rawlings chose for purging society were too drastic. He took punitive measures, not only against his immediate predecessors, as was the general practice till then, but against all his military precursors. It was only through a total elimination of all cantankerous elements, he argued, that society could be restructured. The persecution of all corrupt high-ranking officers was, in his view, an indispensable part of the salvage operation he had undertaken.

A decree was passed which provided for setting up of trial courts whose verdict, subject to confirmation by the AFRC, was to be final. The decree said:

Any person found guilty by the special courts of any of the offences specified shall be liable on conviction to suffer death by firing squad or to imprisonment with penal labour for a term of not less than 3 years and the confiscation to the state of any assets found by the country to have been illegally acquired by such person. 20

Rawlings thus armed the AFRC with supreme judicial power. He said: "There is need for bloodshed to clean up Ghana starting from within the armed forces."²¹ The execution of prominent figures began in mid June, with the firing-squad

20 West Africa, no. 3233, 2 July 1979, p. 1196. The offences specified were embezzlement, hoarding, corruption, etc.

21 Africa Report, vol. 24, no. 5, September-October 1979, p. 26.

going for the former head of State, Acheampong, and the former commander of Ghana's Border Guards, E.K. Utuka. Both were accused of misappropriation of national funds. Akuffo and A.A. Afrifa, Acheampong's predecessors, soon followed suit. A former Foreign Minister, Roger Felli, Major-General R. Kotai, Air Vice-Marshal George Brookey, and an Admiral were charged with the same mal-practice. Seventeen senior military officers and civil servants were imprisoned for terms ranging from five to fifteen years. Twelve senior police officers were dismissed; fourteen retired, and six others prosecuted.²²

This was unprecedented. Even the former military rulers had shied away from summary disposal of their political adversaries. The AFRC totally did away with the traditions of legality and rule of law. And yet the whole thing passed off without evoking much public reaction. This is an important point which deserves attention. The masses did not express any revulsion against the use of such drastic means to cleanse society. One reason is that the rank and file considered the executions as indicative of Rawlings' revolutionary zeal to set things right. They thought that the new political variable of violence might be a good augury for the emergence of an egalitarian society. Another reason is that persistent suffering had coarsened the masses, who quietly accepted the

22 West Africa, no. 3247, 3 October 1979, p. 1366.

✓ methods of the AFRC. The executions provided a catharsis, as it were, for their pent-up feelings.

The political killings drew international attention, and the AFRC came in for criticism from many quarters. Nigeria threatened to stop its oil supplies to Ghana. At this point Rawlings publicly announced an end to capital punishment.²³ This shows how the international community can act as a determinant of a weak country's internal politics.

The modus operandi of house-cleaning underwent a change: Rawlings switched over from en masse executions to less drastic measures. The junta ordered senior army personnel, executive chairmen, and managers of the State corporations and boards to declare their assets. It caused inquiries to be made into the operation of major public corporations such as the Cocoa Marketing Board, the State Fishing Corporation, the State Housing Corporation, etc. Over the years the Cocoa Marketing Board had grown into a monolithic body. The executive officers and the managing directors had made huge profits. Cocoa proceeds were said to have been diverted for the Union Government campaign.²⁴ The AFRC, therefore, abolished the Cocoa Marketing Board and

23 Africa Report, vol. 24, no. 5, September-October 1979, p. 26.

24 Africa Diary, vol. 19, no. 47, 19-25 November 1979, p. 9765.

set up a Cocoa Council in its place. A noticeable characteristic of this salvage exercise was that it was directed not only against high-ranking army officers but also against business men and traders. To quote Rawlings: "The revolution is not meant only for the armed forces; it is a national exercise designed to lift the image of the Ghanaians through a moral battle."²⁵ There were investigations into the enterprises set up by private Lebanese and Indian business men, and about thirty of them were expelled for their illegal entry into Ghana. Through intimidation and thorough investigation the AFRC tried to break the collusion between the business men and the politicians. Six executions took place just two days before the election. This made many business men who were also members of the old political parties leave the country. The significance of Rawlings' call to Limann after the installation of civilian rule to "purge" his party becomes plain against this background.

Interestingly the politicians, the professionals, and the academicians did not become the targets of the cleansing operation although they too represented a privileged class. One may presume that these articulate sections had politically been very active. They were indeed contributing a great deal to the ensuing restoration of civilian rule. Hence people in general looked upon their political participation as

25 West Africa, no. 3233, 2 July 1979, p. 1136.

necessary for their own liberation from military rule. In not bringing these sections within the purview of his "house-cleaning exercise" Rawlings was only trying to be in tune with public sentiment. Secondly, these sections had not any direct involvement in politics for a long time, i.e. since Busia's overthrow. In fact they had been denied access to coveted resources. They had been victimized politically too. Any charge of corruption against them would not have held water.

✓ An important outcome of the massive offensive launched against the senior army officers was that the military structure was maimed out of shape. The army, bereft of its veteran officers and commanders, was reduced to a disorganized body of ambitious and inexperienced junior officers. With much too junior an officer, an officer of the rank of just Flight-Lieutenant heading the army, there was a total collapse of the structure of command. Thus, in spite of being vested with power, Rawlings could not prevent his own institution from crumbling down. He himself confessed: "We have been having problems about direction because we need some of our senior officers to come back."²⁶

The junior officers, Rawlings' main source of support, were soon found to be drifting apart, and gradually

26 Emanuel Hansen and Paul Collins, "The Army, the State, and the Rawlings Revolution in Ghana", African Affairs (London), vol. 79, no. 314, January 1980, p. 20.

many dissensions surfaced. Four members of a significant unit of the AFRC were placed under arrest.²⁷ In an interview to a correspondent of West Africa these arrested men narrated how the internal discords had weakened the AFRC. A body named the Pre-Trial Investigations Team (PIT) had been set up. This proved to be more powerful than the AFRC because it was in charge of the "house-cleaning operation". The PIT was discharging its duties smoothly, but when it came to dealing with the trading community, it was bypassed, and many ad hoc investigating committees were set up. This caused disaffection and suspicion among the members of the PIT. Subsequently there were many allegations of bribery against Ayin, Mensah Ghedemah, Boakye Djan, and other members of the numerous new committees.²⁸ At this juncture the AFRC felt it imperative to do something exemplary so that its image was not tarnished. The four members of the PIT were made scapegoats and were jailed.

