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The Birth of a Nation

By George Padmore

THE publication of Dr. Nkrumah's autobiography¹, under the title of *Ghana*, coincides with the independence of his country. Its appearance at this time is in itself a unique achievement. It can be compared with the appearance of the memoirs of a general who, having conducted a successful military campaign to liberate the Fatherland from foreign occupation, reveals on the day of victory celebration the tactics and strategy he employed against his opponent to achieve his objective. This is the essence of the book and so makes it the most important political document yet to come out of Africa.

There can be no doubt that this book will exert a tremendous influence upon the future of race rela-

tions throughout Black Africa south of the Sahara, and it was with this hope that Dr. Nkrumah undertook the work. "Our example must inspire those who are still under foreign domination," declares the Prime Minister of the first country in Black Africa to gain independence from colonial rule. "In this belief I have written the story of my life so far. If in any way it helps the cause of freedom it will have served its purpose."

About this the Liberator of Ghana need have no doubts. The impact of the book upon the political consciousness of Africans everywhere is going to be decisive. I am confident that it will do for the Negro liberation movements what Tom Paine's *Common Sense* did for the Americans in their most difficult period of revolt against British colonialism—give faith, confidence and inspiration to the Africans in other parts of the continent who are still struggling to achieve democratic rights, racial equality and self-determination. It will do even more. It will provide them with a political programme and

¹Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah. New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1957. XVI+302pp. \$5.00.

GEORGE PADMORE, a frequent *Crisis* contributor, is a personal friend of Prime Minister Nkrumah. Mr. Padmore has himself told of Dr. Nkrumah's rise to power in his book, *The Gold Coast Revolution (1953)*.



United Press

PRIME MINISTER *Kwame Nkrumah smiles happily during the ceremonies marking the end of the British colony known as the Gold Coast and the emergence of the sovereign state of Ghana. Ghana became, on March 6, the ninth member of the British Commonwealth of Nations.*

a guide in non-violent techniques of Positive Action, which Dr. Nkrumah describes in great detail.

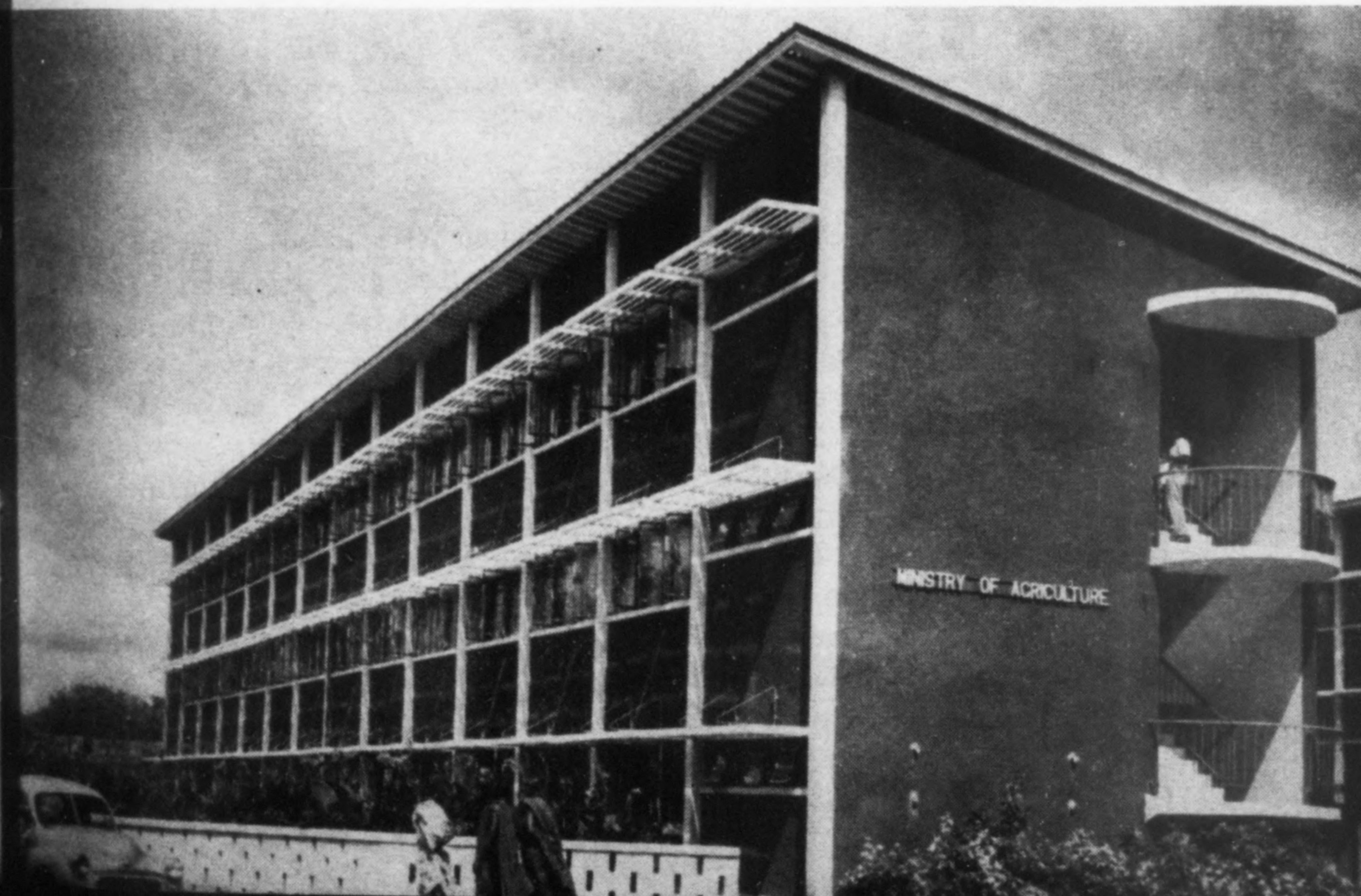
Apart from the political significance of *Ghana*, it is a fascinating human document: the inspiring story of the life and struggles of a poor boy who, by his own exertions, has risen to the highest office in his country and established for himself a firm place in the history of modern Africa as the outstanding statesman of his race.

