REGIME FAILURE AND THE POLITICAL LEGITIMACY OF GOVERNMENTS IN GHANA: THE CASE OF THE ACHEAMPONG REGIME, 1972 - 1979

This is a thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy of the
Australian National University

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November 1983.

STATEMENT

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my independent research and all authorities and sources which have been used are acknowledged.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all Ghanaians, with the sincere hope that they will one day discover solutions to their economic, and consequently, political problems.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis has been written with the encouragement and assistance of many people; so, it is proper that I express my gratitude to them.

Dr. John Ballard, my supervisor, made the greatest contribution to my efforts. That this thesis has the semblance of scholarship is largely attributable to the critical comments he made on various drafts. Furthermore, that the thesis has been written well ahead of schedule, attests to the interest he has shown in my work. I am very grateful to him.

Many colleagues and friends of mine have been eager to discuss various aspects of my draft. I must single out for thanks the following people: Dr. Rolf Gerritsen (alias **Oburoni Kwasea**), William Maley, Michael Maley; Alvaro Marques, Tom Smith, Will Koberuka; John Kaburise, Duncan Colquhoun-Kerr. and James Wapakabulu.

In London, I received assistance from several people. The Staff of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies was helpful. Dr. Richard Rathbone and Dr. Richard Jeffries, both of the School of African and Oriental Studies, also gave me assistance. I found Dr. Rathbone's knowledge of Ghanaian history very inspiring. Dr. Jeffries reduced my problems to a minimum by suggesting that I focus my research on the Acheampong period. I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to these people.

I arrived in Ghana on my field trip at a time when economic conditions in that country were precarious. I would not have survived the four months had it not been for the assistance I got from friends and relatives, including Kpordotsi Datsomor; Butu Datsomor; Kofi Siabi-Mensah;

T. E. K. Amesimeku; Sam Okudzeto; Otis Otim; Kwesi Yeboah; Dr. Kwesi Botchwey and Emmanuel Fekpey. I am greatly indebted to the above-mentioned people.

For financial assistance I must render profound thanks to the Australian National University which awarded me a Doctoral Scholarship and generously funded my research trips to the United Kingdom and Ghana.

Joyce Kasokason made my work much easier by efficiently typing the thesis; and for efforts far beyond the call of duty, I am indebted to Celia Taylor.

I cannot adequately thank my wife Afi and children - Akpene, Kofi and Yayaa for their companionship and affection which made what would otherwise have been boring moments, so enjoyable.

Finally, I must state, as is customarily the case in the field of academia, that the errors and other deficiencies in this thesis are solely my responsibility.

PRECIS

This is a study of the politics of Ghana under successive military regimes, those of the National Redemption Council (NRC) and the Supreme Military Council (SMC) between January 1972 and June 1979. The NRC came to power in January 1972 through a **coup d'e tat** led by Colonel I.K. Acheampong which toppled the elected Progress Party (PP) government of Dr. Kofi Abrefa Busia. In October 1975, the NRC was supplanted by the SMC, and reconstituted in July 1978 under the leadership of General F.W.K. Akuffo.

The focal argument of the thesis may be summarised as follows: since independence in 1957 the legitimacy of governments in Ghana has been vitiated both by persistent economic policy failures and the existence of two intransigent **camps** based on the formative rivalry between parties led by Nkrumah and Busia. The interaction of these two factors has prevented Ghanaian governments from creating political stability through generating widespread acceptance of their continuation of office.

When Acheampong came to power in January 1972, he earned the initial support of the Nkrumah **camp** mainly because he had deposed the Busia **camp**. By 1975, despite vigorous and initially successful attempts to engineer legitimacy, Acheampong faced a crisis which threatened to lead to the overthrow of the government. In response to this, he mooted a **Union Government** concept in an attempt both to establish a new basis for the legitimacy of his government and to dissolve the traditional **camps** of Ghanaian politics. However, in this

attempt he was opposed by the Busia camp and elements associated with it, and failed to receive whole-hearted support from the Nkrumah camp. So the **Union Government** proposal, despite an intense government campaign, failed. It failed not because of the merits or demerits of the proposal but because the legitimacy of the Acheampong government had been eroded irreparably. Not even the removal of Acheampong from office by his colleagues in July 1978 could restore the legitimacy of the military regime.

INTRODUCTION

In January 1972, after twenty-seven months of rule, the Progress Party (PP) government of Dr. K.A. Busia was overthrown by a group of military officers led by Colonel I.K. Acheampong. This was the second time the military had intervened to topple a civilian government in Ghana. The first occasion was the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP) government in February 1966.

The 1972 **coup d'etat** initiated a decade of political instability in Ghana. Regime failure became (and continues to be) endemic. The causes of this failure were two interacting variables; the persistence of Ghana's economic weakness and the political effect of the activities of two mutually irreconcilable **camps**, originally based on the supporters of Nkrumah and Busia. These variables have shaped Ghanaian politics since the early 1950s. The governments of the 1970s were unable to shake themselves free from the constricting shackles of their inheritance of economic decline and political intransigents. The combined effects of these factors ultimately led to the destruction of the SMC as they had the Nkrumah and the Busia regimes.

The military junta that toppled the Busia government established a ruling body, the National Redemption Council (NRC). This was superseded by the Supreme Military Council (SMC) in October 1975, following a power struggle within the top hierarchy of the military. In July 1978, the SMC was reconstituted (SMC2) under General F.W.K. Akuffo when Acheampong was forced by his SMC colleagues to resign. He was accused by his colleagues of

turning 'the whole of the governmental activities' into a 'one-man show' (**Daily Graphic** 11 July 1978).

One year later, shortly before elections were to be held for a return to civilian rule, the reconstituted SMC (SMC2) was removed from office by a group of junior military officers led by Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawings. Acheampong and Akuffo, five other senior military officers connected with the SMC and General Afrifa (retired), one of the architects of the 1966 coup, were executed by Rawlings.

Although all periods in the political history of Ghana since independence have been turbulent, the seven-and-half years of the NRC/SMC is generally regarded in Ghana as the most tumultuous period. The following description by Professor Adu Boahen is typical of views held by many Ghanaians.

> The period 1972 to 1979 will definitely go down into history as the most traumatic, the most dramatic and the most tragic period in the history of the country [Ghana]. It was a period which saw events moving with the force of a hurricane, devastating and consuming everything in the way and leaving behind nothing but social dislocation and demoralization, economic stagnation and bankruptcy and decadence and moral degeneration and decay. Indeed there is not a single facet of life in this country that was not affected during these dark and incredible seven years (Boahen 1980: 333).

The climax of the period of rule by the NRC/SMC was reached between October 1976 and July 1978. This period is commonly referred to in Ghana as the **Union Government (Unigov)** period. In October 1976 Acheampong, who had hitherto consistently maintained that his government was not prepared to transfer political power to civilian politicians, suddenly presented a proposal to form a non-party government comprised

of the military, the police and civilians. Acheampong described this form of government as a **Union Government.** The **Unigov** proposal released forces kept under restraint since the military took over power in 1972 and plunged Ghana into a political crisis. **Unigov** was openly opposed by a small but vocal section of the Ghanaian public, mainly professionals, former Progress Party activists and university students.

In March 1978, the SMC organised a referendum to determine the constitutional status of the **Unigov** proposal. The results of the referendum indicated that a majority of the valid votes were cast in favour of the **Unigov** proposal, but the conduct of the government during the campaign leading to the referendum, and the government's handling of the referendum results, aggravated the political crisis. It was against this background that Acheampong was removed from office as Head of State on 5 July 1978 by his SMC colleagues.

Unigov did not vanish with the fall of Acheampong. His successor, General Akuffo, continued to pursue a slightly different version of **Unigov** by proposing a non-party **Transitional (Interim) National Government (Tinagov).** Continued opposition from Acheampong's opponents forced Akuffo to lift the 1972 ban on party political activity. Akuffo was in the process of disengaging the military from politics when Rawlings intervened on 4 June 1979, thus ending the seven and a half years of NRC/SMC rule.

This is a study of Ghanaian politics under the NRC/SMC from 1972 to 1979; and is analysed using the concept of legitimacy. The study attempts to examine the strategies Acheampong utilised to create and maintain his government's legitimacy, the factors that eroded it, and

Acheampong's response to the eventual crisis in the legitimacy of his government. The thesis is, in part, an account of the rise and fall of the NRC/SMC regimes, but that rise and fall occurred within a structural context that was largely inherited at the regime's accession to power.

The thesis is that government in Ghana is faced with perpetual challenge to its legitimacy and consequently, Ghana is fated to have recurring cycles of instability. The interaction of two factors - general economic failure , and the division in Ghanaian politics between the Nkrumah(ist) and the Busia(ist) **camps**)- has determined the legitimacy of Ghanaian governments. Ghana's situation as an economy ultimately dependent upon a weak external market means that regimes cannot (in the long term) deliver the instrumental goods required by the populace. The existence of an opposition **camp** irreconcilably opposed to government means that public disaffection with economic failures or specific policies, can be crystallised by the oppositionist **camp** to delegitimatize the government. The opposition **camp** seeks to convince the masses and other elite groups of the illegitimacy of the government. The opposition **camp** is successful when the instrumental payoffs system - **essential commodities**, positions, power, and profits via government regulatory licensing for various elite groups - begins to break down due to economic failures. It becomes easy for the opposition **camp** to destabilize the regime and itself succeed to power, and the process begins all over again. Therefore, regime legitimacy in Ghana is always under threat and hence always tenuous, with the result that every government in Ghana is necessarily tentative until such time as a viable economic structure is established.

The study is divided into ten chapters. Chapter one lays out the conceptual framework of the thesis, based on the concept of legitimacy. Chapter two discusses some relevant characteristics of the legitimacy of governments in Ghana before Acheampong came to power. The third chapter outlines the events that explain the fall of Busia, providing a background to the rise of Acheampong and the immediate basis for the legitimacy of military rule. The fourth chapter goes on to examine the major tactics Acheampong utilised to engineer and maintain the legitimacy of his government. Chapter five concentrates on the factors which led to the decline of Acheampong's legitimacy. Chapter six analyses the **Unigov** concept and argues that it was intended to provide a new basis of legitimation. The seventh chapter deals with the political conflict generated by the **Unigov** proposal, the events leading up to the **Unigov** referendum, and the strategies employed by the government to win the referendum. Chapter eight examines the implications of the referendum for the legitimacy of Acheampong and his government, and analyses the removal of Acheampong from office. Chapter nine deals with Akuffo's attempts to restore the legitimacy of the SMC. The final chapter summarises the main arguments in the thesis.

Field research for this thesis was conducted in London and in Ghana between October 1981 and February 1982. In Ghana, I encountered several difficulties which nearly resulted in deferring the research indefinitely. It is necessary to digress here and outline some of these difficulties, not to excuse any short-comings in the thesis but to serve as a warning to scholars intending to do research in Ghana. Originally, I planned to interview a number of people involved in government and in opposition during the Acheampong period. But many of those who participated in the politics of that period were reluctant to speak out. The

execution of Acheampong and Akuffo, together with other senior members of the SMC, also denied me the opportunity to verify my analysis of the SMC, although they would most likely have kept silent likewise.

There were other impediments in my way. Practically every official document in Ghana was classified, and this crippled my efforts to consult such documents. One example was my experience at the Debt Secretariat. I had to seek ministerial approval in order to consult the Debt Agreements signed between Ghana and its creditors since 1966, and approval was denied. My efforts were further frustrated by the severe economic conditions in Ghana during my visit. The inflation rate was estimated to be running at over three hundred per cent per year (Mensah 1982: 71). Food was scarce and expensive; public transportation was overcrowded and infrequent; accommodation was a problem; and basic consumer goods (**essential commodities**) were not available or were highly priced. As a Ghanaian, I felt uncomfortable without tinned fish, tinned milk, toothpaste, toilet roll and sugar. The economic situation had other implications for my research. People, including those in high positions in the bureaucracy, demanded payment in cash (often in foreign currency) or in kind (such as toothpaste or toilet soap) as a pre-condition for giving me access to official documents. Unfortunately, my research grant could not afford such reciprocal relationships.

The **coup de grace** was the change of government in the middle of my research. On 31 December 1981, Rawlings overthrew the elected Limann government. Among the effects of the 'revolution' was a dusk-to-dawn curfew which was imposed for the rest of my stay in Ghana. Also, the common sight of soldiers wielding guns, carrying rounds of ammunition and 'disciplining' people in the name of the 'revolution', rendered the

remaining academic spirit in me disconsolate, leading me to cut the research period, originally planned for nine months, to four.

Now, a word about sources. I have relied heavily on primary sources, mainly official publications, newspapers, magazines and anonymous pamphlets which were, and still are, important characteristics of Ghanaian political conflicts. Luckily, I was involved in some of the events during the **Unigov** period (1976 to 1978) during my under-graduate years when serving as the Secretary to the Mensah Sarbah Hall Junior Common Room at the University of Ghana. This gave me access to valuable information that would otherwise have been difficult to obtain, and the opportunity to meet key personalities both in government and in opposition groups. I have made considerable use of my recollections of events during this period, but have tried to avoid translating my involvement in the **Unigov** conflict into this academic endeavour.

Finally, a statement in justification. Although the Ghanaian academic profession has produced many works, the period under study is yet to find authoritative chroniclers. To some Ghanaians, 'it is better to say very little about Acheampong's rule as one gets hypertension as one continues to remember the sheer incompetence with which Acheampong - illiterate as he was, mismanaged the country's economy' (Anowuoh 1982: 8). To date, the only book on the Acheampong period is that of Oquaye (1980). The basic fault in this book which seriously limits its usefulness as an academic work is that 'Oquaye writes not as a social scientist but a preacher' (Folson 1980: XVI). There are also a few articles on different aspects of Acheampong's rule, among which Chazan and Le Vine (1979) stands out as the most elaborate. The present study, it is hoped, will fill, at least in part, this vacuum in Ghana's political history.

It is a common failing of Ghanaian scholars to resort to preaching rather than critical analysis. On this, Folson notes that 'since they [Ghanaians] believe that the basic national problem is that of morality and since there is no other way of changing this than preaching, we have all become preachers'(Folson 1980: XVI). I hope that I have not preached in the pages that follow.

CHAPTER ONE

LEGITIMACY: A FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

> World history - the history of nations, empires, classes, religious and ideological movements - might well be written in terms of legitimacy - its presence, strength, or else its erosion and disappearance... Its rise and decline has determined much of history and yet, like related concepts of "justice" or "authority", its meaning is difficult to define, and it is not surprising that we find all manner of definitions, from Greece through Rousseau and beyond (Herz 1978: 317-8).

(1.1) Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to sketch the framework of analysis employed in the thesis. Le Vine provides a clear rationale for such an exercise.

> Analytic models are among the most useful scholarly tools to help social scientists find their way through the maze of political, social and economic reality. Without such conceptual maps to guide them, investigators tend to lose their way in tracing complex processual or causal relationships, and to become mired in irrelevancies. The analytical model affords a further advantage in that it does not pretend to serve as a theory although if carefully constructed it may aid the development of theory. It is, then, only a topographic sketch of some social or political landscape, and it can easily be adapted and improved as available knowledge increases, or it can be altogether redrawn if the original outline proves misleading. (Le Vine 1975: 1).

The concept used in constructing the analytical framework of this thesis is that of legitimacy. Legitimacy is a nebulous concept, but when it is carefully examined, it can become a useful and precise tool for analysing political action. The concept of legitimacy may provide answers to a set of questions about the relationship between a govern-

ment and the governed. To that extent, 'the use of the concept may facilitate specific empirical research which may yield the specific empirical answers in historical terms' (Bensman 1979: 37).