✓ Thus while Rawlings, perched at the top of the ladder of support lent him by the junior officers, was endeavouring to gain civilian popularity and strengthen himself further, the ladder itself cracked. Moreover, the

27 The four convicts escaped from Ussher Fort on 12 November 1979. See West Africa (London), 7 January 1980, p. 10.

28 Ibid., pp. 10-11.

✓
police, an old ally of the army, was opposed to the AFRC: the AFRC had taken away from it the position of eminence it had enjoyed during Acheampong's time. Secondly, the lower ranks in the police force attempted a move against their seniors. The fear of an uncontrollable force being released made Rawlings uncomfortable. He, therefore, started looking for an alternative source of support to keep him at the top. He considered the possibility of wooing the hard-hit peripheral section of the people.

We have noticed how at the outset the public adopted a sympathetic attitude towards the AFRC. Very soon, however, there was a renewed demand for demilitarization. The unanimity of the desire for military withdrawal could be gauged from the fact that Rawlings did not consider it expedient to postpone the demilitarization plan. Why did the people withdraw the support they had lent initially? First, the common people had experienced a miserable time under military rule, and they felt that civilian politics was preferable. Even their initial support for Rawlings did not mean total withdrawal of their demand for civilian rule. The gusto with which Rawlings entered politics, the revolutionary zeal which he manifested, and the unprecedented elimination of all the so-called exploiters of society made the general masses feel that the new ruler was capable of infusing new strength into the economy. Once the corrupt elements had been eliminated, a question arose: What next?

Rawlings did not have the answer. He still believed that the common people "will defend the gains of 4 June and these gains are not material so much....The stomach may be hungry but your pride has been restored."²⁹ What the people actually needed, however, was the necessities of life for sheer survival, an improvement in their standard of living, not so much a restoration of their "pride" -- an empty political shibboleth!

Nigeria, which used to supply 80 per cent of Ghana's oil, cut down supplies and also reduced Ghana's credit line from ninety to thirty days. This had a shattering effect on the weak economy of Ghana. Many business men closed down their enterprises in protest against price controls and harassment by the Government. In mid-July the AFRC announced that Government funds had got depleted. The Government had overdrawn on its accounts and had borrowed to pay salaries. A wage freeze was, therefore, imposed on the salaries of civil servants and State employees.³⁰

Loss of civilian support on the one hand and the increasing fragmentation of the AFRC on the other made Rawlings opt to serve as a catalyst for the final withdrawal of the military from politics.

29 West Africa, no. 3234, 9 July 1979, p. 1199.

30 Ibid., no. 3235, 16 July 1979, p. 1287.

We may conclude that Rawlings' take-over, though it was described as a revolution, was primarily a mutiny of the junior officers against the ruling hierarchy of senior officers. The aggrieved junior officers, under Rawlings' leadership, attempted an alignment with a section of the civilians which corresponded economically to their own stratum within the military. By executing the top military rulers and rich business men summarily Rawlings dreamt of becoming a national hero. However, as we have observed elsewhere, the success of a ruler hinges on the crucial factor of his ability to deliver the goods. When he fails to offer any tangible economic benefits and cannot also establish a viable political order, the attitude of the public turns from one of sympathy to one of scepticism and defiance. When Rawlings saw that neither military nor civilian support was forthcoming, he decided to retreat with the same gusto with which he had entered politics. He failed to restore the reputation of the army, one of his primary objectives; nor did he provide social and economic justice. The greatest irony is that he had to hand over power to an elected party, the People's National Party, which was very much a representative of the privileged class he had vowed to overthrow!

....

CHAPTER 4

THE MILITARY'S WITHDRAWAL FROM POLITICS

The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) transferred power to a popularly elected political party on 24 September 1979. A full circle was completed when the military restored the political system which it had overthrown twice--once in 1966 and again in 1971.

It was Acheampong who conceived the process of demilitarization. As we have seen already in Chapter 2 Acheampong chalked out a programme in July 1977 for a gradual withdrawal by the military. He could not, however, get it through. Akuffo, who replaced him, accepted his predecessor's design, though with some broad modifications. The idea of demilitarization caught on so well that even Rawlings, who toppled Akuffo, was obliged to accept it.

In the initial years of his rule Acheampong did not have to concern himself ever much with the usual question of legitimacy. The economy being in a sound state, the different contending groups reaped the benefits without caring to raise or settle the issue of sanctity of political power. When, however, the economy lost its distributive potential, the issue of legitimacy arose. The administration came to a halt in June 1977.¹ In the face of increasing protests

¹ For details, see Chapter 2.

and demonstrations against military rule the Union Government plan was evolved. This plan provided that a committee known as the Keranteng Adow Ad Hoc Committee would, under the chairmanship of the Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, Keranteng Adow, report by September 1978 on the issue of role of the military and the police in an elected future civilian Government; that a referendum would be held in March 1978 to gauge public opinion regarding the nature of the proposed Government; that a Constitutional Commission would be appointed in April 1978 to prepare a Draft Constitution by October; that a Constituent Assembly would then be appointed; and that this Constituent Assembly would complete the work assigned to it by March 1979. According to the plan the final stage consisted in a general election in July 1979 and then the induction of the new Government in office.

The most important feature of the Union Government plan was the absence of political parties. The plan, however, remained by and large undefined and ambiguous. Many a lacuna came to light in the course of the implementation of the different phases of the proposal. For example, the questions to be decided through the holding of the referendum were not precisely known. There was, besides the possibility of a partial rejection or a partial approval of the recommendations of the Keranteng Adow Committee in the referendum. Such a partial rejection or approval was sure to create confusion. It could even cause friction between the military and the

Constituent Assembly because of possible divergent interpretations of the Committee's ruling. Moreover, though the question whether the military should be included was yet to be decided by the referendum, the Union Government became, right from the beginning, synonymous with military participation.² The Ad Hoc Committee submitted its report on 30 September 1978. Although it had been charged to provide only a "broad framework", it actually presented a Draft Constitution. Many controversial issues figured in its report. In view of the background of the army's political involvement, the report said that this "raises the question" of viability of the conventional "strict demarcation" between the civilians and the military. It also observed that the public was against the "active participation" of the armed forces in the Union Government.