The book opens with an amusing narrative surrounding the birth of the author forty-seven years ago in the small village of Nkroful in the extreme southwest of the Gold Coast and tells of his early childhood. Here we get a picture of the typical social life of a Fanti community, mostly engaged in farming and fish-

ing. Nkrumah's father was, however, a goldsmith and his mother, obviously a woman of sterling character, of whom he writes with touching affection, exerted a strong moral influence upon her son. Describing his early childhood, Nkrumah writes: "My family lived together very peacefully and I can remember very few quarrels. The women of the house used to take turns each week to cook the meals and look after my father and at the same time either worked in the fields or did some petty trading in order to supplement the family income. It was a wonderful life for us children with nothing to do but play around all day. Our playground was vast and varied, for we had the sea, the lagoon and the thrill of unexplored bush all within easy reach. But we had no toys."

MINISTRY of Agriculture building, Accra, Ghana, West Africa.

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THE almost completed Ambassador Hotel, Accra, Ghana, will be the largest in Ghana, with accommodation for 100 double bedrooms, a large tea lounge, banquet hall, bar and restaurants and public dining rooms.

Like most Africans, the Nkrumahs had a passion for education, so as soon as young Kwame was old enough to attend the local mission school, off he went. On completing eight years of schooling, he became a pupil teacher at the nearby town of Half Assini. A year later, he got a scholarship to the newly established teachers' training college at Achimota. This was a great leap forward in his life, for it brought him under the stimulating influence of the dis-

tinguished African educationalist, Dr. Aggrey, the vice-principal. It was during this period at Achimota that political consciousness was awakened in Nkrumah and other young students by the nationalistic writings of Dr. Azikiwe, the present prime minister of Eastern Nigeria, who was then editing a Gold Coast paper, *The Accra Morning Post*.