The application of the concept of legitimacy to particular historical situations may help to answer the following set of questions devised by Bensman: 'who are (and what are the characteristics of), the supporters of a political order?'; 'on what grounds do leaders claim support?'; 'who believes or accepts the respective claims?'; 'with what degree of enthusiasm, passivity, or resignation?'; 'who are the competing individual or group claimants for political ascendency in a society and on what grounds do they compete?'; ' who do they neutralise by rendering them passive, depoliticized, or without hope?' (Bensman 1979: 37). We may also add: how much dissent and opposition can a government tolerate? The analysis in this thesis is intended to unravel some of these questions in relation to post-independence Ghanaian governments in general, and to the Acheampong regime in particular.

The chapter is divided into six sections. The first defines legitimacy as used in the thesis and distinguishes this usage from others in vogue; the second discusses the bases of the legitimacy of governments; the third concentrates on measuring legitimacy; the fourth analyses whose perceptions are decisive in determining the legitimacy of a government; the fifth examines briefly the importance of legitimacy for any government; and the sixth provides an analysis of some of the strategies governments use to engineer their legitimacy.

(1.2) Legitimacy Defined and Distinguished

Although there has been a great deal of theoretical discussion about the concept of legitimacy, there is no consensus on its definition. In fact, there are as many definitions of legitimacy as there are writers on the concept (e.g. Lipset 1960; Sternberger 1968; Schaar 1970; Habermas 1976 and 1979; Rothschild 1977; Rigby 1982). In the context of this thesis, legitimacy is defined as 'the foundation of such governmental power as is exercised both with a consciousness on the government's part that it has a right to govern and some recognition by the governed of that right' (Sternberger 1968: 244).

This notion of legitimacy describes a relationship between the government and the governed. On the basis of this relationship, the governed decide to give support to, or withhold support from, a government. In other words, legitimacy determines the 'support for an ongoing or new system of domination' (Bensman 1979: 31). Legitimacy in this sense is claimed by the government. However, the validity of such a claim is 'achieved only when followers accept, believe in, or grant the claims for legitimacy' (Bensman 1979: 31). The grounds on which the governed make such a determination will be discussed later in this chapter.

It is necessary to clearly differentiate between legitimacy and popularity. The idea of support provides a key. Generally, people will support a government or regime against its critics even though they themselves do not like the particular government or regime, if they accept that it is trying hard. So a government can have legitimacy; it

is supported, even when it is not universally popular. However, a government that becomes increasingly unpopular loses support, and, correspondingly, its legitimacy.

The application of this usage of legitimacy must be distinguished from other prevailing interpretations of the term. One example, which is close to ours, conceptualises legitimacy in terms of a community's support for the institutions of the government. It is in this sense that Lipset defines legitimacy as involving 'the capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society' (Lipset 1960:77). Knowledge of the governed 'concerning the relative degree of a nation's political institutions is of key importance in any attempt to analyse the stability of these institutions when faced with a crisis of effectiveness' (Lipset 1960: 81).

In recent times, some critical sociologists have also used the term legitimacy to describe the role of the state in capitalist societies. Habermas is an exponent of this approach. The concept of legitimation as Habermas uses it is quite different from the two noted above. Habermas gives the state (rather than the government, governmental institutions or individuals) a fuller role in the legitimation process. To him, the question of legitimacy becomes one of the ends the state needs to achieve rather than the means it adopts to maintain support. Thus Habermas writes: '[by] legitimacy I understand the worthiness of a political order to be recognised. The claim to legitimacy is related to the social-integrative preservation of a normatively determined social identity. Legitimations serve to make good this claim, that is, to show

how and why existing [or recommended] institutions are fit to employ political power in such a way that values constitutive for the identity will be realised' (Habermas 1979: 182). There are two important points to be made here. In the first place, Habermas' concept of legitimacy has meaning only within a broader theoretical framework concerning the state. Secondly, legitimacy, as Habermas defines it, is an exclusive function which only the state can serve and then only on its own terms, for its own purposes and those of capitalist relations.

There is some theoretical correlation between Lipset's notion of legitimacy and the way the concept is used in this thesis, in the sense that both are presenting a rational view of political action with the ruled as agents. The approach of Habermas is different because for him the state is the sole actor in the legitimation process.

In practice, one can draw distinctions as well as note similarities between beliefs about governmental institutions, especially about the constitutional forms the government assumes on one hand and the support for a particular ruler or government on the other. In some political systems, especially the capitalist democracies, the two can exist independent of each other. For example, the Prime Minister and the government in Australia or the United Kingdom can become very unpopular, without their unpopularity raising questions about the legitimacy of the constitutions of these countries. The explanation for this lies in the fact that governmental institutions in these countries are well established and therefore have acquired their own legitimacy separate from that of individual leaders.

In new states this distinction is less well established. In these countries, the governed tend to conflate the government or ruler and governmental institutions. Some institutions (e.g. the public service, the military and police) which were inherited from colonial rule have acquired their own legitimacy independent of the governmental systems they serve, since they have persisted over time and despite fundamental changes in government institutions. But because the constitutional regimes are new, having been hastily created at independence, they lack their own source of legitimacy. The result is that the legitimacy of a constitution is contigent on that of the government or ruler that wields authority at a particular point in time. The implications of this linkage between government and constitution in Ghana will be discussed in the next chapter. It is sufficient here to note that the governmental institutions acquired in Ghana in 1957 failed to achieve legitimacy.

(1.3) The Bases of the Legitimacy of Governments

This section examines the bases of the legitimacy of governments. By bases of legitimacy is meant 'the conditions for and the processes of the granting or denying of legitimacy to a regime', and 'the conditions for and processes of delegitimation', i.e., loss of legitimacy (Bensman 1979: 21). There is no consensus on the bases of the legitimacy of a government. 'The question of what makes a government legitimate and what justifies a certain type of rule or a certain system of ruling has long been a matter of both theoretical and practical disagreement (Stillman 1974: 33).

There is a classical view which conceptualises the bases for legitimate government in terms of 'objective once-and-for-all valid standards' (Herz 1978: 318). According to this approach, a 'claim to political power is legitimate only when the claimant can invoke some source of authority beyond or above himself such as divine law or a constitution (Schaar 1970: 20). In this sense, therefore, 'legitimacy derives from something outside the range of human deeds; it is either not man-made at all . . . or has at least not been made by those who happen to be in power' (Arendt 1958: 83).

In modern times discussions of the bases of legitimacy usually begin with Max Weber, the first to theorize on the subject. Weber argues that the legitimacy of governments is determined by people's perceptions. He identifies three pure types of basis for legitimate authority: tradition, charisma and conformity to legal and constitutional arrangements. By 'tradition', Weber means belief in or support for a government or ruler 'on the basis of the sanctity of the order and attendant powers of control as they have been handed down from the past' (Weber 1968: 341). 'Charisma', according to Weber, is support for a government or ruler because of 'a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader' (Weber 1968: 358-9). The third 'pure type' of basis of legitimate authority, according to Weber, is 'a belief in the "legality" of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to

authority under such rules to issue commands' (Weber 1968: 328). On this point, Weber notes further: 'today the most usual basis of legitimacy is the belief in legality, the readiness to conform with rules which are formally correct and have been imposed by accepted procedure' (Weber 1968: 131).

Many discussions of the bases of legitimacy of governments and rulers have simply adopted one or more of the Weberian types. Thus, Mayo argues that in democracies a government is regarded as legitimate if it regulates its conduct in accordance with a constitution, especially if the government complies with the legal rules for elections (Mayo 1960: 73f). Taylor also argues that 'supreme authority within a state is legitimately held provided it is held in accordance with the law' (Taylor 1973: 90).

One example of the application of Weber's typologies to a post-colonial state is Apter's location of Nkrumah's legitimacy in his charisma. He argues:

> it is true that for most of the members of the Convention People's Party effective legitimacy does not flow from British political norms, behavioural restrictions, or procedural limitations, although these intervene in increasing fashion. Rather, legitimacy remains the prerogative of Nkrumah, stemming from the charismatic aspects of his leadership' (Apter 1963: 296-7).

Elsewhere, Apter states:

> as charisma has worked in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) as a newly accepted source of legitimacy, it has provided for the public extension of legitimacy and support to new types of social structures in keeping with the objectives of nationalism, meanwhile retaining subrelational aspects of the traditional system, and integrating these aspects of different relational and behavioural modes permissible by Nkrumah's sanction. Out of this last it is possible for secular institutionalization to emerge (Apter 1963: 303).

The adequacy of Apter's postulates has been criticised by Owusu. According to Owusu, 'Apter's conceptualization confuses, to say the least, the facts of political change and legitimation of authority in Ghana' (Owusu 1970: 242). To Owusu,

> the strength of the CPP lay not primarily in the ordinary Ghanaian's devotion to Nkrumah on the grounds of his charisma, ... To a great extent the strength of the CPP lay in the ability of both Nkrumah and the party to appeal to and mobilize generalized or shared instrumental values ... by providing, as a government party, economic opportunities, jobs, and a sense of power to all classes of people, particularly the disadvantaged, on the almost sole basis of membership in the CPP (Owusu 1970: 249).

In agreement with Owusu it is argued in the next chapter that an important factor which defines the legitimacy of governments in Ghana is their ability to provide instrumental benefits to Ghanaians.

There are doubts about the general applicability of Weber's classifications of the bases of legitimacy. It must be emphasised that Weber was not propounding a general theory of legitimacy. His three types must strictly be seen as examples of many possibilities. Weber recognised this: 'submission to an order is almost always determined by a variety of motives; by a wide variety of interests and by a mixture of adherence to tradition and belief in legality ... In a very large proportion of cases the actors subject to the order are of course not even aware how far it is a matter of custom, of convention, or of law. In such cases the sociologists must attempt to formulate the typical basis of validity' (Weber 1968: 132). Many writers who apply Weber's analysis do so as if it is a theory of universal validity. Bensman offers a useful reminder: 'the concept of legitimacy as developed by Weber is so multifaceted and so oriented to particular theoretical and research

problems that it does not (nor was it intended to) constitute a general theory of legitimacy ... Weber's particular formulations of the theory involve contradictions which limit its applicability as a general theory' (Bensman 1979: 18).

It is possible that none of Weber's types of the bases of legitimacy may apply in a particular political system. For instance, the Weberian model cannot adequately explain the bases of the legitimacy of military regimes in many of the African countries. As Olorunsola and Wasko correctly point out:

> one can easily see that traditionalism does not confer legitimate authority upon the military to intervene in civilian affairs, much less automatic legitimacy when it actually does intervene. In addition, nowhere in the nations of Africa is there yet a constitution that legally confers upon the military the right to political intervention whenever it wishes to do so. As the military have no legal right to intervene, they therefore cannot derive or build legal legitimacy, as espoused by Weber. Finally, we doubt that anyone will seriously argue with the position that military leaders lack the "gift of grace" although they may feel a sense of "divine mission" (Olorunsola and Wasko 1978: 308-9).

It follows that one must look beyond the Weberian model in analysing the bases of the legitimacy of specific governments and rulers. In recent times, some scholars have argued that the legitimacy of a government cannot be premised on the satisfaction of standards such as conformity to legal rules, charisma or tradition, but on individual or group values, expectations, and attitudes. Thus, Herz notes: 'legitimacy arises from the subjective phenomenon of human feelings, views and attitudes' (Herz 1978: 318). And to Schaar, legitimacy 'is almost entirely a matter of sentiment' (Schaar 1970: 176). The approach in this thesis accords with these views.

The grounds for individual or group evaluations of the legitimacy of a government may be varied, and may differ among political systems and among individuals and groups within a given system. Furthermore, the bases of the legitimacy of one government or ruler may vary within the same political system. Empirically, it may be the case that some individuals emphasize legal or constitutional criteria in their judgment of the legitimacy of a government. It may also be that others give primacy to the efficacy of a government in providing basic necessities of life such as food, clothing and shelter. Many modern writers support the view that an important (if not the most important) basis of the legitimacy of governments relates to their performance capacity. Accordingly, Hovart argues that a starting point for any analysis of legitimacy is from a 'theory of needs' (Hovart 1977: 81). In the same vein, Coleman states that the 'legitimacy of the government in a modern polity is dependent not only upon continual resolution of the problem of integration but most uniquely and emphatically upon performance, distributive output, and goal attainment' (Coleman 1971: 90-91). The test of legitimacy is not power's origins but its ends (Schaar 1970: 24). The opinion summarised above, although not universally valid, is applicable to Ghana. It is argued in the next chapter that a cardinal basis of the legitimacy of governments in Ghana is an instrumentalist perception of government performance: the ability of any type of government to respond effectively to what individuals and groups perceive as their needs. This has enabled different regimes, from the colonial government to that of Rawlings , to enjoy initial legitimacy because they promise instrumental benefits.

The conclusion implicit in the foregoing analysis is that legitimacy and illegitimacy are questions of relativity. There are always varying levels of legitimacy and, correspondingly, of illegitimacy within every political system, as it is impossible for a government to achieve absolute support from the governed. Legitimacy is therefore a question of degree (Herz 1978: 320). A government has high legitimacy when many people or groups within the polity think it is worthy of support. A government has low legitimacy if the reverse is the case (Fraser 1974: 118). It is when the latter situation becomes persistent and widespread that we can say there is a crisis in the legitimacy of a government. Regimes can remain in power for some time after their legitimacy fades but it is only a matter of time before they fall. The collapse of a regime which has lost its legitimacy is hastened when there is an alternative claimant to political power. This is the case in Ghana where, because of the **camp** structure of politics there is always a rival claimant to power; and where the **camp** not in government regards the **camp** in government as illegitimate (see 2.5.1 below). Since 1966 the military and police have emerged as additional contenders to political power.

(1.4) Measuring Legitimacy

Defining legitimacy in terms of support for a government and locating legitimacy in individual or group subjective evaluation of the government or ruler raise an important question that cannot easily be resolved. How can support for a government or ruler be measured? Support for a government must be analysed at two levels, i.e., at mass and elite levels.

Mass support is difficult to assess, except in the election or a referendum. This is basically because in the mass of the people are not

organised and are less articulate than the elite. Even an election or referendum may fail to determine the precise level of the support a government receives from the masses, for people can be coerced to vote in favour of government policies or candidates. As Clark notes: 'elections in the Third World have been notorious for the way in which the dominant political forces have ... coerced illiterate peasants and city workers into voting for the approved candidates...' (Clark 1978: 8). Indeed, many of the rural peasants and the urban workers who fill ballot boxes during elections and referenda do so not as a sign of support for the government but because they have been coerced to do so or because of other reasons such as ethnic, family or financial obligations to particular candidates.

The elite sections of the community may be subject to the same manipulation as the masses; nonetheless, elite support for a government may be easier to evaluate for a number of reasons. For one thing, the elites are usually mobilised into groups; for another, they are concentrated geographically. Furthermore, they are articulate. These characteristics of the elite make the measurement of their relationship with a government more feasible. Levels of elite support for a government may be evidenced in written communications, such as resolutions and petitions, student demonstrations, industrial strikes (which are often organised by elite union leaders) and the press. However, in many countries such as Ghana the press is largely irrelevant as an indicator of the level of a government's support, as much of the press is government-owned and journalists are on the pay-roll of governments. The press is often under the control of the governments of the day and only 'sings the master's voice' (as it is said in Ghana). The private press

is also controlled by government through censorship, licensing and other administrative controls such as allocation of import licences (cf Hachten 1971, Sommerlad 1966).

(1.5) Whose Perceptions?

The second issue posed by our usage of the concept of legitimacy is the identity of whose perceptions and support determine the legitimacy of a government. It is a truism that no political system is homogeneous. This means that, to a large extent, the expectations, needs and interests of different people and groups will not coincide. As Rothschild notes: 'in any political system there are many publics and different engagements, values, intensities, and weights. These publics elicit different levels of concern on the part of the regime as it strives to maintain legitimacy in their several judgments' (Rothschild 1977: 50). It is therefore important to identify those whose perceptions are decisive for the legitimacy of a government.