The abridged form of the report published by the Government contained certain grave distortions which changed the emphasis and the implications of the Committee's findings. The original report read: "while the preponderance of representations was against active participation of the forces

2 Some of Acheampong's statements confirmed this belief. For instance, Acheampong claimed in 1977 that "in talking about civilian rule, I don't really mean civilian rule; there must be military and police participation if you want to see any peace and harmony in the country." Naomi Chazan and Victor T. Le Vine, "Politics in a 'Non-Political' System: The March 30, 1978 Referendum in Ghana", African Studies Review (Waltham, Mass.), vol. 22, no. 1, April 1979, p. 177.

in the Union Government, it was in favour of some kind of participation in a future government."³ On the other hand the printed Government report read: "The preponderance of representations was in favour of some kind of participation by Armed Forces and the Police on government."⁴ The original report made a clear distinction between "active representation" and other "kinds of participation". It turned down the first, viz. "active participation", inasmuch as it presupposed the induction of the military in the Cabinet and in other decision-making bodies. It, however, accepted the latter viz. "other kinds of participation, because it only signified representation on advisory boards etc. In fact, while rejecting any "institutional representation" it specifically excluded the Chief of the Defence Staff and the Inspector-General of Police from Cabinet office. All that these officers were permitted was to acquire membership of the President's Advisory Council of State and of the National Security and Defence Council. By ignoring this distinction the summarized Government report blurred the original emphasis.

However, the Ad Hoc Committee, a body instituted by the military, did finally feel obliged to make concessions to it. It said that military officers could seek elective office but only after obtaining leave. It did not, however, spell out the provisions for such participation by the military. (The outcome was that the crucial issue of military participation in the Union Government remained ambiguous.) The military Government interpreted the Committee's report in its own favour and tried to bolster its referendum campaign.

³ African Diary (New Delhi), vol. 17, no. 47, 19-25 November 1977, p. 8759.

⁴ West Africa (London), no. 3160, 6 February 1978, p.23.

Another issue of significance discussed in the report was party politics. Here, too, the Committee's decision was in favour of a system without political parties. It was thus in consonance with the military's plan for a permanent ban on party politics. Its plea for politics without parties was mainly based on the argument that it would help in the emergence of political consensus and contribute to the revival of indigenous political traditions. It did not study the problem of feasibility of holding elections and forming legislatures without political parties. It just mentioned that the State should finance elections out of a public fund meant for the purpose. This led to apprehension that the Government would, being itself a contestant in the elections that were to be held, manipulate the public media in its own favour, appropriate for its own use all public transport facilities, and deny State funds to others.

The report said, further, that a strong President at the Centre on the US pattern was what the people wanted. It stipulated that an electoral college would nominate a reasonable number of eligible candidates but left "reasonable" undefined. It also provided that the Council of State, an advisory body, should, "in the absence of an organized opposition", be one of the institutions to obviate the possibility of misuse of office by the Executive. This shows that although the Committee thus admitted the possibility of the President committing excesses, it did not think it

expedient to devise effective means to provide for checks on his powers.

The report defined the Union Government as "a form of representative government of the people having as its philosophical foundation the concepts of national unity and consensus and selecting its functionaries from all levels and sections of the community on a basis other than membership of an institutionalized political party or parties".⁵ Thus, although it did not decide the central issue of the military's participation in the Government clearly in the military's favour, it sought to project the Union Government as an ideal form of government devoid of controversial features. Since the common people were not likely to go into the details, or into the political implications, of the Union Government, it ensured their approval of the Union Government in the referendum by making it appear that the Union Government and the indigenous consensual system were identical.

The second stage of the demilitarization plan after the release of the Ad Hoc Committee's report was the holding of the referendum. Though the referendum centred on the key question of Union Government, many other, related questions also arose and became a part of the pre-referendum debate and discussion. The National Redemption Council (NRC)

5 African Recorder (New Delhi), vol. 16, no. 21, 19 November-2 December 1977, p. 4673.

attempted to boost its public image by referring to its launching of developmental projects, economic programmes, and so on. However, by doing so it made economic and political policies a referendum issue. This provided an excellent opportunity to the opposition to attempt to expose the Government. The opposition employed the tactic of citing the NRC's unsuccessful administration as indicative of the bleak future the Union Government held for the country. As the day of the referendum drew near, Acheampong tried to sidetrack the question of his Government's performance.⁶ However, once the proposition of performance arose, it became inevitable that the question of the military's participation in politics should be judged on the basis of its actual performance.

Another fiercely contested issue to figure in the pre-referendum debate and discussion was whether there should be political parties. The report of the Ad Hoc Committee had discussed at length the question of viability and relevance of politics without political parties. The discussion there provoked considerable reaction from the opponents of the Union Government. The military frequently played up the merits of the no-party system as mentioned in the report. This actuated the rival groups on the civilian side to focus

6 On the day of the referendum Acheampong called on the public to "reject the politics of milk, soap, sardines, and mackerel...." Chazan and Le Vine, n. 2, p. 132.

on the inexpediency of the no-party system. They sought to impress upon the people time and again that the ulterior motive behind the so-called no-party system was to establish the military as an inevitable sharer of power and thus legitimize something that was fundamentally illegitimate. They claimed that a salient prerequisite of representative democracy was free functioning of political parties and that the idea of Union Government meant perpetuation of the military's authoritarian rule.

We now turn to the formation of pro-Union and anti-Union forces. One group of supporters of the NRC was constituted of some politicians like Krobo Edusei Tawia Adamfo, E.E. Dadson, et al., who formerly belonged to the Convention People's Party (CPP). This shows how, while preparing for withdrawal, Acheampong tried to nurture a nucleus of selected supporters within the CPP ranks to counter the Busia group of 1969 and Nkrumah's controversial group of 1966. Another group of supporters consisted of certain chiefs. It is worth mentioning that most of these had been appointed to the various committees. Some associations like the Ghanaian Peace and Solidarity Council, the Ghana Patriots' Association, and the Ghana Youth Club too lent their support to Acheampong. Most of the supporters of the NRC had either been recipients of the patronage of the Government or were hopeful of being rewarded amply in the event of Government's victory in the referendum.