Both Dr. Aggrey and Dr. Azikiwe had been educated in America and had returned to Africa to render

service in their respective spheres in the advancement of their people. Their examples inspired Nkrumah to give up his teaching in a Roman Catholic institution and go off to America. His limited savings, augmented by the generosity of two relatives, gave him a modest sum of \$600, out of which he paid for a third-class passage via Liverpool, which left him with the equivalent of \$160 on which to start his educational career when he arrived in America in October, 1935. He applied to enter Lincoln University in Pennsylvania without the financial means to pay his way, but the dean, being kindly, accepted him, it being understood that he would have to work. Working one's way through college is a well-established custom

in America, and Nkrumah did all kinds of manual labor to finance his studies. It is this practice which, undoubtedly, leaves American-educated Africans with more of the common touch than most of the Oxford-Cambridge black elite.

At the end of ten years of strenuous life in America, where besides receiving many academic honors he acquired a rich and varied experience in politics, he decided to return to his country in order to render service to his race. He interrupted his homeward journey by a stay of two-and-one-half years in England. It was during this interregnum in Great Britain that Nkrumah became seriously involved in nationalist politics.

Shortly after his arrival in early

UNDERGRADUATES and dean at a Ghanian university.

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Mrs. Roosevelt speaks at banquet celebrating independence of Ghana. Standing at left is John Akar, Ghana program officer; seated, Seth A. Onwona, president Gold Coast Students Association of USA and Canada.

Robert Walker

INDEPENDENCE Festival Banquet of Gold Coast Students Association of USA and Canada held on February 8 at Carnegie Endowment International Center, New York City.

Robert Walker



summer, 1945, he became associated with the Pan-African Movement founded by the distinguished Afro-American scholar, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois. Arrangements were then being made for the holding of a Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester in October of that year, and Nkrumah was co-opted onto the organizing committee as one of the secretaries: Out of this conference emerged a program and strategy for the non-violent African Revolution. When he returned to the Gold Coast at the end of 1947 to become the secretary of the United Gold Coast Convention, Nkrumah was well versed in the techniques of political organization and was armed with a clear political objective: the complete independence of Ghana as the first stage towards a United West African Federation.

TRUMPED-UP PROSECUTIONS

His relationship with the U.G.C.C. was not a happy one, for the aims and objects of the founders of that organization were diametrically opposed to the aspirations of the common people, to whom Nkrumah was dedicated. He gives an honest account of his disagreements with the leaders of the U.G.C.C. and the circumstances which led to his parting company with them and the formation of his own Convention People's Party in June, 1949. The full story surrounding the establishment of the C.P.P. is told in a chapter entitled "The Birth of My Party", and is followed by a detailed account of the events leading up to "Positive Action", which brought Nkrumah and his colleagues into head-on col-

lision with the colonial officials of British imperialism.

After surviving a number of trumped-up prosecutions brought against the C.P.P. newspaper editors and leaders, Nkrumah and several others were eventually imprisoned. It was while he was in jail, under conditions that should shame even a totalitarian regime, that the first general election under the "bogus and fraudulent" Coussey Constitution took place. Nkrumah tells for the first time how he directed the C.P.P. election campaign from his prison cell, using toilet paper as his medium of communication with his colleagues outside the jail. Enough is told without revealing the operations of the "underground railway"; but it is obvious that even those Africans who nominally were on the side of the imperialists were in spirit with him. Without these "operators", Nkrumah's links with the masses, to whom he pays generous tribute throughout the book, party unity could not have been maintained and the party would have been isolated from its leader and finally crushed by the forces of imperialism and their agents.

WINS ELECTION

Emerging victorious from this first electoral campaign, the very authorities who had imprisoned Nkrumah were obliged to release him in order to form the Government. "Tactical Action" now replaced "Positive Action," marking a further stage in the struggle. Having routed his political opponents at the polls, Nkrumah was now able to consolidate his political position in the Legislative Assembly,