There is no consensus on this issue. According to Friedrich, legitimacy is conferred on a government or regime by the majority of the people subject to the rule of that government or regime (Friedrich 1963:234). Rothschild on the other hand argues that it is the elite sections of the public and the dominant social groups within the political system whose perceptions are most decisive for the legitimacy of a government. For Rothschild, only in exceptional circumstances are the views of the masses or the subordinate groups in the society likely to prove crucial for a government. He argues:

> history and contemporary life abound in examples of governments thoroughly unpopular with, and morally repudiated by, the masses nevertheless surviving by virtue of having preserved their legitimacy in the judgement of other power clusters such as the armed forces, the bureaucracy, the national bank or a multinational corporation. Alternatively, some popular governments fall because they are deemed illegitimate by such auxiliary power centres (Rothschild 1977: 50).

What Rothschild is saying is that when all the elite elements of the ruling class support an institutional structure and the particular government that occupies that structure, then the political system will retain legitimacy. This is because the ruling class creates the ideology that supports its interests and persuades the ruled to accept this - what Gramsci calls political or ideological hegemony (Gramsci 1957: 30).

It is difficult to generalise about the groups whose judgments demonstrate the legitimacy of governments. It is necessary to look into every political system in order to determine this. It is argued in the next chapter that it is the support of certain politically dominant elite groups and individuals which is decisive for the legitimacy of a government in Ghana.

(1.6) Why Governments Need to Achieve Legitimacy

Before we outline some of the strategies governments utilise to achieve legitimacy, it is necessary to state why a government will desire to obtain legitimacy. Put another way, what is the importance of legitimacy to a government or ruler? The significance of legitimacy to rulers is brought out by Sternberger: 'the desire for legitimacy is so deeply

rooted in human communities that it is hard to discover any sort of historical government that did not either enjoy widespread authentic recognition of its existence or try to win such recognition' (Stenberger 1968: 244).

It is said that the legitimacy of a government ensures voluntary obedience of the governed. To quote Rothschild: 'a government which is considered legitimate is able to make difficult and controversial decisions confidently at lowest cost and with the widest margin of support, even from those who disagree with the government in particular circumstances' (Rothschild 1977: 52). But where legitimacy is low people will only be swayed by constraint and force (Duverger 1966: 157). It is also believed that 'revolutions against and obedience to governments are frequently justified if not partially caused by men's ideas about what constitute legitimate government' (Stillman 1974: 33-34). Furthermore, the legitimacy of a government minimises the cost of governing and enables the government to rule with minimum deployment of other political resources. In other words, the higher the legitimacy of a government is, the better it is able to exercise power and allocate values with minimal cost (cf Wriggins 1964: 41; Dahl 1967; Stillman 1975: 43).

There is a relationship between the legitimacy of a government and its tolerance of dissent and opposition. Lack of tolerance develops with loss of legitimacy. The point is that as a regime's legitimacy declines, disobedience increases, and, inevitably, regime countermeasures become more coercive. The legitimacy of a government enhances its sense of security (Wriggins 1964: 41; Dahl 1976: 60). On the

other hand, when a government loses its legitimacy, such a government is most likely to become apprehensive of non-conformist groups and individuals. A government that becomes increasingly illegitimate by definition begins to lose voluntary support. Such a government may resort to force to prevent dissent and opposition or to enforce compliance. As Rothschild argues: 'where legitimacy has gravely eroded, regimes and governments are obliged to devote much energy to defending their authority' (Rothschild 1977: 52). In Ghanaian usage, governments may be expected to 'show where power lies'.

Although the shift from authority to coercion by a government in such circumstances may enhance the 'legitimacy of the rulers in the eyes of those to whom the implementation of force must necessarily be entrusted' (Zolberg 1968: 77), the use of force becomes self-perpetuating. The very application of coercive mechanisms may cause support to decline further. The use of coercion by a government may also produce countervailing forces. In the first place, a government that resorts to coercion becomes 'afraid that any concession might be interpreted as weakness and open up a Pandora's box of claims' (Zolberg 1968: 77). Furthermore, 'when individuals and groups are deprived of their right and opportunity of exercising power to express their demands, they have no choice but to submit to force or use it themselves to express their demands', and when the governed discover that the government's use of force is constrained by physical limits, dissent and opposition may be intensified and 'specific demands tend to be translated into demands for a general change of rulers' (Zolberg 1968: 77).

From the above brief survey, it can be seen that legitimacy is an important asset that every government will endeavour to acquire and preserve as the erosion in the legitimacy of a government may result in grave consequences for the government. Wriggins sums it all up adequately: 'with legitimacy much is simple; without it everything is difficult' (Wriggins 1969: 39).

(1.7) Legitimacy Engineering

It was stated above that legitimacy is an exchange relationship between the government and the governed. This means that legitimacy is a dynamic process and therefore must be engineered and sustained through the actions of the government. Legitimacy is located in the political process. No government is endowed with perpetual and absolute legitimacy. Rather, governments achieve legitimacy through their actions and interactions with the community. This does not imply that a government starts with a blank sheet. To some extent, every government inherits some level of legitimacy from people's attitudes under previous regimes, from the continuity of the state, governmental institutions and the public service, and from expectations raised by a change of government. The last observation relates to the adage that a new era begins with every reign, and that the calendar is a calendar of kings.

In pursuit of legitimacy, governments employ a range of strategies. Some of the strategies adopted by leaders in Africa and Asia have been discussed exhaustively (cf Wriggins 1969; Nelson 1979; Ilchman and Uphoff 1971). The major ones include the following: concession; bargaining or dialogue; co-option or widening participation; departici-

pation; patronage; populist ideology and rhetoric; the use of constitutional and 'democratic' processes such as election and referendum; and coercion. The choice of strategy is determined by the sector of the population or the group aimed at. In relation to the mass of the people the strategies are often the provision of 'bread and circuses', and the use of populist rhetoric and ideology. Strategies such as co-option, patronage, the granting of concessions and coercion are aimed at elite groups and individuals. The practical application of some of these strategies in Ghana is discussed throughout the chapters that follow.

(1.8) Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the conceptual framework adopted in this thesis. This framework, as we have seen, is based on the concept of legitimacy, defined in terms of a relationship between the government and the governed. It is this relationship which determines the support a particular government receives from the governed. Legitimacy is therefore a function of the government to persuade the governed of its credibility and appropriateness. The flow is from the government to the governed. The discussions in the chapters that follow rely on empirical evidence to substaniate some of the propositions advanced in this chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

LEGITIMACY ISSUES IN GHANA BEFORE ACHEAMPONG

(2.1) Introduction

This chapter examines specific aspects of the legitimacy of governments in Ghana before Acheampong assumed office in 1972. Most of the examples used are drawn from the Nkrumah and the Busia periods, because these two governments exhibit the basic and dominant patterns of Ghanaian political behaviour before Acheampong came to power. The issues to be analysed are: the lack of distinction between the legitimacy of constitutional regimes and that of specific governments and rulers; the relationship between legitimacy and government's tolerance of dissent and opposition; the group nature of legitimacy of governments; the impact of political cleavage on the legitimacy of governments; and the instrumentalist bases of legitimacy in Ghana. The examination of these issues provide background for and insight into the specific strategies Acheampong later utilised to engineer legitimacy for his government and the legitimation problems his government faced.

(2.2) Linkage Between Constitutional Order and Governments

As argued in the last chapter, in the new states there is a close linkage between the way people perceive constitutional regimes and their support for governments. Since constitutional arrangements are recent, it is difficult for them to achieve their separate legitimation.

One of the features of legitimacy in Ghana is this synthesis between government and constitutional regimes. The legitimacy of a constitutional regime is dependent on the government that rules at a particular time. The result of this is that the decline in the legitimacy of a government results in a corresponding loss of legitimacy for the constitutional regime. This explains the frequent constitutional changes in Ghana. Since independence, the expediency of different types of constitutional regimes has been on the agenda of Ghanaian politics. In fact, Ghana has operated several types of political system within the twenty-five years of its existence as a sovereign state. Since 1957 one form of government has been discarded in favour of another in rapid succession. The 1957 Westminster type constitution gave way to a Republican/Presidential constitution in 1960. In 1964 the Republican constitution assumed a new phase with the declaration of Ghana as a single-party state by Nkrumah.[1] Between 1966 and 1969, the regime was military. The election of Busia in 1969 as Prime Minister witnessed a return to the 1957 Westminster model. Twenty-seven months later, Ghana returned to a military administration when Acheampong led a **coup d'etat** to overthrow the Busia government. From 1972 to 1979, there were four different sets of institutional arrangements for military rule - the National Redemption Council (NRC) from 1972-75; the Supreme Military Council (SMC) from 1975 to 1978; a reorganised Supreme Military Council (SMC 2) from 1978 to 1979; and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) in 1979. In September 1979, an American model presidential type of constitutional regime was adopted. This lasted for just over two years until the military intervened again.

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1. Before 1964, the single party was in **de facto** existence. By the end of 1961, the Opposition existed only in name. Austin notes: 'Whereas in March 1957 the opposition was a solid feature of the political landscape, three years later it had all but disappeared as an organized force... The single party was virtually in existence'(Austin 1964: 35).

One source for the instability outlined above relates to the fact that there has been a general crisis in the legitimacy of Ghanaian governments since independence, mainly as a result of the coincidence of persistent economic and political problems.[2] As the economic and political difficulties of governments increase, the legitimacy of rulers and constitutional regimes is challenged. This is particularly so in Ghana, where one of the two **camps** can be expected to be out of power and to provide an intransigent core for any political opposition (see 2.5.1). In response to such situations, the rulers begin to blame their failures on the inappropriateness of the constitutional regimes within which they operate. Attempts are then made by the rulers to change the constitutional regimes in order to seek new forms of legitimacy. This analysis explains the constitutional changes during the Nkrumah period (1957-1966) and the emergence of the **Union Government** concept during the Acheampong era, analysed in chapter five.

In 1960 Nkrumah replaced the Independence constitution with a Republican one which gave him wide-ranging powers to deal with the economic and political problems confronting his government. The Republican form of government underwent further transformation. In 1961, Nkrumah publicised socialism as a political ideology. This was followed by the **de jure** adoption of the single-party state in 1964. In all these changes the irrelevant nature of the British system of government that Ghana inherited was central to the arguments Nkrumah employed to justify the constitutional changes (Austin 1964: 31, 363). The objective realities were, however, that these constitutional permutations were reactions to growing political and economic problems. In the political field, Nkrumah faced hostile opposition groups. There was also increa-

2. See (2.5.2) for a discussion of the implications of economic crisis in Ghana for the legitimacy of governments.

sing dissent within the ruling Convention People's Party (Austin 1964 **passim**). The economic problems of Ghana (which became particularly evident from 1961) included shortages of foreign exchange, scarcity of basic consumer goods and high rates of unemployment (Killick 1978: 33-100). The 1961 Sekondi-Takoradi strike discussed later in this chapter, was a clear illustration of the legitimation problem against which the constitutional changes during the Nkrumah period must be assessed.

Similarly it will be shown in later chapters that Acheampong's **Union Government** idea emerged when the Supreme Military Council (SMC) began to face serious challenges to its legitimacy as a result of deteriorating economic conditions and a host of other political problems (see chapter 5 below).

Constitutional instability in Ghana also reflects the fact that the ultimate consequences for the general legitimacy crisis in Ghana have usually been the overthrow of governments through **coups d'etat** rather than the ballot box. Because of the linkage between the legitimacy of a government and that of the constitutional regime, the overthrow of government has also resulted in the destruction of the constitutional regimes these governments operate. For example, the collapse of Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP) government in 1966 led to the demise of the Republican/single-party form of government. That the fall of the CPP regime was largely due to Nkrumah's loss of legitimacy cannot be over-emphasised (cf Bretton 1966; Afrifa 1966; Ocran 1968; Owusu 1970; Bebler 1973). The removal of Busia from office provided yet another example. In January 1972 the Progress Party government headed by Busia was toppled by the military when that government's legitimacy

was gravely eroded (cf chapter 3 below). The result of that was the demise of the liberal-democratic/ Westminster form of government.

From the preceding analysis, it can be seen that there is a relationship between the legitimacy of constitutonal regimes and that of governments in Ghana. The legitimacy of governments is the decisive factor which determines constitutional change in Ghana. This conclusion does not foreclose the possibility that a particular government's legitimacy may be influenced by the type of constitutional regime the government assumes. For example, there may be some people or groups in Ghana whose recognition of the legitimacy of a government is defined by the nature of the constitutonal regime. For example, the Ghana Bar Association in particular, and most academics in general, are often critical of military regimes, if not immediately upon their accession to power; then certainly after these regimes violate what are seen to be liberal-democratic norms such as the rule of law or the independence of the press or the judiciary. However, it will be argued when we come to the discussion of the bases of the legitimacy of governments in Ghana, that to most people, neither the form of government nor the constitution are crucial issues in their judgments of the legitimacy of governments. What is important for them is the efficacy of a government in providing instrumental benefits. Indeed, as Owusu points out, 'what matters is not the regime type, but the kind of national leadership that could solve their persistent poverty, that could effectively do something about...the runaway inflation, high unemployment, severe shortages of locally produced and imported food and other essential commodities...' (Owusu 1979: 103). In the light of the above, one may hazard the conclusion that, in Ghana, no major distinction can be drawn between civilian governments on the one hand and military on the other when it comes to a discussion of the legitimacy of governments.

(2.3) Relationship Between Legitimacy and Tolerance in Ghana

The relationship between legitimacy and a government's tolerance of dissent and opposition has been established in chapter one. In the Ghanaian context the concept of legitimacy assists in understanding why all governments since independence have displayed a lack of tolerance for dissent and opposition. In 1974, Price noted: 'as is true in other African states, one notable aspect of Ghanaian politics over the past twenty-five years has been the hostility shown by political incumbents towards any public criticism of their policies, or toward organised opposition to their continued tenure in office' (Price 1974: 190). In 1977, the Association of Recognised Professional Bodies (ARPB) reiterated the same view: 'it is unfortunate that it has become a regular feature in the political life of this country that whenever any individual or group of individuals out of national feeling criticise or oppose any move of the government in power, which they feel to be detrimental to the national interest, they are labelled as traitors, saboteurs or enemies of the revolution' (ARPB News Bulletin volume 1 Number 1, 4 July 1977: 1). Governments in Ghana have each been established amidst general optimism and initially have been fairly tolerant of dissent and opposition activity; they then grow less tolerant as their political and economic problems increase. This was the case with Nkrumah from 1957 to 1966, the National Liberation Council (NLC) after 1976, Busia after 1970, and Acheampong from 1974 to 1978. This attitude of Ghanaian governments may be partly analysed in terms of the general legitimacy crisis in Ghana.

Some examples from the Nkrumah and the Busia period illustrate the relationship between legitimacy and governments' tolerance of dissent and oppositon in Ghana.

On Ghana's independence day, Nkrumah proudly declared:

> Minority rights will be respected. Opposition members in the Assembly will be able to raise questions which seem to them in the national interest. The Opposition will have a guaranteed proportion of representation on Standing Committees and Select Committees of the Assembly. In matters of grave national importance, a tradition should be established that the Prime Minister of the day could consult the leader of the Opposition to secure, if possible, a concerted national policy. (Nkrumah 1961: 79)

Nkrumah went on to affirm his governent's commitment to the ideals of Western liberal democracy: 'the government', he stated, 'thinks that it is an essential part of democracy that there should be a free press and that provision should be made by law that any state broadcasting system is free to put the Opposition's point of view as that of the government' (Nkrumah 1961: 80). And finally that: 'we shall soon become masters of our own country and for that reason a very great responsibility rests upon us all. We must show the world that Africans can give a lead in justice, tolerance, liberty, individual freedom and in social progress' (Nkrumah 1961: 82). Most probably, this rhetoric was intended to win legitimacy for the CPP government, both at home and abroad.