At the other end of the spectrum were fragmented anti-Union Government forces which, in spite of their common goal, failed to present one broad civilian front of opposition to the NRC. One group known as the People's Movement for Freedom and Justice (PMFFJ) emerged on the scene. It was made up of veteran politicians of the periods of rule by Nkrumah, the National Liberation Council (NLC) and Busia. The notable figures were Gbedemah, A.A. Afrifa, and William Ofori Atta,⁷ Foreign Minister in Busia's Government. This group, being a sum total of important functionaries of all the previous three regimes, was regarded as the most formidable among Acheampong's adversaries. Another anti-Union Government body was the Front for the Prevention of Dictatorship (FPD) consisting of some old Ministers of the Progress Party (PP) like Victor Otuasi, Jato Kalie, et al. Yet another group in the political arena was the Third Force led by K. Wilson.

Academics and intellectuals were also articulate critics of the NRC and the Union Government plan. Their academic freedom had been smothered during the NRC's repressive rule. They aspired for a liberal atmosphere in which to carry on their academic work without fear of political interference.

Students played a crucial role by lending strength to the campaign against the Union Government plan. They

7 West Africa, no. 3160, 6 February 1978, p. 261.

had constantly criticized the Government's economic and political policies. They had also demanded that the military should give up power. The NRC retaliated by stationing the police on the various campuses. The closing down of three universities (in 1977) mark the culmination of the friction between students and the NRC. Naturally, therefore, students were staunch opponents of the political system which the NRC now wanted to establish. One striking feature of student politics was its aloofness from the civilian political configurations. Students did not coalesce round, or merge in, any political grouping.

A notable factor characteristic of Ghanaian politics in general was the social background of the protagonists and adversaries of the Union Government plan. The supporters of the military and its allies belonged generally to the upper class; so did the opponents, the professionals and the politicians. Thus apparently it was a conflict between pro and anti-Union Government groups. In actuality, however, it was a conflict between the different privileged sections for access to power.

The referendum was held according to schedule on 30 March 1978. The military was the sole arbiter in the process. The soldiers and the police cast their votes two weeks ahead of the rest of the people though the results were not disclosed. On the polling day the police was present

at a number of booths. After the voting the ballot boxes were shifted to other places to be counted in secret. The ostensible reason for doing so was to prevent disruption.⁸ First the disappearance of Justice Abban, the Election Commissioner and then his dismissal undermined the credibility of the referendum. According to the final results of the referendum, 54 per cent of the electorate had voted for the proposition and 46 per cent against it. That is to say, about 1,100,000 Ghanaians had voted in favour of the proposal, and 880,000 had voted against it. Election Commissioner disclosed that carbon copies of the true figures showed a very different count: for 1,399,330; against 1,600,294.⁹ Thus, in spite of manipulation the NRC had managed only a marginal victory. Secondly, the turnout was very low. More than half the registered voters did not vote. This mass abstention was clearly reflective of the public apathy to politics and politicians. Another interpretation could be that the masses through their abstention expressed their demand for the development of a mass-based political system.

The NRC interpreted its victory as a massive endorsement of its rule and its future political role.¹⁰

8 Graham Hancock, "Ghana", Africa Guide, 1979 (Saffron Walden, England), p. 140.

9 See H.V. Hodson, ed., The Annual Register: A Record of World Events in 1978 (London, 1979), p. 215.

10. According to S.O. Lamptey, Special Aide to the head of State, the results reflected that the Ghanaians had "massively accepted the Union Government proposal". West Africa, no. 3169, 10 April 1978, p. 691.

Acheampong felt further emboldened to maintain his monopoly of power. Soon after the referendum he banned all the three opposition organizations, viz the IMFJ, the FOD, and the Third Force, which had done widespread propaganda against the Union Government. His justification for the move was that since they had failed to gain popular confidence, there was no reason for their continuance. Thirty-five leading politicians were arrested because of their involvement in an alleged attempt to organize a strike against the manipulation of the referendum result. Far from subduing the opposition, however, this measure only exacerbated the spirit of intransigence. The doctors, the professors, the lecturers, and the politicians, who were already infuriated at the farcical nature of the referendum, were roused to intense activity by the coercive measures adopted by the NRC.

A Constitutional Drafting Committee was set up in May 1976 and charged to submit a draft constitution by 1 October 1976. However, the NRC retained in its own hands the final authority to promulgate the Constitution. The civilians did not regard the appointment of the Constitutional Drafting Committee as a crucial step leading on to the final stage of the military's pullout from politics. The reason was that the Ad Hoc Committee's report and the referendum had become suspect in the opposition's eyes. The whole exercise relating to the return of civilian politics was automatically regarded as a hoax. The referendum thus created more dissension instead of resolving the politico-constitutional

crisis, and it weakened Acheampong's position further instead of strengthening it. The military under Acheampong lost whatever legitimacy it had enjoyed till then. Soon there was a change of leadership within the military: F.W.K. Akuffo replaced Acheampong and became head of State.

(Soon after the installation of his Government Akuffo declared his plan of disengagement and set up a National Government in place of the controversial Union Government.) He felt that because of the long spell of political uncertainty, a "cooling off" period was required. He, therefore, decided that a National Government elected on the basis of free elections should continue for at least four years and build up an atmosphere conducive to the induction of a permanent Government. (See Chapter 3 for details.) (The chief characteristic of such a National Government was the absence of the army as an "institution". However, these political concessions, though carefully formulated, failed to placate the opposition. Doubts arose over the rationale behind the National Government plan. If the National Government was to be a Government without political parties, it was akin to the Union Government. (Interestingly, in the Koranteng Addow Committee's report on the Union Government the two terms, "National Government" and "Union Government" are used interchangeably.) Many opposition groups wondered why the Supreme Military Council

(SNC) itself had assumed the right to determine the tenure of the National Government if it seriously meant to step out of politics.

When the ploy of National Government failed to establish the credibility of Akuffo's Government, he turned to the economic front. By introducing some new economic measures he tried to win the common people over. (See Chapter 3.) These economic policies failed, and pressures started mounting on his NE to quit. To save the SNC from crumbling he finally conceded the opposition's demand for a revival of political parties. This political bonanza boosted the opposition's morale in its fight against the military.

The Constitutional Commission under the chairmanship of Mensah submitted its Draft Constitution in November 1978. It prescribed a system based on the principle of separation of powers. It provided for an Executive consisting of a President and a Cabinet drawn from outside the Parliament. It envisaged a 140-member Parliament as a supreme law-making body. The President was to have no powers to ride roughshod over the wishes of Parliament. It suggested, besides, an independent Judiciary. Another recommendation was that political associations should be allowed to exist but that they should be barred from putting up candidates in the first two elections. After two elections a

referendum should be held to decide whether or not party politics should be allowed.¹¹

According to the schedule for demilitarization, the SMC appointed a Constituent Assembly in December 1978 under the chairmanship of Justice V.C. Crabbe. It consisted of representatives of local councils and such bodies as the Council of Chiefs, the Bar Association, etc. The nature and powers of the office of President were discussed at length. A bill for amending the Draft Constitution's provision stipulating an executive President was defeated by 73 votes to 43.¹² By a very significant provision the Assembly indemnified all SMC members.