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GHANA'S CABINET—*Front row, seated, from L: A. E. Inkumsah, minister of housing; Kojo Botsio, minister of trade and labor; Prime Minister Kkrumah; K. A. Gbedemah, minister of finance; A. Casely-Hayford, minister of communications; (standing) A. E. A. Ofori-Atta, minister of local government; N. A. Welbeck, minister of works; B. Yeboah-Afari, minister of agriculture; J. H. Allassani, minister of health; J. B. Erzuah, minister of education; L. R. Abavana, minister without portfolio; Ako Adjei, minister of the interior; and Krobo Edusei, minister without portfolio. BOTTOM: Inauguration of new Accra Municipal Council. In the foreground are the councillors, and facing them are the president, the minister of local government and housing and officials of the ministry.*

while at the same time using his party as a battering ram against those political opposition groups which emerged one after the other. Within three years of taking office, Nkrumah, who by that time had been officially recognized as *de jure* Prime Minister, was sufficiently entrenched to be able to get the Constitution reformed to allow the Gold Coast to wield full internal autonomy under an all-African Cabinet. In the elections which followed in June, 1954, preparatory to the introduction of the new changes, the position of the C.P.P. was further consolidated by its being returned to office with an overwhelming majority of 72 out of 104 seats. The way was now clear for the final transfer of power.

Realizing that their days were numbered, the forces of reaction decided upon exploiting every grievance, real or imaginary, within the Gold Coast, in the hope of delaying, if they could not defeat, the attainment of immediate independence. All the discredited politicians who had been eliminated in previous contests gathered around to create a new opposition under the banner of the National Liberation Movement. The centre of this opposition was based on Kumasi, and thanks to the support of the Asantehene and the Asanteman Council was able to call up a mass following by exploiting the tribal chauvinism of backward rural sections still under the domination of feudal autocracy. With their allies, especially the Northern People's Party, another sectional organization, the N.L.M. embarked upon a campaign of violence on the one hand and intransigent tactics on the other.

In all of these, they had the encouragement and support, both open and covert, of certain imperialists in the Gold Coast and in Britain, who recognized that the coming of independence would bring to an end their term of untrammelled exploitation and overlordship.

HUMAN CLOSE-UP

How Nkrumah met and overcame these various crises is told with commendable objectivity and detachment in a chapter entitled "The Final Test". The book closes with a chapter appropriately headed, "The Hour of Triumph", in which the Prime Minister gives a very human close-up of himself, describing his emotions when the Governor handed him the official despatch from the Secretary of State fixing March 6, 1957, as the date of independence. A man able to sleep even under the most trying conditions, Nkrumah, on the night following the good tidings "lay for a long time sleepless while the whole story of life passed before me like some kind of pageant. I saw myself as a boy in Nzima, as a proud scholar in Achimota, as a struggling student at Lincoln; I saw myself in London where my studies gave way to politics; my return to the Gold Coast; the struggles that ensued both from within and without; detention, positive action, imprisonment; my final acceptance as a politician—events which were only the beginning of bigger and bigger struggles and intrigues. Then, after almost ten long years of it all, those few words that represented the end of the road, the end of what had sometimes seemed to be a never-