Shortly after independence, Nkrumah began to face serious political problems. The first was that of the Alavanyo riots in March 1957 in support of reunification of the Volta region with Togo (Austin 1964: 217-272). This was followed three months later by disturbances in Accra organised by the Ga Adangme Shifimo Kpee (the Ga Standfast Association), in protest against poor housing conditions in Accra and the influx of non-Gas into Accra (Austin 1964: 273f). Then, in the middle

of 1958, the government detected a plot by R.R. Amponsah (General Secretary of the United Party) and others to overthrow Nkrumah through a **coup d'etat** (Austin 1964: 380f). Nkrumah's political difficulties heightened after 1958. These included bombings at CPP rallies and the 1961 strike by rail and dock workers which nearly paralysed the CPP government (Drake and Leslie 1966). In August 1962, there was a bomb attack on Nkrumah's life at the Upper Region village of Kulungugu (Austin 964: 410). Five months after the Kulungugu incident, there was another threat to Nkrumah's life when Seth Ametewee, a police constable on duty in Flagstaff House (Army Headquarters), fired shots at Nkrumah (Austin 1964: 413).

Economic difficulties added to Nkrumah's growing political problems. At the time of independence in 1957 Ghana's external reserves amounted to nearly £200 million (Bretton 1966: 152) which was about one year's import bill (Killick 1978: 101). By 1961, Ghana's external account was in deficit to the tune of nearly £53 million (Fitch and Oppenheimer 1966: 91). In 1966, when Nkrumah was overthrown, Ghana had accumulated foreign debts of about £250 million (Austin 1976: 105). The domestic economy declined with the deteriorating foreign exchange position. Some of the dominant features of the domestic economy in the 1960's included high unemployment, a decline in living standards, and shortages of consumer goods. These were in part caused by the overvaluation of the Ghanaian currency (Killick 1978: 66f).

Nkrumah became increasingly repressive as his political problems increased and as the economy deteriorated. By 1964, Nkrumah had competently bullied his opponents out of existence and established a situa-

tion in which Ghana was not very different from other African states (Austin 1976: 90-91). One of the first instruments of repression was the **Preventive Detention Act** (PDA), enacted in 1958. Under this act, citizens of Ghana whose activities Nkrumah considered as inimical and prejudicial to the security of the state were detained for a maximum of five years without trial. In 1958 alone, about thirty-eight members of the Opposition were detained under the PDA (Austin 164: 381). Members of Nkrumah's own camp whose loyalty was suspected were also detained under the PDA. For example, in August 1962, Tawia Adamafio (General Secretary of the CPP and also Minister of Information), Coffie Crabbe (Executive Secreary of the CPP) and Ako Adjei (Foreign Minister) were detained following the assassination attempt on Nkrumah at Kulungugu (Austin 1964: 410). Undoubtedly, the PDA was Nkrumah's response to threats posed to his regime by the Alavanyo riots and the Amponsah coup plot (Austin 1964: 381).

Nkrumah's treatment of the press was another example. After 1960, when Ghana's economic and political problems exacerbated, Nkrumah adopted measures to silence the press. First, censorship was imposed on all news items leaving and entering Ghana (IPI Report vo.10, February 1962: 12), and the publication of information hostile to the government. The **Pioneer** was a particular victim in this respect. The **Ashanti Pioneer** (now **Pioneer**) was founded in 1939 by John Tsiboe, and based in Kumasi (capital of the Ashanti region). During the early days of nationalist struggles for independence in Ghana, the **Pioneer** espoused the cause of Ashanti regionalism and gave strong support to the National Liberation Movement (NLM). After independence, the **Pioneer** continued to criticise Nkrumah's suppression of the Opposition and his slide to dictatorship.

The **Pioneer** became a target for Nkrumah. For nine months in 1960, the Nkrumah government placed a censor in the offices of the paper. A censor was again installed in September 1961. The **Pioneer** was closed by Nkrumah in October 1962 (IPI Report vol. 11 No.7 November 1962).

Secondly, editors of private as well as government-owned newspapers were dismissed or detained. For example, in 1961, the editor of the **Ghanaian Times**, T.D. Baffore lost his job for writing a critical editorial on a cabinet reshuffle by Nkrumah (IPI Report V110 No.2 June 1961). Mathias Ofori, Deputy Manager of the government-owned **Daily Graphic** was detained in 1961, and in 1962, A.D. Appea and Kwame Kesse-Adu, editors of the independent **Ashanti Pioneer** were also jailed under the PDA (IPI Report vol.10 No.10, February 1962: 12).

Foreign journalists were not exempt from Nkrumah's harsh treatment of the press. In 1961, two British journalists, Neil Bruce of the British Broadcasting Corporation and Arthur Chesworth of the **Daily Express**, were deported for allegedly reporting 'false, tendentious and obnoxious news' about Ghana (IPI Report vol.10 No.8, 1961: 15). Then, in September 1962, Mary Dorkenoo, a correspondent of the London **Sunday Times** (and also a wife of a Ghanaian journalist) was deported with five minutes' notice. She had written an article in the **Sunday Times** of 29 July, 1962 in which she stated among other things that the Ghanaian economy had almost collapsed, and that Nkrumah's ideas of Pan Africanism were not shared by all his supporters. Interestingly, before her departure from Ghana, an official of the government said to her: 'of course, everything you wrote was correct. And we all know that you have the good of Ghana at heart. But you know that the Government doesn't want you to say these things. So why did you say them?' (Dorkenoo 1962: 4). Finally,

in 1965, Lutz Herld, a German freelance journalist, was sentenced in Ghana to a 40 years prison term for 'being in possession of documents of a highly subversive nature' (IPI Report vol.10 No.14, 8 December 1965:11).

The Busia period (1969-72) provided further evidence to substantiate the point that governments in Ghana become less tolerant contemporaneously with the decline in their legitimacy. Cases of Busia's sensitivity to dissent and opposition and the background to these cases are discussed in chapter three below. The Sallah case, the assets issue, and the disintegration of the TUC are of particular significance here.

It will be argued in chapter five that Acheampong was no exception to the pattern outlined above. He also became hostile to dissent and opposition, particularly after 1973 when he began to face economic and political problems.

(2.4.0) Groups and Legitimacy of Government in Ghana

We saw in the last chapter that there is no theoretical consensus about whose judgments are crucial for the legitimacy of governments. It was argued that one has to examine every political system in order to determine this. In Ghana, it is the perceptions of the elite which are decisive for the legitimacy of governments. For example, losing the support of, say, rice and yam growers in the North creates less insecurity for a government than loss of support from the trade union's leadership or the professionals. Most important is the support by the military. To a large extent, the rural peasantry and the mass of the urban working class are removed from the centre of political activity

and conflict. They remain as human reservoirs, occasionally voting, or occasionally consulted or mobilised by different factions of the elite, and then disregarded once conflict is over.

This is not to suggest as some elite theorists such as Mills and Michels have done that the masses are politically inert. Mills argues that 'sunken in their routines', the masses 'do not transcend, even by discussion, much less by action, their more or less narrow lines', that 'they do not gain a view of the structure of their society and of their roles as a public within it', and that 'members of the mass exist in milieux and cannot get out of them, either by mind or by activity except in the extreme case - under the organized spontaneity of the bureaucrat on a motor-cycle' (Mills 1957: 324). To Michels, the masses are indifferent, inert, removed from politics and public life and lack any sense of orgnaization. They rely on the elite for guidance. Above all, they feel grateful for being ruled by the elite whom they [the masses] consider as their advisers - those who 'speak and write on their behalf' (Michels 1949: 60).

What is being argued is that it is elite dominance of post-colonial politics in Ghana which renders it impossible for the mass of the people to participate in politics except for their occasional manipulation to serve the elite's interests. The masses have become disenchaanted with independence because they feel it has not served their interests. This disenchantment exemplifies Fanon's model of the aftermath of independence:

> the bourgeoisie who are in power vainly increase the number of processions; the masses have no illusions. They are hungry; and the police officers, though they are now Africans do not serve to reassure them particularly. The masses begin to sulk, they turn away from this nation in which they have been given no place and begin to lose interest in it (Fanon 1967: 136).

Nonetheless, one must not discount the future political significance of the masses in Ghana. As Chazan and Le Vine note:

> this element..., may in coming years prove crucial in deciding the country's political orientation. It remains the most tantalizing elusive political segment of the country; the leadership that could tap its strength could claim something that few past regimes have had for long, that is, the support of the base, not the apex, of the Ghanaian social pyramid. (Chazan and Le Vine 1979: 190-91)

In Ghana the legitimacy of governments must first and foremost be analysed in terms of elite groups. There are some politically sensitive and mobilised groups in the country whose support a government needs to draw upon to remain legitimate. The most prominent of these groups are the military and police; the Trades Union Congress (TUC); the **market women**; the university; professional groups; the public service and the religious establishments.

The rest of this section examines at length three of the groups outlined above. These are the military and police, the TUC, and the **market women**. The choice of the three is based on their political influence under the Nkrumah and the Busia regimes. The analysis also reveals some of the strategies governments use to win the support of the groups or to neutralise them.

(2.4.1) The Military and Police

The groups whose support a government needs most in order to remain legitimate are the military and police. This is primarily because of their control of the guns. Wriggins' statement about the military in the new states applies to Ghana also: 'a regime can survive for a time

when the civilian bureaucracy opposes it...But no regime can survive if the military does not at least acquiesce in its rule...They [governments] need them for many functions; they fear they may be overthrown by them. Winning their backing is a central concern of any leader' (Wriggins 1969: 65, 69).

The military and police assumed political significance in Ghana particularly after the 1966 coup that overthrew the Nkrumah regime. They have jointly been responsible for two changes of government. In 1966 and 1972, combined groups of the military and police overthrew the civilian regimes of Nkrumah and Busia respectively. The military alone toppled two other governments. In June 1979, the Supreme Military Council (SMC2) was ousted from office by a group of junior military officers led by Flight Lieutenant Rawlings. Again, in December 1981 some military personnel subverted the civilian regime of President Hilla Limann. The foregoing facts demonstrate the armed weight of the military and police in Ghana.

Governments have devised various strategies to contain the military and police, but in most cases these strategies have proved counter-productive. Some of the principal strategies Nkrumah adopted to minimise the risk of the military toppling his government are noted here. The mechanisms Busia utilised to control the military and police and the consequences of these mechanisms are discussed in chapter three. It will be seen below that Nkrumah virtually concentrated on the military to the exclusion of the police. From this, one may argue that it did not occur to him that the police posed any threat to his regime.[3]

3. Nkrumah's detention of eight senior police officers and the transfer of the Special Branch from police to the presidential control in 1964 following the assassination attempt on him by Seth Ametewee (Kraus 1970:185) was an isolated case. It can be argued that Nkrumah took those measures not because he believed the police to be a serious security threat, but simply as an extension of his power.

In 1960 Nkrumah enacted a new constitution, the Republican Constitution, which made him the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. The constitution further empowered Nkrumah, as the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, to dismiss a member of the Armed Forces or to order a member of the Armed Forces not to exercise any authority vested in him until directed by the Commander-in-Chief (Articles 8(3) and 54(2)). These were part of several other wide-ranging powers given to Nkrumah under the Republican constitution. Others included the power to appoint and dismiss judges and Ministers of State. In the exercise of these powers Nkrumah was to act in his own discretion and was not obliged to follow advice tendered by any person (Article 8(4)). The practical result of Nkrumah's constitutional powers over the Armed Forces was that he assumed personal and direct command over the selection, promotion, supervision and control of military officers (Bretton 1966: 78). Nkrumah used his constitutional powers in 1965 when he dismissed the chief of Defence Staff, Major-General Otu, and his deputy, Major-General Ankrah. The two officers had opposed Nkrumah's establishment of the President's Own Guard Regiment (POGR), a separate unit of the military directly responsible for Nkrumah's security (Kraus 1970: 185).

Nkrumah also attempted to bind the military more closely to his regime by setting up an Armed Forces Bureau which sponsored regular lectures to educate the military on their proper roles in the society (Kraus 1970: 185). Nkrumah frequently reminded the military that: ' it is not the duty of the army to rule or govern, because it has no political mandate and its duty is not to seek a political mandate' (quoted in Kraus 1970: 185). Other measures in this direction included a 1964 order by Nkrumah that only the CPP enlist personnel in the military, and that

military officers should periodically affirm fealty to him (Kraus 1970: 185).

The most far-reaching attempt by Nkrumah to deal with the military was the creation of the POGR. Originally, the POGR was set up in 1960 as a ceremonial guard to deploy unfit soldiers and those on relief tours from the Congo, where they were part of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force (Ocran 1968: 28; Kraus 1970: 185). After the 1962 bomb attack on Nkrumah (Austin 1964: 413), he decided to turn the POGR into a security guard distinct from the general army and directly under presidential control (Ocran 1968: 28). By the time of the 1966 coup, the POGR consisted of two regiments (Kraus 1970: 185).

Nkrumah's re-organization of the POGR after 1962 was intended to weaken the powers of the regular army. This was revealed in the differential treatment Nkrumah gave to the regular army on one hand and the POGR on the other, as described by General Afrifa, one of the architects of the 1966 coup.

> We were also aware that members of the President's Own Guard Regiment were receiving kingly treatment. Their pay was higher and it was open fact that they possessed better equipment. The men who had been transferred from the Regular Army no longer owed any allegiance and loyalty to the Chief of Defence Staff, but to Kwame Nkrumah who had become their commanding officer...Nkrumah was beginning to manipulate certain officers for the purpose of undermining the authority of the Military Command. The policy of divide and rule was actively pursued among all ranks of the armed forces. It had become difficult to trust one's officer colleagues. There were instances when some officers openly hobnobbed with the politicians (Afrifa 1966: 100).

In the end, Nkrumah's strategies to deal with the military became counter-productive. According to statements made by some of the

planners of the coup against Nkrumah, the most important reasons for the 1966 coup included the establishment of the POGR which the regular army feared had superseded it, and the dismissal of senior military and police officers by Nkrumah. The survival motive of the 1966 coup was illustrated by Ocran when he argued that: 'in all this plan to build a second army one thing stood out prominently: and that was a plan gradually to strangle the Regular Army to death' (Ocran 1968: 37); and according to Afrifa, 'the arbitrary dismissal of our two Generals pained us most' (Afrifa 1966: 100). The decline of the CPP-Nkrumah legitimacy meant that the self-defense coup by the army was possible because it would have popular support.

(2.4.2) The TUC

Another group in Ghana whose support is significant for the legitimacy of a government is the TUC. The TUC was originally established by an act of Parliament, the **Industrial Relations Act** of 1958, proposed by Nkrumah as one of his efforts to control the labour movement (Gerritsen 1972; Damachi 1974; Jeffries 1978).

The political prominence of trade unions in Ghana is based on their leading role in the late colonial period. Gerritsen, in a study of trade unions in Ghana states that 'they have excited suspicion or hostility on the part of governments. During the nationalist period they were at the forefront of the upsurge of anti-colonial consciousness and played a prominent part in securing Ghana's independence. The Unions have not been able to throw off this political legacy. Even when they have concentrated on their 'economic' interest, governments have been

quick to chide them for 'playing politics'' (Gerritsen 1972: 59). Ghana is, of course, in this not unique. The phenomenon has been noted to be general for most developing countries. Waterman argues:

> undergoing the crisis of social transformation, the third world is marked by regimes lacking legitimacy and consequent stability. The comparative lack of political and social organizations frequently implies that trade unions represent the most significant mass of social force after the military. Since workers are frequently concentrated in the capital or in one or two major industries, and since they are often highly conscious of their potential, strikes by even small sections have a social impact far greater than that of similar groups in industrialised countries... (Waterman 1976: 334).