On 4 June 1979, just a month before the elections, even as the civilians were preparing for the advent of civilian rule, Akuffe was overthrown by Flight-Lieutenant Rawlings. The so-called "moral revolution" of Rawlings was primarily a rebellion of the junior officers of the army against the privileged senior officers and also the upper civilian class, which too had shared some of the benefits of military rule. Rawlings finally became a victim of the same political and socio-economic constraints which had led to the removal of Acheampong and Akuffe from

11 This recommendation approximates very closely to the transitional feature of National Government.

12 Africa Report (Washington, D.C.), vol. 24, no. 3, May-June 1979, p. 26.

power. He, therefore, decided to relinquish power to the civilians at an early date -- in any case, not later than October 1979.

Several political parties had emerged on the political scene after the ban was lifted by Akuffo early in 1979. But the number of parties which could register themselves by the January 31st deadline was only 16, out of which 10 were declared invalid by the Electoral Commission in April. Thus, finally 6 parties contested the election.¹³ Each nominated a candidate for the Presidential election. Four independent Presidential candidates were also in the fray. In spite of the Political Party Decree¹⁴ the old proscribed parties were back by proxy. The restraints imposed by the decree were sidetracked when new names were given to the old parties, and new candidates were sponsored by the old political notables. The People's National Party (PNP) was a reincarnation of the CPP. The Popular Front Party was the old PP in a new form; and the United National Convention (UNC) was an agglomeration of some elements of the PP and National Alliance of Liberals (NAL).

13 The People's National Party (PNP), the Popular Front Party (PFP), the Action Congress Party (ACP), the United National Convention (UNC), the Social Democratic Front (SDF), the Third Force Party (TFP), and independents. See Appendix II.

14 See Chapter 3, p. 9.

The PNP won 71 out of 140 seats. The runner-up was the PEP, with 42 seats. The UIC got 13 seats; the Action Congress Party, 10 seats; and the Social Democratic Party, 3 seats. One seat went to an independent candidate. The PNP's Presidential candidate Hilla Limman also polled the highest number of votes. He scored about 514,000 votes as against the PEP candidate's 432,000. According to a Presidential election decree, the President was required to poll at least 50 per cent of the total votes. If no candidate scored the requisite votes, an election was to be held again within twenty-one days.¹⁵ In the second round, the PEP candidate, Hilla Limman, received the support of some of the minor parties and won.

In August Rawlings' AFRC set up a joint commission of the elected civilian Government and its own members to arrange for a peaceful change-over from military to civilian rule. A new chapter was added to Ghana's political history on 24 September, when, after a lapse of seven years, civilian rule was finally restored.

Rawlings' address at the time of handing over is too important to be missed. It was a kind of reminder to the civilian Government that in the event of any misuse of office, he would play the nemesis. Although politics was thus demilitarized, yet it was not the same as it used to be

¹⁵ Africa Report, vol. 24, no. 4, July-August 1979, p. 27.

till 1966. The troops retreated to their barracks, but their shadow continued to loom large in politics. Rawlings was convinced that he had a right to monitor the governing of civilian administration. The AFRC left its impact even upon the framework of the Constitution by ensuring the inclusion of some provisions.¹⁶

16 Section 16 of the First Schedule of the new Constitution of Ghana reads: "Notwithstanding anything contained in this Constitution, any confiscation of any property and any other penalties imposed by or under the authority of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council shall not be reversed by any authority under this Constitution." Section 19 of the same schedule is a novel example of the AFRC's attempt to constitutionalize its otherwise unconstitutional role. It stipulates: "Notwithstanding anything contained in Article 240 of this Constitution [which provides for amendments] Parliament shall have no power to amend this section or sections 15, 16, ... of this schedule." See West Africa, no. 3254, 20 November 1979, p. 2171.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

We have observed in the foregoing chapters how the overthrow of the civilian Government at the hands of the military in 1966 paved way for the militarization of Ghana's politics. Once the military persuaded itself to depart from its organizational conventions and launch a coup, a series of coups followed. Finally, under the pressure of social political and economic forces, the military felt constrained to withdraw from politics. We cannot yet tell whether its withdrawal is a terminal point in Ghana's political system or merely a passing phenomenon. However, we may set down here some notable features of the military's political role which emerge from our study.

The recurrence of coups brought about a change in the attitudes of the successive military rulers in Ghana. This accounts for the divergence in the policies of the different rulers. For example, the leaders of the first coup, i.e. the members of the National Liberation Council (NLC) overthrew the then legally constituted civilian Government and initiated an unconstitutional political trend. Their objective, however, was limited in nature. According to their contention, it was primarily to change the national leadership and prepare the

ground for the advent of a democratic polity. We witnessed in Chapter 1 how after the completion of Constitutional arrangements the NLC held elections and transferred power to the elected candidate. It thus played only a transitional role in Ghana's politics. In contrast the National Redemption Council (NRC) aspired to rule for an indefinite period. Its leader, Acheampong, claimed that he was as entitled to exercise power as any civilian politician. He planned out his rule on a long-term basis and extended his stay in power for as long as possible. Chapter 2 shows how he tried to militarize the political system and establish the military as a constitutional political actor -- although his efforts were forestalled as a result of his ouster. In Chapter 3 we see how the last military leader, Rawlings, contended that being an ordinary soldier he was a committed representative of the masses and hence the most aspired-for leader. He sought to change the character of Ghanaian politics and make it mass-based rather than elite-based, a task which apparently required a long tenure of office. Thus, as the outcome of a succession of coups, military intervention changed into active participation.