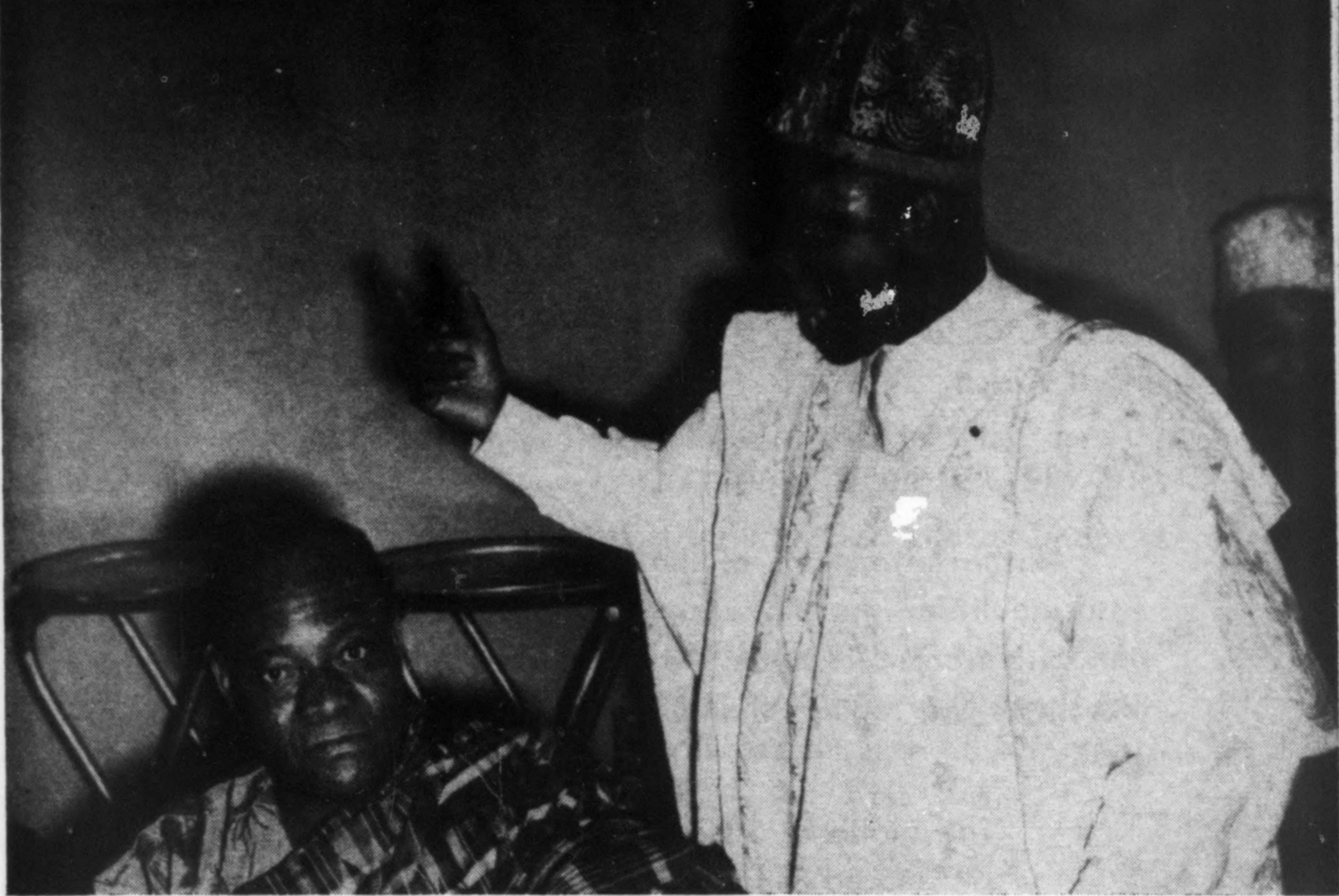
Vice-President Richard Nixon shakes hands with Ghana minister of communications Casely-Hayford (left) as Mrs. Nixon and minister of trade and labor Kojo Botsio (right) look on following the Nixon's arrival at Accra airport.

United Press

CENTRAL LIBRARY at Accra, Ghana, West Africa. There are about 190 Ghana students studying in the United States. Accra, capital of Ghana, is the largest city in the nation with a population of 150,000.

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Robert Walker

ASSISTANT *director of education of Ghana, B. A. Brown (facing camera) attends Independence Festival dinner, New York City.*

ending struggle; just a few words on paper handed over to me quietly by the man who had both imprisoned and released me and who had since afforded me every encouragement in my arduous task. 'The 6th of March,' I said to myself. 'The 6th of March. *The 6th of March . . .*'"

The book ends with a call to the new phase of the struggle, for there can be no standing still in the long march which will extend freedom's frontiers from Ghana to the ends of the Continent. "African nationalism was not confined to the Gold Coast, the new Ghana," Nkrumah points out as he comes to the end of his narrative. He tells his people that "from now on it must be Pan-African nationalism, and the ideology of African political consciousness

and African political emancipation must spread throughout the whole continent, into every nook and corner of it.

"I have never regarded the struggle for the Independence of the Gold Coast as an isolated objective but always as a part of a general world historical pattern. . . . Our task is not done and our own safety is not assured until the last vestiges of colonialism have been swept from Africa."

Ghana's independence is just the beginning of Pan-African freedom. It is this wider vision that places Dr. Nkrumah so high above the political leaders in other West African territories, who are either tribal chauvinists or self-centered nationalists—the "big fish" in small ponds!