Wriggins' comments are also worth noting:

> as most developing economies are built on a narrow base, the total modern sector of the economy may be vulnerable to the actions of a very few unions. Export economies can be brought to a virtual halt by control of the port or a few trucking or railway workers unions. Public Services in an acutely over-crowded capital are easy to disrupt. A number of simultaneous strikes can be used to dramatize a government's inability to cope with the country's necessities. This may be a prelude to a defeat of the government at the polls, or to a change of government by other means (Wriggins 1969: 83).

In Ghana, various governments have recognised the potential of the labour movement. Not surprisingly, therefore, they have tried to court the TUC and its leadership, though with varying degrees of success. Some examples prior to the period of Acheampong's reign are in order.

Nkrumah successfully 'colonized' the labour movement by the use of legislation and co-optive measures (cf Gerritsen 1972: 59). Through a series of industrial legislative items between 1958 and 1965, the CPP government secured control over the labour movement. The **Industrial Relations Act** of 1958 established a Trades Union Congress (TUC) with twenty-four constituent national unions. The certification of unions had to be sought through the TUC from the minister responsible for

labour . A 1959 amendment of the 1958 act made all labour unions outside the TUC structure illegal (Gerritsen 1972: 73).

Nkrumah also incorporated the TUC into the ruling Convention People's Party government. The TUC in fact became one of the most important integral wings of the CPP. All senior posts in the TUC were occupied by people loyal to the CPP. As early as January 1959, Kojo Botsio (then Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPP) stated: 'it is an ideological heresy for Party members to elect a non-party worker as a leader of their Organization - the CPP and the TUC are one' (quoted in Jeffries 1978: 67). In 1961 membership cards of the constituent unions forming the TUC were replaced by CPP cards (Jeffries 1978: 67). The extent of the TUC's co-option by Nkrumah was reflected by the fact that the 1965 Parliament had four leading trade unionists as members. Six union leaders were also made ambassadors (Gerritsen 1972: 91).

Busia tried to 'colonize' the TUC, but with little or no success. The Progress Party (PP) government appointed Benjamin Bentum, (the Secretary-General of the TUC) to the Executive Committee of the National Service Corps (Gerritsen 1972: 149 note 28). According to Gerritsen, Bentum accepted this position 'even though he thought the Corps of no use or importance, because he thought his refusal to serve a Committee formed in the national interest would be used by the Government as an excuse not to allow trade union representation on the Social Security Committee' (Gerritsen 1972: 149). The PP government also tried to 'informally woo Bentum in the hope that this would produce a more sympathetic trade union movement or, alternatively, to seek to 'colonize' the TUC' (Gerritsen 1972: 157). For example, in 1971, the PP tried unsuc-

cessfully to win Bentum over by attempting to establish a close personal relationship between Busia and Bentum (Gerritsen 1972: 158).

In line with this co-optive strategy, Busia adopted corporatist language that, 'except for the absence of socialist rhetoric, was strangely reminiscent of an earlier period in Ghanaian history' (Gerritsen 1972: 140).

> In this country the Government is the largest employer, and how can the interest of the Government you yourselves have elected to power be opposed to yours? If the interest of the Governent which is the largest employer and that of the workers is the same then the interest of the other smaller employers is not likely to be different. It is therefore artificial and unrealistic for workers to assume the same attitude to management as that of workers in industrialised countries (Busia 1970: 4).

Despite these endeavours, neither Nkrumah nor Busia could successfully control the TUC. Trade union strikes were among the factors precipitating the downfall of the CPP and the PP governments.

In September 1961, the Railway and Dock workers at Sekondi-Takoradi and also in Accra and Kumasi embarked on a strike which lasted for almost two weeks and which nearly crippled the Nkrumah government (Drake and Lacy 1966; Damachi 1974; Jeffries 1978). The end of the strike witnessed the beginning of a wave of repressive measures. The strike leaders were arrested and detained. At the same time, detention orders were served on prominent members of the Opposition United Party. New legislation was also rushed through Parliament. The **Emergency Powers Act** gave the President power to declare a state of emergency in the country without reference to the National Assembly or his cabinet. The **Criminal Code (Amendment) Act** empowered the government to take action retroactive to 1957 against any citizen of Ghana making false reports

damaging the reputation of the Government of Ghana or who showed disrespect to the person and dignity of the Head of State. Under this act, special courts were set up by the government, members of which were to be appointed by the President and empowered to deal with offences against the State and the peace. The courts had the power to recommend the death penalty; and there was no appeal from the decision of the courts (cf Harvey 1966).

Most importantly, the Convention People's Party (CPP) became fragmented after the 1961 strike. Nkrumah carried out an extensive purge within the party. Two cabinet Ministers, Gbedemah and Botsio, who had served on a Presidential Commission during the period of the strike, were dismissed from office and suspended from membership of the party. Two other cabinet members and four important party officials were asked to surrender their property to the state (Austin 1964: 402f). Writing on the strike five years later, Drake and Lacy noted that 'never before had the government's reaction to an internal crisis been so intense. Its response to the Sekondi-Takoradi strike drastically altered the entire character of political activity in Ghana' (Drake and Lacy 1966: 68). Legum also notes that the 1961 crisis 'marked the end of the constitutional phase of Ghana's politics and the beginning of another - that of the assassin's bombs' (Legum 1964: 149).

We shall see in chapter three that the TUC played critical roles in the downfall of the Busia government. A combination of various factors led to confrontation between the TUC and the Busia government in September 1971 and 'heralded the imminent downfall' of the Busia regime (Jeffries 1978: 137).

(2.4.3) The Market Women

The term **market women** actually hides a continuum from casual and itinerant petty traders up to very significant investors in real estate. This group is politically important because its members control the retail trade in food and consumer goods in many parts of Ghana. The following description by Bretton is to the point:

> strategically situated in the retail trade, food distribution, transport, they were the owners of 'mammy wagons' - these women dominated the major communication arteries in the country, spreading their influence along the country's supply and distribution routes. (Bretton 1966: 72)

The importance of this strategic situation will be seen below where it is argued that the instrumentalist basis of the legitimacy of governments in Ghana for the general population is in the availability of consumer goods (**essential commodities**), such as tinned fish, tinned milk, corned beef, sugar and toilet rolls, in the shops and markets. Because of their control of the retail trade in these commodities, the **market women** become a potential threat to the stability of any government in Ghana, since they have the capacity to cause artificial shortages of **essential commodities** by simply withdrawing the goods from the markets. In fact, this capacity has been employed whenever a government introduces any policy damaging to their economic interests. The political consequences for any government of shortages of consumer goods are often disastrous. A specific example of overt political action by the **market women** was their role in sustaining the 1961 Sekondi-Takoradi strike against Nkrumah by distributing free food to the strikers (cf Drake and Lacy 1966; Jeffries 1968). It was not surprising that Nkrumah arrested and detained some **market women** together with the strike leaders after the strike (cf Drake and Lacy 1966; Jeffries 1978: 38).

Governments in Ghana have often tried to bind the **market women** closely to their regimes. In most cases, these attempts have faltered. It should be noted here that the strength of the economy determines the relationships between governments and groups in Ghana. Because the Ghanaian economy has been in disequilibrium since the 1960s, governments have generally found it difficult to maintain the support of the **market women** over a long period. The following examples illustrate the point.

The **market women** were among the groups that initially championed Nkrumah's rise to power (Bretton 1966: 72). By 1961 however, their support had declined.

> Although nominally organized in the National Council of Ghana Women, under the CPP Constitution, an 'integral wing of the party', the trading women remained a fiercely independent lot, trading their support of Nkrumah for material benefits. When these benefits dried up, as a result of the deteriorating economic situation and resultant shortages, restrictions and persecutions of petty traders, the support waned. Insistence by the regime on nationalization of trade most probably fed the flames of hostility...
>
> As his ability to dispense material benefits to the group as a whole dwindled, Nkrumah resorted to bribery of key leaders... personal loans, gifts, free houses, choice appointments to sinecures for the leaders plus spot concessions to their followers in the form of tax relief, and sporadic relaxation of certain important restrictions, as well as spectacular 'investigations' into their grievances. (Bretton 1966: 73).

Busia's relationship with the **market women** was similar. The Progress Party came into power in 1969 with the support of a 'coterie of Ghanaian businessmen' (Gerritsen 1972: 141). Many of the economic policies of the Busia government were aimed at maintaining the support of the **market women**. Barely two months after assuming office, the PP government issued an Aliens Compliance Order under which a large number of aliens in Ghana without valid residence permits were ordered to leave

the country. The Aliens order affected over 150,000 people, largely Nigerian, among whom were apparently hundreds of traders and other self-employed with whom Ghanaian business people had competed (Esseks 1971: 27). Exceptions were granted to farm labourers after a group of cocoa farmers presented petitions to the government (**Africa Confidential** 5 December 1969: 5). The PP government's aliens policy was immensely popular among the business community in Ghana (Austin 1976: 152).

The policy was supplemented by a Business Promotion policy which excluded all aliens from some categories of economic activity. Finally, a liberalization policy was partly aimed at reducing shortages of **essential commodities**. Under this policy, the government removed exchange restrictions on a number of imported goods. Open licenses were also granted to cover several categories of raw materials, capital goods and basic consumer goods; and as a result, by 1970, about 60 per cent of the country's entire import trade was free from any restrictions (Esseks 1975: 54). Most probably, the initial attraction of these policies was one of the reasons why Busia won the 1969 elections, for in fact, the PP had pledged during its campaign to provide assistance to indigenous private enterprise (Esseks 1971: 26).

By the middle of 1971, however, the Ghanaian economy had deteriorated considerably from an already weak position. The worsening economic situation was further aggravated in 1971 by the fall in the world price of cocoa, the country's main foreign exchange earner, thus exacerbating the country's terms of trade (Esseks 1975: 54). It was in response to this economic situation that Busia introduced stringent economic policies in July and December 1971, which included a ban on the

importation of many **essential commodities** and a 44 per cent devaluation of the cedi. These measures reduced support from the **market women** to the extent that shortly before the PP government was toppled by the military, it was not uncommon to hear **market women** hooting and abusing Busia when his motorcade went by. Busia's political market had run out of 'goods'.

(2.5.0) Bases of Legitimacy in Ghana

It was argued in the last chapter that because legitimacy is largely defined by opinions of individuals and groups, it is impossible to outline accurately the factors that form the bases of the legitimacy of governments that is applicable to all political systems and to different governments within the same polity. However, it is possible that, over time, one can generalise about a particular political system when some factors have gained notoriety from the circumstances in which the legitimacy of various governments is seen as having been lost. In Ghana, two factors may be said to have acquired such status. These are the persistence of two political **camps** and the economic performance and capacity of governments in providing instrumental benefits. These two factors shape Ghanaians' recognition of the legitimacy of governments, and condition the relationship between governments and groups. This section examines the two factors outlined above.

(2.5.1) Political Cleavage and Legitimacy in Ghana

The legitimacy of governments in Ghana is, first and foremost, defined by the existence of two political **camps** in the country. The political class in Ghana is divided into the Nkrumah(ist) and Busia(ist) **camps**. One

camp is always in government (**in camp**) and the other opposed to it (**out camp**). 'Even a very superficial acquaintance with Ghanaian politics would convince anyone that the Nkrumah - Busia cleavage does exist, but it is much more difficult to say what it consists of. To some extent it is symbolic, that is, the struggle between Nkrumah and Busia was the first internal political conflict in Ghana that was dramatised on a national level. Therefore most conflicts have tended to be expressed in terms of 'Nkrumahism' and 'Busiaism'' (Hettne 1980: 176).

The cleavage noted above reflects both the rival leaders and their alternative ideological stances, around which Ghanaian politics polarised in its formative period. The Nkrumah **camp** is supposed to represent a socialist option, while the Busia **camp** a capital option. The two **camps** are not institutionalized as such. They take different shapes, e.g., as parties: (the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC); the Convention People's Party (CPP); the United Party (UP); the Progress Party (PP); the People's National Party (PNP); and the Popular Front Party (PFP). The CPP and PNP belonged to the Nkrumah(ist) **camp**, while the UGCC, UP, PP and PFP represented the Busia(ist) **camp**. Alternatively, they can be seen as cliques (Afrifa and Kotoka, Afrifa and Busia, the Acheampong group). Occasionally, people have changed **camps**. For example, between 1951 and 1956, some people moved from the Nkrumah **camp** to the Busia **camp** as a result of internal disagreements in the CPP. These included Kwesi Lamptey, Saki Scheck, Joe Appiah and Victor Owusu (Austin 1964: 16f, 26f). During the single-party phase of Nkrumah's rule, some members from the Busia **camp** were enticed or intimidated into joining the Nkrumah **camp** (Austin 1964: 385).

The essential dividing line between the two **camps** was formed between 1947 and 1951, the early period of nationalist struggles for independence in Ghana, and is well documented by Austin (1964) and Nkrumah (1957). Lewis sums up the origin of the growth of the two **camps:**

> there was an active political movement going back fifty years, run by the middle class with the support of some powerful chiefs. Its leader in 1947 was Dr. Danquah... The movement decided that the time had come to organize a mass political party. Ako Adjei...had met Kwame Nkrumah in London and had been impressed by his oratorical and administrative gifts. He therefore suggested to Danquah that Nkrumah, who had been away for ten years, should be brought back and made organizing secretary of the party [UGCC]. Danquah agreed to do this, in complete ignorance of Nkrumah's opinions. Nkrumah came back, and using the money and prestige of the movement and the protection of the chiefs, built up a mass movement through the southern half of Ghana... When the movement realised what was happening, they deprived Nkrumah of his office. But it was then too late. He took the mass movement with him, and it could not be recaptured (Lewis 1965: 27).

Nkrumah and his party, the CPP, completely outmaneuvered the UGCC, subsequently winning the 1951, 1954 and 1956 pre-independence elections (Austin 1964: 103-152) and the post-independence election (Austin 1964: 316-362). The members of the UGCC, representing the bulk of the intelligentsia, regarded themselves as the heirs apparent to the colonial state and saw Nkrumah as a usurper (Austin 1976: 23). In fact, 'they never forgave Nkrumah' (Davidson 1973: 87). George (Paa) Grant, one of the founders of the UGCC confirmed this.

> By June 1949, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, expatriated by the Convention in 1947 to take up the secretaryship, had for reasons that are now obvious to all, so sabotaged the effort of the principal leaders of the Convention and so discredited me and all my principal colleagues and he was able to mislead the masses to follow him... He filched our name, our SG [Self Government] policy, our branches, and even our colours - to establish a separatist group - the Convention People's Party - which, as he falsely claimed at that time, was formed within the Convention in the name of Ghana and of God (quoted in Austin 1976: 29).

Nkrumah's break with the UGCC, coupled with his electoral victories before independence, marked the clear division between the two political **camps**. After the 1951 elections, the UGCC disintegrated. After the 1956 election, Busia put together its remnants as the nucleus of the United Party (UP). Under the leadership of Busia, the UP became the sole Opposition party from November 1957 until Nkrumah formally declared Ghana a one-party state in 1964 (Austin 1964: 384f). The old antagonism between Nkrumah and the UGCC thus became one between Nkrumah and Busia. Since then, the elites in Ghana have inherited their political positions within the **camp** system. The demise of Nkrumah and Busia has not led to the collapse of the **camps** which carry their names.[4]

The **camp** element in Ghanaian politics has some implications for the legitimacy of governments. The **camps** define political enemies and allies of a government. There is a tendency for members of either **camp** not to recognise the legitimacy of a government formed by a party or clique from the opposing **camp** or with support from that **camp**. For example, as early as 1958, barely one year after independence, some leading members from the Busia **camp** were involved in a plot to overthrow the government of Nkrumah through a **coup d'etat** (Austin 1964: 424-429), despite the fact that the 1957 constitution explicitly provided for a constitutional means of changing the government. The CPP's failure to enact the regional assemblies that had been promised in the independence negotiations with the British (Austin 1964: 370, 379), confirmed the hostility of the Busia **camp** - they were not to be allowed to have their own independent bases of power; so they (or elements of them) began to plot to overthrow the CPP. In more recent times, the tendency for one

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4. After the fall of Nkrumah and Busia, the **camps** will be referred to as Nkrumahist and Busiaist.

camp to refuse to grant legitimacy to a government formed by the other can still be discerned. During the 1979 general elections, for example, many people from the Busia **camp** openly declared that they would leave Ghana if the Nkrumahist **camp** formed the government. These people were, in effect, stating categorically that they would not acknowledge the legitimacy of a government formed by the Nkrumahist **camp**.