When the military entered politics in Ghana, its tradition of political neutrality which it had observed sedulously for long years proved to be a handicap. (The military leaders had neither the administrative skill nor the political acumen needed for government. Even then the resources chosen

by them were different. Whereas the NLC leadership opted for an alliance with the bureaucracy so as to be able to draw upon its expertise, the NRC leader, Acheampong, was unwilling to share power with any civilian grouping. He tried to concentrate power in his own hands, hoping that total power even in the absence of political skill would provide effective administration. The outcome of the first option, i.e. co-operation with the bureaucracy, was that a polity run by the bureaucracy, the technocracy, and the military was ushered in. One important advantage of working in co-operation with the civil servants was that the military acquired their support in return. The backing of such a key sector of the nation as the bureaucracy strengthened the NLC's regime. The outcome of the second alternative, i.e. exclusion of all civilian groupings from exercise of power, was that Acheampong could neither cultivate a supportive cell within the civilians nor acquire the backing of the rank and file of the armed forces.

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned differences in the perceptions and some of the policies of the military rulers, there are some common characteristics of military rule in Ghana as depicted in the preceding chapters.

It is worth noting that military rule in Ghana did not challenge the power structure. Military officers were as much a part of the elite as civilian politicians. What they threatened was the exclusive right of the civilians to

exercise power. It was Rawlings who tried to defy the senior military hierarchy and also oppose the civilian leadership. He did so because he himself was a low-ranking soldier with no stakes in the elitist Establishment. However, he failed in his mission. Power was finally handed over to the same old civilian leaders.

All the military rulers in Ghana had to contend with the issue of legitimacy. Nkrumah's civilian Government had acquired power by means of a popular mandate, and it could claim to be an elected representative of the people. It did not suffer from the legitimacy problem till 1961. It was only in the post-1961 period, when it started assuming the trappings of authoritarianism, that it lost public support (though in the de jure sense it still was a Constitutional regime.) The various military leaders of the series of coups which followed, on the other hand, first seized power and then, in order to legitimize it, sought public approval. The military rulers justified their accession to power on the grounds of the inefficiency and maladministration of the rulers that they had replaced. They spelt out populist ideals and aspirations as the aims of their regimes. Even then, all that they could do was to subdue the issue of legitimacy though they could not totally free themselves from it. They were rulers on probation. When they failed to fulfil their promises, the masses found no reason for their continuance.

The high degree of regression accompanied military politics. This explains why there was nothing sacrosanct about military rule. The leaders of the conseil d'etat seized power by force, sustained their rule by force, and were made to give up politics by force. Since they came into politics by force, others could justifiably use the same instrument for dislodging them. The number of subversive decrees passed from 1966 to 1978 reflect that the military rulers suffered throughout from a counter-coup psychosis.

(The economic conditions of the country played a crucial role in determining the destiny of the military rulers.) A study of the rule of Acheampong and Anuffo highlights this point. At the time of their take-over the economy was in a paralysed form. By promising economic reforms they quietened the people initially. Subsequently, in an attempt to come to grips with the chronic economic maladies, they tried out a number of policies, but the economic crisis proved to be too stubborn and posed a threat to their stability. The remedies they could think of for the economic malaise were too superficial to yield results. They were not equipped well enough to deal with the basic ills of the economy. For instance, they did not exert themselves vigorously enough to step up production at the same time that they took such measures as the devaluation of the cedi and the controls on imports. This proved disastrous for the

common man. Moreover, cocoa exports continued to form almost two-thirds of the total export earnings. The military took steps to diversify the economy. It is worth noting that cocoa accounted for an average of 13 per cent of the total Government revenues from 1961 to 1966; it shot up to 27 per cent from 1970 to 1974.

As we have said in the preceding chapters, the military resorted to heavy deficit financing from 1972 onwards. The reason was that its current expenditure recorded a persistent increase. Such expenditure unlike capital expenditure is difficult to slash even in a year of cocoa slump. When, in 1971-72, there was a decline in the revenues, the current expenditure increased by 15 per cent. When the revenues fell from £422 million to £397 million in 1972-73, current expenditure again increased by 11 per cent. This led to a high budgetary deficit. Even in 1974, when Ghana could have reversed its economic trend in view of a 40 per cent spurt in its export earnings, the military chose to increase its expenditure by 56 per cent. In 1975-76 there was another record budget deficit. This eventually led to galloping inflation. The problem of balance of payments became a perennial problem. The military rulers were thus overwhelmed by the economic factors they had promised to combat.

✓ An important characteristic of the military regimes in Ghana was that the rulers did not have the necessary organizational means to deal with any stir or agitation on

the social plane. Nor did they evolve institutions which could have absorbed social conflict. Lack of communication with the masses was the bane of military politics. Since it lacked the necessary political infrastructure for mass mobilization, the military would have done well to use the various political parties as an effective bridge to the masses, but it banned them and nipped every kind of political activity.

The absence of mobilizational institutions was an outcome of deliberate policy. The military was determined not to let any civilian force have direct access to politics lest it should later emerge as a claimant or rival to office. By keeping the mobilization process, at a low key and depriving civilians of political participation the military tried to prevent a recrudescence of socio-political forces. This policy, however, backfired. Denial of civil rights and political liberty made the professionals, the politicians, the students, and the middle class restive. When these social and political forces became active during the rule of the NRC and the Supreme Military Council (SMC), the result inevitably was social conflict. Since there were no institutions to absorb such conflict, it contributed to the fall of Acheampong and Akuffo.

The military could not long resist the effects of politicization. Once it moved into the centre of the political

arena, power left an indelible impact on its institutions. Every successive coup pushed up the junior officers in the power hierarchy. With such junior officers as those constituting the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) at the helm of affairs and senior personnel carrying out their orders the military became increasingly unmilitary-like. The expansion of the military suffered a setback owing to the arrest, deportation, and transfer of officers suspected of subversive activity. The prosecution of the ousted military rulers and many other senior officers by the AFRC also caused decimation.

The military's political participation led to an erosion of its organizational character also. Such qualities as were characteristic of the military as a corporate body - as, e.g. discipline, the regimented way of living, and the organized line of command - were automatically eroded. The very fact of a military take-over implied an undermining of its structure and made it difficult for the military rulers to count on the military strength for support. Whenever a military grouping rose to power, it led to disaffection and unrest among the other groupings within the army. While the ruling caucus bagged the dividends of political power, officers belonging to the other groupings, unable to make any substantial gain, felt alienated. This created divisiveness in the otherwise-cohesive structure of the

Ghanaian army. Thus, under military rule, while some individual military officers attained high status, the military organization itself suffered.

Thus under military rule in Ghana there was neither any political development nor any economic growth. The military failed to prove itself either as a progenitor of reform or progress or as an agent of positive socio-political change. It was not even a guarantor of public order.