We have seen in chapter one that a government that becomes increasingly illegitimate may resort to coercion, thereby further weakening its legitimacy. In Ghana the progression of governments to coercion from initial toleration is hastened by the fact that the **out camp** is always opposed implacably to the **in camp** and engages in clandestine activities to overthrow the government; whilst the government becomes paranoid and interprets any dissent to its policies as oppositionist strategies to overthrow it. The government becomes more repressive, and in the process, groups whose support it needs to draw upon to remain legitimate are alienated. The introduction of the **Preventive Detention Act** (PDA) in 1958 by the Nkrumah government and its repressive response to the 1961 Sekondi-Takoradi strike illustrate this point. The PDA was partially Nkrumah's reaction to the conspiratorial attitude of the opposition (cf Austin 1964: 38; Bing 1968: 443); whilst the open identification of United Party (UP) leaders with the 1961 strike was an important factor underlying CPP response (cf Drake and Lacy 1966). It will be argued in the next chapter that many of the actions of the Busia government (such as the dismissal of public servants, Busia's stand in the Sallah case and the disorganization of the TUC) which eroded its support, occured within the context of the **camp** structure of Ghanaian politics.

(2.5.2) Economic Performance

The second important factor that determines Ghanaians' recognition of the legitimacy of governments is their economic performance. Generally, Ghanaians adopt an instrumentalist approach to politics. Governments are held responsible for the provision of practically everything - food, consumer goods, roads, schools, etc. A government, to many Ghanaians, is legitimate if it is able to direct the economy so as to provide instrumental benefits for individuals, communities and groups. This sounds a sweeping statement which is difficult to substantiate with empirical evidence. It needs a personal acquaintance with Ghanaian politics to fully appreciate the assertion. Owusu's findings in his study of Agona - Swedru is quite representative of the whole of Ghana.

> Political relations are considered extensions or primary dimensions of economic relations. That is, the set of relations concerning the mobilization of resources, of production and exchange, of distribution and allocation of scarce values, primarily defines, establishes, or influences power relationships and patterns of authoritative domination and subordination. Economic relations also greatly influence legitimate control of public-policy decisions and support of these decisions (Owusu 1970: 3).

The most pervasive aspect of this instrumentalist approach to politics in Ghana concerns the capability of governments to ensure a steady supply of consumer goods (usually referred to in Ghana as **essential commodities**) such as tinned fish, corned beef, sardines, sugar, tinned milk, toilet rolls and detergents. The availability of these goods on the shelves of supermarkets, in the shops and in the markets, coupled with the ability of the people to afford them, compensates to a large extent for the most ill-considered, inefficient, corrupt and unconstitutional

practices of governments. This attitude cuts across class boundaries but it is most pronounced among urban people and elite groups. When **essential commodities** run out, or when their prices rise, the legitimacy of governments in Ghana is threatened. It is in such circumstances that charges of 'economic mismanagement' are made by Ghanaians against their governments. The assumption is that, if the economy is handled well, governments can afford to import **essential commodities** to 'flood the markets' (as it is often said in Ghana). It must be noted there that the **out camp** will oppose the governmennt regardless of its credible performance. However, the supporters of the **in camp** and people neutral lose interest in the government when the instrumental benefits decline, thus creating conditions for regime overthrow and for support for new rulers.

The origin of this instrumentalist view is difficult to explain. Dating back to the colonial period, the elites in Ghana have been mobilised effectively to press for instrumental benefits (cf Kimble 1963). These already existing values were reinforced by the expectations arising from the independence movement. The nationalist parties, especially the CPP, capitalised on this instrumentalist view of politics at the time of independence. Campaigns by the nationalist leaders for support were largely expressed in instrumental terms. Commenting on the CPP, Austin notes that 'knife and fork' questions were at the root of its election promises (Austin 1976: 40). There were promises of higher wages, higher cocoa prices and better standards of living (cf Austin 1976: 34-45). The CPP's pledge 'to make the Gold Coast a paradise so that when the gates of heaven are opened by Peter, we shall sit in heaven and see our children driving their aeroplanes, commanding their armies' (quoted in Genoud 1969: 16) exemplified the high level of expectation the nationalist parties generated before independence.

The reasons for Ghanaians' fondness for **essential commodities** may be attributed to the progressive incorporation since the mid-nineteenth

century of Ghana into the capitalist economy (cf Howard 1978). Briefly stated, this process involved the penetration of the capitalist economy and conversion of Ghana into a peripheral appendage of the centres of capital. Urbanization is accompanied by dependence upon imported processed food as capital investment in the rural areas is concentrated on production of, and infrastructure for, export commodity ventures (cocoa, minerals, timber). Investment (both of capital and labour) in 'traditional' food crop production declines and it cannot compete with imported foodstuffs in the main markets of the growing cities. The burgeoning comprador elites (academics and professionals especially, but also business people) sustain the process by creating a social and economic climate that equates status with the consumption of (usually imported) manufactured consumer goods. This process was completed and entrenched by the time Ghana achieved independence. In political terms, it may be said that consumption of **essential commodities** has become part of Ghanaian political culture.

The political history of Ghana is full of examples to sustain the argument that the legitimacy of governments in Ghana has been largely dependent on their ability to provide instrumental benefits, especially the supply of **essential commodities.**

An important basis of the legitimacy of the colonial administration was its ability to supply **essential commodities.** In 1948, the Gold Coast, previously described as a 'model colony' or a 'peace-loving country' (Austin 1964: 3) was caught up in a wave of riots which precipitated the transition from colonial rule to self-government. Following the riots, the Watson Commission was set up to investigate the

causes of the disturbances. The following paragraph from the Commission's report illustrate the part **essential commodities** played in causing the 1948 riots.

> There can be no dispute that in the immediate post-war years many Africans in the Gold Coast had to pay prices for essential commodities that had increased more than their incomes... It is plain that by the end of 1946 at the latest, short supplies, maldistribution, conditional sales, pass-book customers and other devices calculated to impede fair distribution at reasonable prices had created among the mass of the population a sense of frustration and the greatest social unrest (quoted in Kay 1972: 62).

Writing about the bases of the legitimacy of Nkrumah, Owusu argues that 'political ideology as such was not the most crucial factor. Only when ideology is perceived as affecting economic well-being is it a crucial factor' (Owusu 1970: 143, note 24). Elsewhere, Owusu makes the same point. To the supporters of Nkrumah, 'political parties and political ideologies were meaningful primarily to the extent that membership conferred economic and social advantages' (Owusu 1970: 146). And, arguing about the erosion in the legitimacy of the Nkrumah regime, Bebler notes:

> One of the major underlying causes of this erosion was the shrinking material base of the regime and the CPP leadership's inability to adjust to it. Up until 1961 the previously accumulated public reserves in Britain, the high price of cocoa on the world market, and good credit ratings permitted the government simultaneously to effect great and visible strides in economic and social development, to carry out generous patronage activities and to produce an economic climate in which the new entrepreneurial class and the party-state bureaucracy thrived... Deteriorating economic conditions and inflation after 1960 brought the real wage index of unskilled labourers in Accra to 89 points in December 1963, compared to 98 points at the time of independence. This deterioration alienated even industrial workers from the CPP and helped precipitate an important 1961 strike...(Bebler 1973: 30).

It cannot be denied that shortages and high prices of **essential commodities** played substantial parts in the erosion of the legitimacy of both Nkrumah and Busia. Indeed, 'the successful military coup in February 1966 - which occurred when consumer prices were rising rapidly and shortages of consumer goods were critical - only provides the final example of the extent of the party's dependence on its ability to deliver economic 'goods'' (Card1975: 541).

This interpretation was supported by Afrifa, one of the architects of the 1966 coup. Afrifa gave as one of the reasons for the coup 'severe shortages of the most essential goods' (Afrifa 1966: 90). It will also be seen in chapters three and four that high prices of **essential commodities** were decisive in the overthrow of Busia by Acheampong in January 1972. And, as we shall see in chapters five and eight, the legitimacy of Acheampong was eroded partly because of the shortages of **essential commodities.**

It was argued in the last chapter that the legitimacy of a government is a dynamic process which must be engineered. In Ghana governments carry out legitimacy engineering primarily by engaging in exchange relationships with groups and individuals. The difficulty that governments in Ghana face in engineering their legitimacy through exchange relations derives from the instrumental bases of Ghanaian politics and the legitimacy of governments noted above.

Since the 1960s , there has been a general legitimacy crisis in Ghana as a result of the failure of governments to deliver the 'economic goods'. The reason is not hard to find. The economy of Ghana has been

in decline for two decades. An important aspect of this situation has been a continuous deficit in the country's balance of payments. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) in its survey of the Ghanaian economy in 1975 noted that 'since the beginning of the 1960's Ghana has faced a persistently difficult balance of payments situation' (IMF 1975: 175). In 1978, Killick also noted that 'its acute balance of payments problems is perhaps the most widely known feature of Ghana's economy' (Killick 1978: 100). An examination of the causes of this balance of payments crisis is beyond the scope of this study.[5] What is relevant to this thesis is the political implication of this balance of payments crisis.

One political implication of Ghana's economic problems is that governments have not been able to achieve the expected economic results. Most importantly, governments have not been able to satisfy the instrumental demands of Ghanaians as they lack an important political resource - foreign exchange. The Ghanaian economy is essentially a dependent one. One feature of this dependent economy is that all capital goods and most consumer durables have to be imported. Foreign exchange scarcity therefore means that enough **essential commodities** cannot be imported to 'flood the markets', with the consequence that the legitimacy of governments becomes weakened.

In 1966 and 1972 respectively, the CPP and PP political machines collapsed within a few hours of the coups that toppled their governments. Part of the explanation for the failure of Ghanaians to rally to the defence of these governments was probably the failure of the two governments in question to satisfy the instrumental demands of the people. Austin's comments on this are to the point:

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5. For a detailed analysis of this, see Killick (1978).

> Here is one explanation of the failure of the CPP and the Progress Party, and the way in which these party regimes collapsed without a hand being raised even to wipe away a tear of regret except by those who were the direct beneficiaries of a particular regime. It is an explanation based on profit and loss, and rests on the assumption that politics at a national level, and at the intersection of national and local interests, is simply the politics of the market place. When the goods run out, the traders are discredited. They lose not only their customers but the trust that the customers once placed in them.. No ordinary elector in Ghana is going to risk his security, let alone his life, to defend a governing elite which fails to provide sufficient 'benefits', including the material comforts of a high-import economy - tinned milk, corned beef, sardines, cloth, cutlasses, petrol and motor tyres at reasonable prices (Austin 1976: 158).

Another implication of the economic crisis in Ghana is that it inhibits attempts by governments to maintain the support of the politically sensitive elite groups and individuals. Apart from the inability of governments to satisfy the instrumental demands of these people which has been already noted, the economic crisis also means that governments lack some of the important political resources to engineer their legitimacy. For example, shortages of **essential commodities** also antagonise the **market women** whose economic activities depend on the availablilty of these commodities. Foreign exchange scarcity means that import license applications cannot be approved and letters of credit cannot be opened, while spare parts, cars, lorry and car tyres and crude oil cannot be imported in adequate quantities. This alienates the business groups and the elite as a whole from governments. These groups are the beneficiaries of these aspects of Ghanaian economic consumption.

Most importantly, foreign exchange scarcity also means that equipment for the military cannot be purchased, thus reducing the defence budgets. The institutional grievances of the military are important in

understanding the 1966 and 1972 coups . Ocran, one of the architects of the 1966 coup has this to say in his justification.

> The Forces had extreme difficulty in ordering the necessary spares to maintain existing vehicles and equipment. On the other hand, no new or additional equipment had been ordered since 1963 to make good existing deficiencies. In my battalion, only four Land Rovers were issued as against the 25-odd required, and only nine three-ton trucks as against the required 15. The signal equipment was insufficient and in most cases without batteries for operating it, indeed there was nothing, by normally accepted standards, except the high spirit of soldiers (Ocran 1968: 44).

Governments in Ghana have not been unconcerned about economic conditions. However, policies aimed at improving the economy have tended to antagonise some of the politically sensitive groups in the country. A few examples will illustrate the point. The 1961 TUC strike against the CPP was partly provoked by the monetary and fiscal policies adopted by Nkrumah in July 1961. These policies were in response to a threatened deteriorating economic situations. The measures included: the imposition of income taxes; a freeze on salary increases and a compulsory savings scheme under which 5 per cent of all wages and salaries and 10 per cent of other type of incomes were deducted at source; and higher duties on beer, liquor, tobacco, diesel oil, textiles, sugar etc. (cf Drake and Lacy 1966).

To some extent, Nkrumah's adoption of socialism after 1960 was in response to the deepening economic crisis his government faced. This argument is based on the timing of Nkrumah's move to the 'left' after 1960. The introduction by Nkrumah in 1961 of the Seven Year Development Plan for 'Work and Happiness', based on socialist principles was made against a background of deteriorating balance of payments position, loss of huge amounts of external reserves and the failure to attract foreign

capital to finance industrial plans (Fitch and Oppenheimer 1967: 83). The adoption of socialist policies however eroded the support of Nkrumah coming from many people. In the first place, socialism led to crisis within the CPP, culminating in the defection of the CPP rightists like Gbedemah. Socialism also eroded the support base of Nkrumah within the business groups.

> Ghana's traders, many of them among the earliest supporters of CPP, resented Nkrumah's initial policy of restricting Ghanaian private businesses to small-scale enterprises (significantly, this policy was changed in 1963). One group of producers actively opposed to the government's policies for cooperative buying and selling was the fishermen of Accra and Cape Coast. While they welcomed the offer of power-driven boats, they bitterly attacked the measures compelling them to sell their catch to a single state-purchasing organization. This particular move was also strongly resisted by the 'market mammies' who lost their traditional position as middlemen as a result. (Legum 1964: 144)

It will be seen below that Busia's economic policies in 1971, especially the compulsory savings scheme and the 44 per cent devaluation of the cedi, which were in response to the worsening economic situation, eroded the PP government's support significantly in the eyes of many people, including the TUC and the military. From the foregoing analysis, it can be seen that the fortunes of governments in Ghana depend on the strength of the economy. This observation will become more apparent in chapter five when Acheampong's handling of the economy is discussed. Indeed, 'if one examines the constitutional changes and changes of government that have taken place in Ghana in the post-colonial era, one is drawn to the inescapable conclusion that it has been inability to cope with economic problems that has precipitated each and every change' (Hitchens 1979: 173).

As a result of the importance of economic factors in determining the legitimacy of governments in Ghana, governments shun long-term economic policies which may improve the situation because they are politically costly. Rather, governments resort to short-term and ad-hoc measures such as wage increases and subsidies on **essential commodities** which provide immediate instrumental benefits to the people and support for governments but worsens the economic situation. Ultimately, these transient strategies produce delegitimation results as much as would have the long-term ones. In the attempt to preserve immediate legitimacy, governments tend to arouse unrealistic expectations. Examples of this nature can be found in some of the strategies Acheampong employed to engineer legitimacy, examined in chapters four and five.

(2.6) Conclusion

The preceding sections have attempted to examine some aspects of regime legitimacy in Ghana before Acheampong assumed office in January 1972. Five main issues have been at the centre of the analysis. Firstly, it was argued that the legitimacy of governments, and that of constitutional regimes within which the governments operate, tend to converge; with governmental legitimacy determining constitutional regime legitimacy. Consequently, the collapse of governments also results in the demise of their constitutional regimes. The second issue discussed was that, in Ghana, there is a linkage between the legitimacy of a government and its level of tolerance of dissent and opposition. It has been shown that many of the repressive acts of the CPP and the PP regimes were in response to declining regime legitimacy. Thirdly, we have argued that, in Ghana, a government's claims to legitimacy are validly held if such claims are acknowledged by certain elite groups such as the military and

police, trade unions and the **market women.** The fourth point discussed is the significance of the existence of the two intransigent political **camps** for the legitimacy of governments in Ghana. The origins of the two **camps** and their implications for regime legitimacy have been shown. The final issue analysed is the instrumentalist basis of Ghanaians' perceptions of regime legitimacy. We have seen that, to many Ghanaians, a government is legitimate if it is capable of providing them with instrumental benefits, mainly **essential commodities.** This instrumentalist basis of regime legitimacy is one of the greatest set-backs to any government sustaining its legitimacy in the long-term; the reason being that the Ghanaian economy has been in crisis since the 1960s, thus making it difficult for governments to satisfy the instrumental demands placed on them by Ghanaians. It will be seen in the chapters below that the NRC/SMC regimes were no exceptions to the pattern outlined above.

CHAPTER THREE

THE RISE AND FALL OF BUSIA

(3.1) Introduction

This chapter outlines and discusses the major factors that led to the decline in the legitimacy of the Busia government - factors which created the grounds for Acheampong's rise to power. The main purpose of the chapter is to sketch the background to Acheampong's entry into the Ghanaian political scene in January 1972, and to provide an understanding of the situation within which his government acquired legitimacy (see chapter three above). The analysis in the chapter also reinforces propositions advanced in chapter two concerning the legitimacy of governments in Ghana. The chapter is divided into seven sections. The first section gives a brief background to Busia's rise to power. The remaining six sections examine the major circumstances which led to the erosion of the massive electoral support Busia received in 1969. These factors include the following: economic failures; dismissal of public servants[1] and the Sallah case; the failure to comply with constitutional provisions stipulating that Ministers and Members of Parliament should declare their assets; foreign policy in relation to South Africa, confrontation with the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and alienation of the Military and Police.

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1. This episode is generally referred to in Ghana as **Apollo 568** simply because it coincided with the anniversary of the launching of the American Spacecraft **Apollo II**.

(3.2) Background to Busia's Rise to Power

The Progress Party (PP) government under Dr. K.A. Busia assumed office in October 1969, after about two-and-a-half years of military rule following the overthrow of Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP) government in February 1966. The PP scored a landslide victory in the general elections that brought Busia into office as Prime Minister. It won 105 out of the 140 seats in the National Assembly. The PP's closest rival, the National Alliance of Liberals (NAL) led by K.A. Gbedemah,[2] won only 29 seats.

The factors that explain Busia's victory in 1969 include the following: the early re-appearance of Busia on the political scene as a primary alternative after the overthrow of Nkrumah; the ethnic factor in the 1969 elections; the identification of Gbedemah (Busia's main rival) with the discredited Nkrumah; the personal credibility Busia enjoyed; the superior calibre of PP candidates and the instrumental appeal of the PP to the electorate (Austin 1975: 8f; Austin 1976: 120f; Boahen 1975: 236f; Owusu 1975: 255f; Saffu 1973: 285f).

Busia came into power with the support of several distinct groups, apart from the Akan support he received. To a large extent, the PP was a lineal descendant of the old United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), the National Liberation Movement (NLM) and the United Party (UP). The government put together by Busia in 1969 was an elite one **par excellence.**

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2. K.A. Gbedemah (an Ewe) was one of the original founders of the CPP. He held important positions under Nkrumah, among which was the Finance portfolio. In 1961, he came into open conflict with Nkrumah and fled into exile. He returned to Ghana following the overthrow of Nkrumah in 1966 (see Austin 1964 **passim,** for more details on Gbedemah).

It represented what Austin describes as the 'new intelligentisia' (Austin 1976: 159). This group included judges, lawyers, university teachers, students and senior public servants (Austin 1976: 159). The PP government was also supported by a 'coterie of Ghanaian businessmen' (Gerritsen 1972: 141) who had enjoyed a relative era of prosperity under the National Liberation Council's (NLC)[3] 'Ghanaianization' policy.[4] Busia's ideological commitment to Western liberal democracy convinced the business community that he would pursue the same economic policies (see Busia 1967). In addition, Busia's ideological stand, and his campaign rhetoric won for him the support of sections of the labour movement which he (Busia) considered 'as natural allies in the fight for democracy' (Jeffries 1978: 119).

Initially, the Busia government's prospects for stability seemed strong. Four political factors enhanced this. The first was a degree of continuity in regime which ensured a smooth transfer of power. Some of the Ministers in Busia's government - people like Victor Owusu, R.A. Quarshie, J.H. Mensah, William Ofori-Atta and N.Y. Adade - had served as Commissioners under the NLC. The Prime Minister, Busia, had also played an influential role under the NLC as a member of the Political Committee of the NLC and the Chairman of the Centre for Civic Education (Saffu 1973: 12, 120). There were no problems of transition from NLC to PP

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3. The National Liberation Council (NLC) was the name of the military government which overthrew Nkrumah's CPP in 1966. The NLC ruled Ghana from February 1966 to September 1969. (See Pinkney 1972 **passim**; Saffu 1973 **passim**, for analyses of the NLC period).

4. The 'Ghanaianization' policy of the NLC was aimed at promoting indigenous private enterprise. In 1968, the NLC passed the **Ghanaian Enterprises Decree** which provided a legal framework for the policy. The decree called for the 'Ghanaianization' of a number of enterprises. These included taxi services and retail trade establishments with an annual sales volume of one hundred thousand cedis or less.

rule. In that sense, therefore, the Busia government may be described as a continuation of the NLC in civilian dress (Austin 1976: 159). The second factor was continuity in factional support. The PP government received support from some sections of the NLC, especially from General Afrifa (Austin 1976: 120-21). The support meant, at least in theory, that Busia was assured of the co-operation of those sections of the army loyal to Afrifa. The third factor was that the country had just started to recover from two-and-half years of military rule and it appeared that many people were not in a mood to support a coup. The final factor was the overwhelming victory of the PP in the 1969 elections. As we have seen above, the PP won an absolute majority of seats in the National Assembly. The government was thus based on solid support within the Parliament. It could easily rely on its numerical strength to introduce any legislation.

But beneath the stability outlined above, the Busia government faced a number of problems from the very beginning. In the first place, the government inherited a weak economy. The total foreign indebtedness of the country immediately before Busia assumed office stood at about 494 million cedis. Out of this, short and medium term debts incurred on suppliers credits amounted to 324 million cedis, more than 60 per cent of the total foreign liabilities of the country (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1968: 38). In addition, industrial growth was stagnant, unemployment was high, foreign exchange was in short supply and shortages of basic consumer goods were evident (**Africa Confidential** 5 September 1969: 2-3). Busia, in a plea to Ghana's creditor countries to reschedule Ghana's foreign debts, summed up the economic situation his government inherited:

> I freely and frankly acknowledge our present difficult and unhappy situation. We are heavily in debt as a nation. We owe more than 1,000 million new cedis. It will take 13 out of every 100 new cedis we earn from our exports to service our debts on the basis of present arrangements. Our Gross National Product is growing at less than one percent, whereas our population is growing at no less than 2.6%, i.e., more mouths are arriving than we are able to feed. At that rate we shall get more and more hungry and poorer and poorer. Already one quarter of our adult labour force is unemployed... (Quoted in **Africa Contemporary Record** 1969/70: 475-6).

As we have seen in chapter two, the strength of the economy in Ghana is crucial to the legitimacy of any government. The prospects for stability of the Busia government were therefore threatened from the start.

Another factor that raised doubts about the future stability of the Busia government was its ethnic composition. Two major political parties, the PP and the NAL, contested the 1969 elections that brought Busia to power. There was 'one ugly fact about the result, namely the predominantly Akan basis of the Progress Party's victory and the predominantly Ewe basis of the main opposition to Progress' (Austin 1976: 130). As we have already seen, the PP won about 75 percent of the seats in the National Assembly. These included all the seats in the predominantly Akan areas - Ashanti, Brong Ahafo and Central regions and all the Akan-based seats in the Eastern and Volta regions (Twumasi 1975: 142). The 1969 Parliament therefore pitted one ethnic group against the other. There was no Ewe in the cabinet. This was not by design, for there were no Ewe PP members of parliament to be assigned ministerial portfolios.

The ethnic composition of Busia's government soon raised questions about political stability. Immediately after the elections Gbedemah

(leader of the Ewe-based NAL) warned that, if care was not taken, Ghana could become like a neighbouring country 'divided by tribes into regional areas set against each other' (reference to Nigeria) (Quoted in **West Africa** 13 September 1969: 1098). A correspondent in **West Africa** also observed:

> Because of the composition of Parliament and the government - with one geographical area completely dominant and another completely committed to the opposition - one must ask ... whether, in view of Ghana's history the dominant group will not seek to suppress the minority one, and whether the minority one would not then attempt extra parliamentary opposition perhaps relying on support from kinsmen in Togo (**West Africa** 4 October 1969: 1170).

The most important consequences of the ethnic composition of the Busia government was reflected in the relationship between the government and the military and the police. The NLC, reportedly, was divided on tribal grounds. Afrifa (an Ashanti) supported Busia while Harlley and Deku (both Ewes and policemen) supported Gbedemah. Although Ocran (Fanti) appeared uncommitted some observers believed he would lean to Busia (**Africa Contemporary Record** 1969/70: 468). The possibility that the army and police were divided on tribal grounds was likely. This could prove disastrous to the stability of Busia's government. Indeed, immediately before the 1969 elections, rumours circulated in the country that Ewe army and police officers might be unhappy if NAL lost the elections (**Africa Confidential** 5 September, 1969: 2). So it was not surprising when, after the elections, fears were often expressed within PP quarters that Ewes might adopt anti-government tactics to subvert the government. Thus,ethnic rivalry combined with the weak economy to provide a basis for government insecurity and defensiveness.

The remaining sections will now examine how and why Busia fell from power. The factors listed as responsible for Busia's loss of support are discussed in detail below.

(3.3) Economic Failures

The Busia government, as we have seen, inherited a very weak economy. Ultimately, it was Busia's inability to achieve economic success which, more than anything else, led to his downfall. The major policies Busia pursued to salvage the economy and the results of these policies and their political implications are examined in this section.

The first policy adopted by Busia to resuscitate the Ghanaian economy was an extension of the NLC's 'Ghanaianization' of, and the encouragement of private participation in, the economy. A number of policies were designed to achieve these objectives. The Liberalization Policy was aimed at reducing the shortages of consumer goods and the promotion of industrial growth. Under this policy, the government removed exchange restrictions on some imported goods. Open General Licenses (OGL) were also extended to cover several categories of raw materials, capital goods and basic consumer goods. By the end of 1970 a third of commodity imports were under the OGL scheme. At the end of 1971 about 75 percent of importable items were placed on Open General License (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1971: 23). In pursuance of the Liberalization policy, the government also directed that OGL importers were simply required to pay a fee of twenty-five cedis into any Commercial Bank. The pay-in slip received became the sole authorization to import (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1971: 23). In economic terms, the government's liberalization policy

was a failure and led to foreign exchange shortages, mainly because of lack of effective control mechanisms. As the **Central Bureau of Statistics** noted in its 1971 review of the Ghanaian economy, 'by this policy, a mushroom of importers sprang up overnight who imported quite sizeable quantities of goods without due regard to the availability of foreign exchange or its effect on the balance of payments position of the country' (**Ghana Economy Survey** 1971: 23).

As part of its policies, the government implemented a **Ghanaian Business Promotion Act** and an **Aliens Compliance Order.** The **Business Promotion Act** excluded all aliens from many sectors of the economy and terminated foreign participation in small and medium-scale trading operations. These included retail and wholesale trading enterprises whose annual sales did not exceed five hundred thousand cedis, taxi services, commercial transportation, bakery, printing, petty-trading and hawking. The **Aliens Compliance Order** commanded all non-Ghanaians without valid resident permits to leave the country.

The second major economic policy of the Busia government was aimed at concentrating national resources on rural development. There were two aspects of this policy. One aspect concentrated on 'bridging the gap' between urban and rural dwellers. To this end, in some rural areas the government initiated development projects aimed at providing electricity, pipe-borne water, schools, and medical facilities. The second aspect concentrated on encouraging food production in the rural areas to feed the population (Jeffries 1978: 121).

Thirdly, the Busia government was concerned with the unemployment problem. The Finance Minister, J.H. Mensah, in his budget statement on July 30, 1971, described the government's unemployment policy as 'the launching of a frontal attack on the problem of unemployment'.

The fourth economic policy of the Busia government concentrated on debt servicing. As we have seen, Busia's government inherited a large foreign debt from previous governments and his government accepted these obligations and took steps to conclude agreements with creditor countries. This was one of the policiesfor which Busia was bitterly criticised in Ghana. By the end of 1971, it became evident that some nationalist sections of the Ghanaian community, especially the academics, were not happy with what they regarded as Busia's conservative approach to the debt problem. An editorial of the **Legon Observer**[5] (31 December 1971) accused the government of an unnecessary obsession with Ghana's foreign debts and of creating the impression that Ghana was the only debtor country in the world. The **Observer** urged the government to 'summon all its courage and unilaterally declare our inability to pay these debts for, say, the next ten years'. The campaign was carried further by calling on Busia to 'examine and repudiate any dubious' debts. (**Legon Observer** 14 Januaary 1972: 2).

The government's economic policies seemed to have little positive impact on Ghana's already weak economy. Although the Finance Minister claimed that the economy had attained a real Gross Domestic Product growth rate of 4.1 per cent in 1970 compared to 2.5 per cent in 1968 and that the real Gross National Product had risen by 3.4 per cent against 0.4

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5. The **Legon Observer** is a critical fortnightly journal published by the Legon Society on National Affairs (LSNA) - a group of academics at the University of Ghana, Legon. The **Observer** was first published in July 1966 when the NLC relaxed restrictions on the press after the overthrow of Nkrumah.

per cent (**West Africa** 1 January 1971: 1507), the economy continued to experience difficulties. By the end of 1971, 'the foreign exchange position of Ghana became extremely precarious' (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1971: 23). At the same time, accumulated short-term debt increased by an extra 194.6 million cedis while the foreign exchange reserves were in deficit by 180.5 million cedis (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1971: 23). Indeed, by the end of 1971, Ghana's net external position was weaker than at any time since 1965 (IMF 1975: 175).

In the domestic economy too, there seemed to be no signs of improvement. Inflationary tendencies were evident. The food supply situation was weak, despite the government's agricultural policies (**West Africa** 1 January 1971: 1507). Inflation continued. The Consumer Price Index (1963 = 100) rose from 188.5 in 1970 to 206.0 in 1971, and the index for 1971 increased by 9.3 per cent (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1971:10). Unemployment remained high. At the end of 1970, it was estimated that about 200,000 people, representing nearly half of the work force, were unemployed (Esseks 1975: 52). The government's One Year Development Plan of 1970-71 also noted that the 'available information seems to indicate that the present (unemployment) position is not better than it was in 1960' (quoted in **Legon Observer** 1 January 1971: 2).

The economic situation was further worsened by the sharp fall in the world price of cocoa (the country's main foreign exchange earner), from 830 cedis per ton in 1970 to 264.5 cedis in 1971 (**Ghana Economic Survery** 1971: 36). This resulted in an adverse net terms of trade. Export earnings from cocoa in 1971 fell by 91 million cedis from the 1970 figures (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1971: 36).