However, the outstanding feature of Ghanaian politics is that civilians have finally proved their supremacy over the new set of military rulers. It is clear that the military is no answer for the challenges posed by Ghana's economic backwardness and political instability. At one time the dream was to weld Ghana's Socialistic order with the Pan-Africanist movement. At another time it was to establish Parliamentary democracy strictly on the Westminster model. At yet another time it was just the opposite of it, viz the creating of a political order absolutely controlled by men on horseback. Finally there arose a soldier revolutionary who promised to rid society of all kinds of inequality. After experimenting with all these various models Ghana is back to civilian rule.

Appendix I

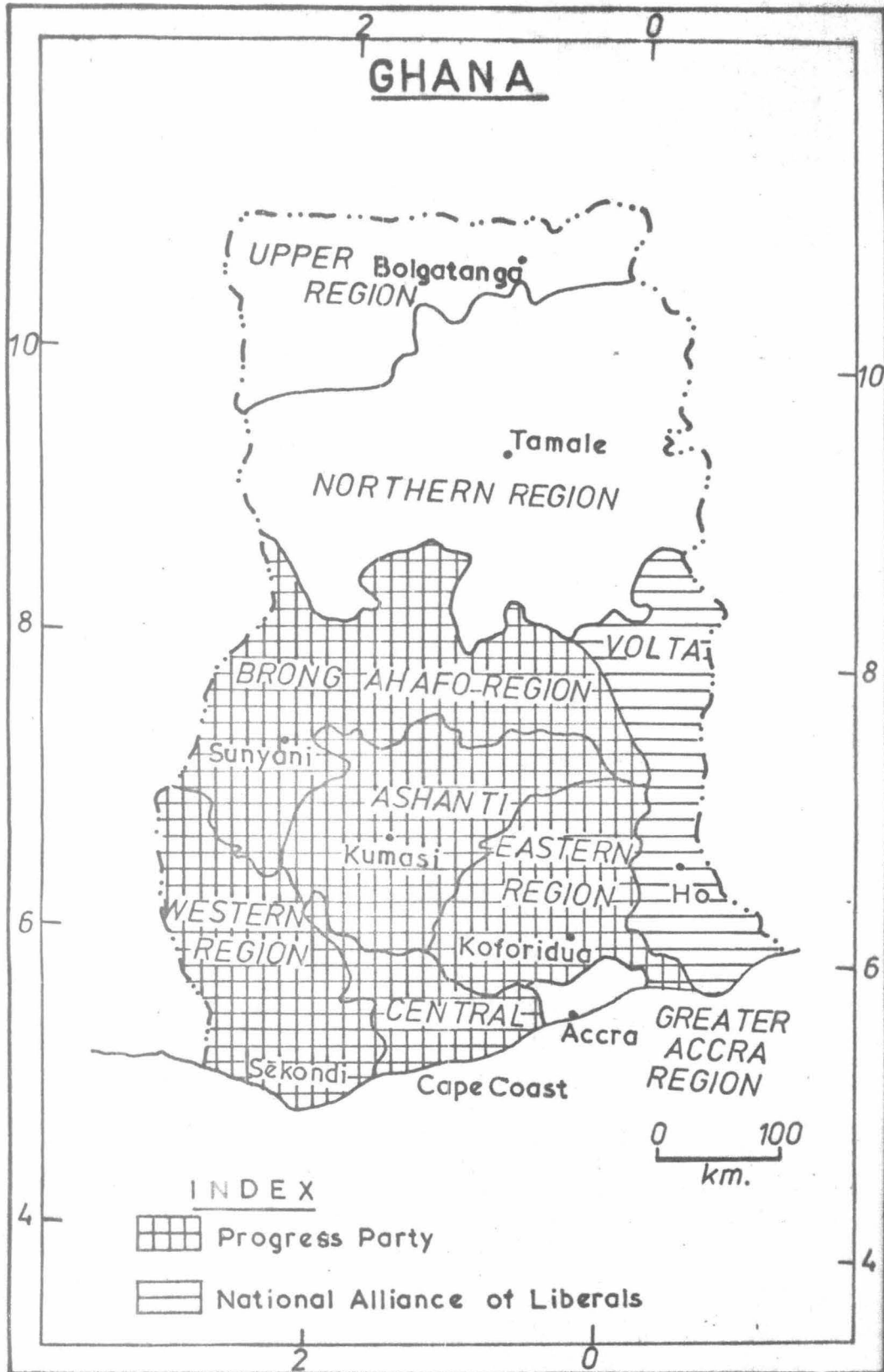
1969 Parliamentary Election

<u>Regions</u>	<u>Linguistic Group</u>	<u>Seats</u>	<u>Progress Party</u>	<u>National Alliance of Liberals</u>	<u>Others</u>
Ashanti	Akan	22	22	-	-
Brong-Ahafo	Akan	13	13	-	-
Central Region	Akan	15	15	-	-
Western Region	Akan	13	10	-	3
Eastern Region	Akan	22	18	4	-
Volta Region	Ewe	16	2	14	-
Greater Accra Region	Ga	9	3	3	3
Northern Region	Non-Akan	14	9	5	-
Upper Region	Non-Akan	16	13	3	-
Total		140	105	29	6

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Source: Dennis Austin, "Elections in Ghana, 1969", Africa Quarterly (New Delhi), vol. 9, no. 3, October-December 1969, p. 206.

RELATIVE CONCENTRATION OF THE TWO POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE
1969 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION



Map 1

Appendix 2

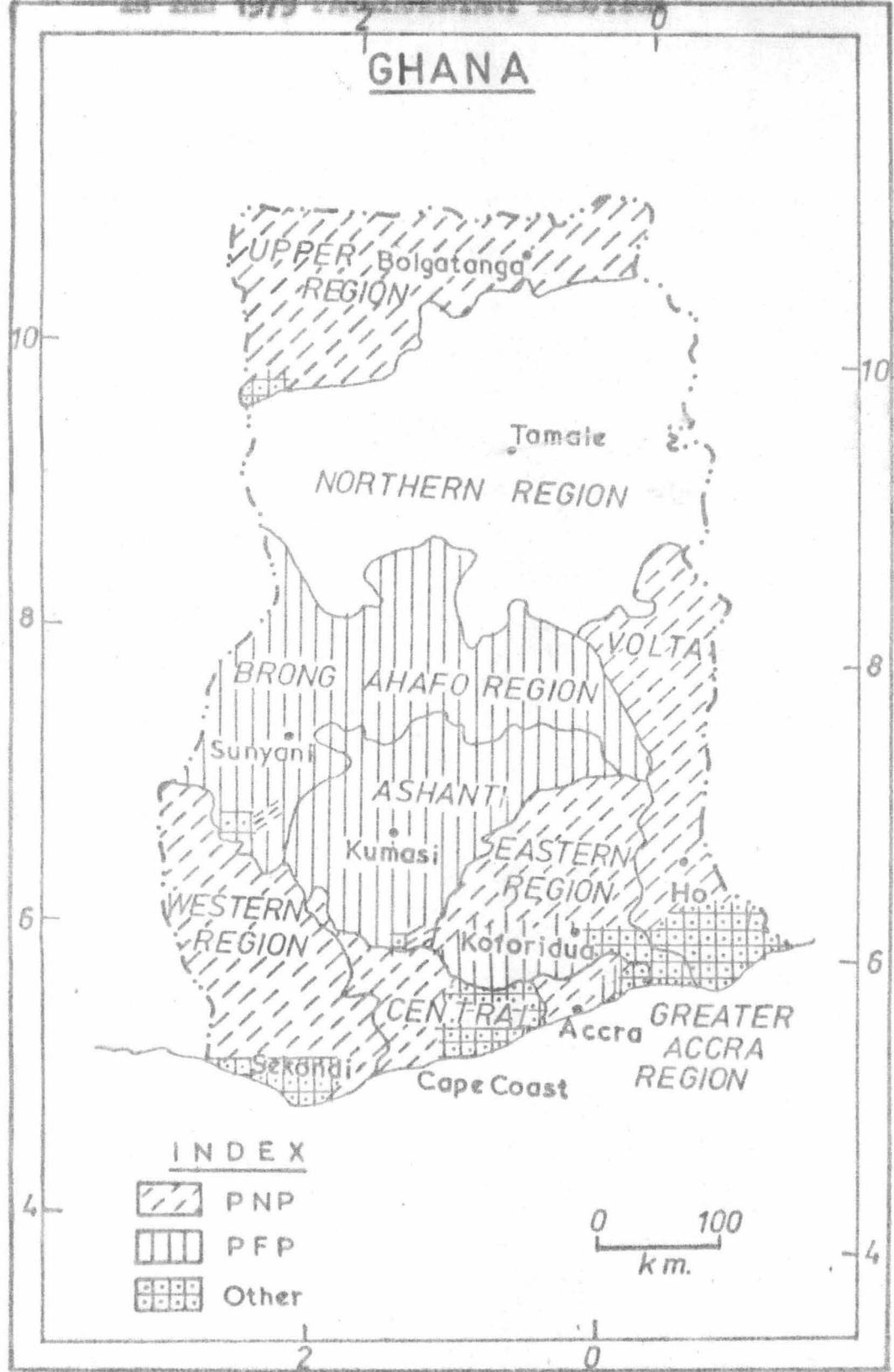
1979 Parliamentary Election

Regions	Seats	PHP	PPP	UNC	ACP	SDP	IPP	IND
Ashanti	22	2	19	1	-	-	-	-
Brong-Ahafo	13	2	10	-	-	-	-	1
Central Region	15	8	-	-	7	-	-	-
Western Region	13	9	1	-	3	-	-	-
Eastern Region	21	11	6	4	-	-	-	-
Volta	16	11	-	5	-	-	-	-
Greater Accra	10	6	1	3	-	-	-	-
Northern Region	14	7	4	-	-	3	-	-
Upper Region	16	15	1	-	-	-	-	-
Total	140	71	42	15	10	3	0	1

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Source: Richard Jeffries, "The Ghanaian Elections of 1979", African Affairs (London), vol. 79, no. 316, July 1980, pp. 397-414.

RELATIVE CONCENTRATION OF THE DIFFERENT POLITICAL PARTIES
IN THE 1979 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS



Map 2

Chronology of Events

- 24 February 1966 Overthrow of Nkrumah.
Installation of the National Liberation Council (NLC).
- 4 November 1966 Constitutional Commission set up.
- 14 October 1967 Devaluation of the Cedi from 10s to 7s.
- 17 April 1967 An unsuccessful counter-coup attempted.
General Kotoka killed.
- 20 November 1968 Detention of Air Marshal H.A. Otu for
subversive activity.
- 29 January 1969 Constituent Assembly set up
- 2 April 1969 Resignation of General Ankrah as
Chairman of the NLC.
- 1 May 1969 Ban on political parties lifted.
- 29 August 1969 Parliamentary elections lifted.
- 1 October 1969 Busia takes over.
- 27 December 1971 Devaluation of the Cedi by 44 per cent.
- 13 January 1972 Overthrow of Busia in a coup headed by
Lieutenant Colonel Acheampong.
Installation of the National Redemption
Council (NRC).
- 27 December 1972 Revaluation of the Cedi by 42 per cent.
- 9 October 1975 Supreme Military Council (SMC) set up.
- 13 May 1977 Students go on strike.
- 23 June 1977 Association of Recognized Professional
Bodies demand the SMC's withdrawal.
- 13 July 1977 Announcement of the withdrawal programme
by Acheampong.
- 30 September 1978 Submission of the Koranteng Addow
Committee's Report on "Union Government".

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 30 March 1978 | Referendum held. |
| 1 May 1978 | A Constitutional Commission set up. |
| 5 July 1978 | Replacement of Acheampong by
Lieutenant-General Akuffo. |
| 31 July 1978 | Announcement of the withdrawal programme. |
| August, September
and October 1978 | A series of strikes. |
| 6 November 1978 | Declaration of a state of emergency. |
| 12 November 1978 | Submission of a draft constitution by
the Constitutional Commission. |
| 26 December 1978 | Constituent Assembly set up. |
| 1 January 1979 | Lifting of ban on political parties. |
| 4 June 1979 | Overthrow of Akuffo in a <u>coup</u> led by
Flight Lieutenant Rawlings.
The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
(AFRC) set up. |
| June 1979 | Execution of Afrifa, Acheampong, and
Akuffo by the AFRC. |
| 13 June 1979 | Elections held. |
| 24 September 1979 | Hilla Limann takes over. Return of
civilian rule. |

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