In 1971 the government initiated policies aimed at sustaining its economic programme and checking the decline in the economy. In July the government introduced its 1971/72 budget. The budget imposed a development levy of between 1 and 5 per cent on the incomes of workers earning above one thousand cedis per annum; reduced housing and car allowances for public servants; cut the defence budget; imposed a 10 to 26 per cent tax on foreign exchange transfers; increased the price of petrol; increased bank rates; introduced hospital and school charges and banned the importation of many consumer goods. The policy measures in the 1971/72 budget eroded the support for the government coming from many of the politically important groups in the country, such as the **market women**, the TUC, public servants and the military. As we shall see below, Busia's confrontations with the TUC partly stemmed from the dissatisfaction of the TUC with the 1971/72 budget. We shall also see in chapter four that economic grievances arising from the 1971/72 budget were among the most important reasons Acheampong used to justify the overthrow of Busia.

The measures contained in the 1971/72 budget were followed by an unprecedented 44 per cent devaluation of the cedis in December 1971. Although the negative impact of the devaluation was partially cushioned by a number of counter-measures such as increases in the minimum wage and the producer price of cocoa and the abolition of import surcharges, its economic and political implications for the government were enormous. The **Ghana Economy Survey** for 1972-74 described the effects of the devaluation thus:

> The immediate impact of the devaluation was that prices of many food items shot up by about three-fold; moreover, the price of imported raw materials, machinery and equipment increased tremendously. Business houses which had large orders in the pipeline had to pay nearly 100 percent in cedis for their indents. Business confidence was greatly shaken as most business houses were on the verge of bankruptcy. As a result of the increased prices of the imported as well as local food stemming from the devaluation, the real income of the workers was substantially reduced (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1972/74:1).

The devaluation was particularly damaging to the legitimacy of the government. The economic hardships it imposed 'coincided with growing political dissatisfaction across a broad range of former party supporters - trade unionists, university students, civil servants and, most ominously, the police and the army' (Esseks 1975: 55). A few weeks after the devaluation, a writer in the **Times** (London) noted that 'Ghana's economic crisis, represented by the recent 44 per cent devaluation of the cedi is on a scale that would threaten the existence of the government in many African countries' (cited in **Legon Observer** 28 January 1972: 39). But the writer wrongly assumed that 'Ghana is in no mood to return to military rule and the army in any case is led by officers loyal to Dr. Busia'. Two months after the devaluation, the army toppled Busia's administration. Busia's 'mismanagement' of the economy was among the important reasons Acheampong used to justify his coup.

(3.4) Apollo 568 and The Sallah Case

The second factor which eroded the support of the Busia government was the dismissal of 568 public servants in 1970, coupled with the overriding of a Supreme Court decision by Busia in the Sallah case. In February 1970, six months after the PP came into power, the government

announced that it had dismissed or refused to renew the appointments of 568 public servants in accordance with the Transitional Provisions of the 1969 Constitution (which allowed the government to dismiss public servants who had been appointed by the dissolved NLC). These provisions were effective only within six months of the promulgation of the Constitution. The six months expired on 21 February 1970, the day on which the government gave notice to the dismissed public servants.

The motives of the government were not clear, and neither were the criteria used. Although the government justified its action by reference to the Constitution and claimed that in taking the decision, 'consideration was given to the fact that Public Servants should be efficient, honest, forward-looking and devoted in the performance of their duties' (quoted in **Africa Research Bulletin**, 1-28 February 1970: 71), political motives could be discerned. According to **The Pioneer**, some of the dismissed public servants participated in the 'misdeeds' of the Nkrumah regime and were also responsible for the misdirection of the NLC (cited in **Africa Research Bulletin**, 1-28 February 1970: 672). The statement by **The Pioneer** supported the widely held view that unrevealed motives, 'ranging from the continuing campaign against suspected Nkrumahists to purely personal vendettas were at work' (Goldsworthy 1971: 52). The antipathy to Nkrumah, Nkrumahists and their work revealed by the Busia government after 1970 supports the above interpretation. An example was the amendment under a certificate of urgency the government made to the **Criminal Code** in August 1971 in a historic fourteen-hour sitting of parliament. The **Criminal Code (Amendment) Act** made it an offence, among other things, to display any symbol of the disbanded CPP, to adopt the manifesto of that party or to display or

distribute any photographs of Nkrumah. Busia's obsessive paranoid hostility to Nkrumah must be understood against the background of the antagonism between the Nkrumah and the Busia camps discussed above. Busia was able to carry out a political 'purge' of the Civil and Public Servants by hiding behind the Constitution and thus echoing Zinn's observation that:

> The modern era, presumably replacing the arbitrary rule of men with the objective, impartial rule of law, has not brought any fundamental change in the facts of ... unequal power. What was done before ... is still done, except that this no longer appears as the arbitrary action of the ... Lord or the King, it is now invested with the authority of neutral, impersonal law... (Zinn 1971: 17).

After the dismissal notices were given one of the affected people, E.K. Sallah, then the Manager of the Ghana National Trading Corporation (GNTC), brought an action in the Supreme Court challenging the government's decision to dismiss him. The Supreme Court gave judgment in favour of Sallah, holding that he was not one of the public servants covered by the Transitional Provisions of the 1969 Constitution and that the Constitutional provisions covered only offices 'established' or 'created' by the NLC or under an enactment of the NLC. From a legal point of view, the Sallah case was a fairly complicated one, involving controversal jurisprudential interpretations.

But immediately after the judgment was delivered Busia appeared on radio and television and refused to accept the judgment of the Court. He warned that the Supreme Court's decision was a dangerous precedent which could lead to chaos and anarchy. Busia also accused the Supreme Court of engaging in politics.

> ... there are some who think they can use the courts politically to change the people's choice so clearly and so massively made in fair and free elections last August...
> They are wrong. They cannot succeed... But if the judges want to play politics, I am quite ready to take them on... I cannot be tempted to dismiss any judge. I shall neither honour nor deify anyone with martyrdom; but I say this, that the judiciary is not going to hold or exercise any supervisory powers not given to it by the Constitution... (quoted in Austin 1976: 153).

Later, the PP organised a demonstration outside the Castle (the seat of government). The demonstrators carried placards some of which read: 'Purge the judiciary', 'PM, Hit back hard', 'Judiciary now Political Opposition'. Busia was reported to have thanked the demonstrators for their loyalty and assured them that the matter was under control (**West Africa** 2 May 1970: 501).

The Busia government's 'purge' of the Civil Service, coupled with the Prime Minister's negative attitude towards the judiciary following the decision in the Sallah case, adversely affected the public image of the government. Busia also antagonised the civil service, the judiciary and people who were not supporters or sympathizers of the Progress Party. To many people, the Busia government had become a government for PP supporters. This view was reinforced when Victor Owusu (then Foreign Minister) was reported to have deplored publicly the fact that many people holding key positions, especially in the public service, were not supporters of the PP (**Africa Confidential** 18 September 1970: 8).

That Busia reacted towards the judiciary in the way he did and that he condoned a demonstration against a judgment rendered against his government stunned many people. As Austin notes: 'those who had believed that Busia and Progress would be a considerable improvement over both

the CPP and the military, as a party prepared to defend "Freedom and Justice", watched with some dismay the erosion of those high principles ...' (Austin 1976: 160). Busia's reactions to the decision in the Sallah case was also ironic. Three years earlier, Busia had written **Africa in Search of Democracy** in which he defended the principles of the rule of law. 'In the democracy', Busia argued, 'the Rule of Law places limitations on the power of the government in the interest of personal freedom' (Busia 1967: 164). Busia also agreed with the Lagos Conference of the International Commission of Jurists that there was need for an independent Judiciary 'if the Rule of Law was to be a reality' (Busia 1967: 164). But Busia as a writer in 1967 was different from Busia as a Prime Minister in1970. To quote Austin again: 'how easy it is to be in search of good government; how hard it is to achieve it!' (Austin 1976: 151). Busia, like most Ghanaian politicians before and since, found the temptations of the power of office overwhelming and acted contrary to the rhetorical positions he assumed previously in opposition. More importantly, the Sallah case hurt Busia's reputation as a liberal democrat, therefore weakening his legitimacy and arousing suspicions about the lengths to which he would go to retain power.

(3.5) Failure to Declare Assets

Another factor which eroded Busia's support was the failure of his government to compel Ministers and Members of Parliament to declare their assets in compliance with the 1969 Constitution. This was coupled with the government's negative response to criticism of its shortcomings. Fourteen months after the 1969 Constitution came into force, it was revealed that not a single member of Parliament had declared his assets

in accordance with the Constitution (**Africa Confidential** 28 May 1971: 1). The provisions concerning declaration of assets were deliberately inserted into the 1969 Constitution by its framers. The reports of the Commission of Inquiry which had been set up to probe the members of Nkrumah's government in 1966 had revealed that Ministers, Members of Parliament and other party functionaries had enriched themselves with State monies. The framers of the 1969 Constitutionn therefore decided to make a clean break from the past. Accordingly, articles 67 and 89 of the 1969 Constitution required that all Ministers and Members of Parliament should declare their assets on taking the oath of office.

Following the revelation that the constitutional provisions had not been complied with, General Ocran, a member of the dissolved NLC who also served on the short-lived Presidential Commission under Busia, announced his intention of taking legal action against the government to make Members of Parliament declare their assets. Ocran criticised the government for its disregarded of the Constitution. According to him, the CPP was overthrown by the military (including himself) at great risk to lives 'to put an end to moral decline including bribery and corruption' and it was their hope that 'such shameless thievery, plundering and cheating...should not occur again in Ghana' (quoted in **Africa Confidential** 28 May 1971: 1). Ocran explicitly made it clear that his intention was not sinister: 'my only reason is to see that Members declare their assets. If they are unwilling to do so, let them say it. It is not my intention to overthrow any government' (quoted in **Africa Research Bulletin** 1-31 December 1970: 1954).

As it had in the Sallah case, the Busia government adopted a hostile attitude towards its critic, Ocran. Instead of looking on the

General's outburst as a useful safety valve that could take the steam out of any feeling that the army might entertain about the violation of the Constitution , the government decided to give Ocran the 'full treatment' (**Africa Confidential** 28 May 1970: 2). B.J. da Rocha, General Secretary of the PP issued a statement which alleged that Ocran was making a subtle attempt to whip up public opinion against the government: 'He is merely trying to create a resentment at a time when goodwill should be the watch word... The Progress Party wish to make it clear that he (Ocran) cannot topple our government even if he tried. It will require more than an Ocran to topple the Progress Party government'. **The Star** (PP newspaper) described Ocran as a 'false knight in armour'(**Africa Confidential** 28 May 1970: 2).

Five months after the government's confrontration with Ocran, Members of Parliament had still not declared their assets. At the annual meeting of the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS) in May 1971, the students threatened that if the government failed to order Members of Parliament to declare their assets, the NUGS would 'advise itself accordingly'. The students passed a resolution declaring: 'we are not here to impute any dishonesty... We shall not relax. We shall still press as citizens of this nation to see to it that the provisions of our Constitution are not flouted by our legislators' (**West Africa** 14 May 1971: 552).

Again, the government responded to the students' criticism in the same negative way as it had to Ocran. Amissah-Aidoo, the Deputy Speaker of Parliament alleged that the students' threat 'tends to create in

the mind of any reasonable person that the consequences might even include violence to Members of the house' (**West Africa** 14 May 1971: 552). The entire executive of the NUGS (15 students in all) were summoned before the full house of Parliament, humiliated and forced to apologise to members of Parliament. The students were jeered at for not wearing suit coats. The NUGS President, Tamakloe, was not permitted to read his apology until he borrowed a coat from another student.

The failure of the government to compel Members of Parliament to declare their assets, and the episodes outlined above, also eroded Busia's support. The reaction to the two incidents indicated the government was not prepared to enforce the Constitution. More significantly, the government's conduct demonstrated that Busia was not prepared to tolerate democratic, constitutional criticism. To many people, the failure of the government to compel Members of Parliament to declare their assets was sufficient evidence that the Busia government was going to be as corrupt as the previous ones. A writer in **West Africa** referring to what he described as Ocran's revelations, summed this up when he noted:

> One cannot help but say that history, which is meant to be instructive, has failed miserably to teach any lesson to the present leaders of Ghana. Many Ghanaian politicians, no matter what their ideology, have a similar shade ... an inordinate thirst for material wealth ... The hopes of many Ghanaians who wish to see the building of a nation devoid of corruption and greediness have been dashed to the ground ... When will Ghana get the right type of politician - the politician who will know that there is much happiness and pleasure in giving honest and selfless service to those from whom he derives his power: the politician who will know that ostentatious living is an affront to many of his fellow-citizens who have no source of income (quoted in **West Africa** 25 December 1970: 1477).

(3.6) Dialogue with South Africa

A further factor which eroded the overwhelming support Busia received in the 1969 elections was his conduct of foreign policy. On assuming office, Busia declared support for the policy of Houphouët-Boigny, the President of the Ivory Coast, in favouring dialogue with South Africa as a method of eliminating apartheid in Southern Africa. Dialogue with South Africa was justified on two grounds. In the first place, it was argued that guerilla tactics in Southern Africa had not worked but had resulted in the military build-up of South Africa. Dialogue was also justified on the grounds that the economic isolation of South Africa had proved ineffective because of the non-co-operation of many states (**West Africa** 21 November 1970: 1378). Busia went to the extent of suggesting that White South Africans should be invited to Ghana 'to see what we can do for ourselves and how we can live as people who can claim to be living as equals' (cited **West Africa** 15 November 1969: 1386).

Busia lost much support from Ghanaians because of the dialogue policy. An article in the London **Financial Times** by Cameron Duodu (then Editor of the **Ghanaian Times**) stated that many Ghanaians were beginning to feel that they had exchanged the strong political position on the world stage enjoyed by the Nkrumah regime for both 'a deteriorating economic situation and an utter lack of individuality in World affairs' (**West Africa** 11 July 1970: 758). In December 1970, the NUGS

also issued a statement criticising Busia for unwittingly dividing the united front of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) by advocating dialogue with South Africa. Later, the People's Popular Party (PPP) organised a rally in Accra to protest against Busia's dialogue policy. The massive attendance at this rally, compared with that at a counter-rally arranged by the government revealed the disenchantment of many Ghanaians with Busia's dialogue policy (**Africa Confidential** 5 March 1971: 8). Most significantly, some members of Busia's cabinet opposed the dialogue policy. For example, Victor Owusu (then Foreign Minister) disagreed with the policy and was virtually running a separate foreign policy (**Africa Contemporary Record** 1970/71: 351).

Ghanaians had every reason to oppose Busia's dialogue policy. Historically, Ghana had been at the forefront of the African liberation struggle and had played a very significant role in the formation and running of the OAU. One of the factors uniting the States in the OAU had been their shared opposition to apartheid in Southern Africa. The official policy of the OAU had been total non-co-operation with South Africa. Busia's dialogue policy reversed traditional Ghanaian foreign policy. Some Ghanaians regarded this an affront to the international image of Ghana. It was also feared that some African countries were going to isolate Ghana because of Busia's dialogue policy, particularly as Ghana under Busia was the only Anglophone African country pursuing the dialogue policy.

(3.7) Confrontation with the T U C.

The Busia government's support was also eroded when it antagonized the TUC, one of the groups from which it initially derived some support.

A series of confrontations between the PP government and the TUC led to a situation in which by September 1971 the TUC completely disintegrated and was reduced to a condition reminiscent of the late colonial era - amorphous, financially insolvent and politically subservient (Damachi, 1974: 107). The conflict arose from four main factors: the desire of the TUC to participate in national decision making; instrumental grievances of the TUC; the hysteria the PP government developed over Nkrumah; and the personal threat the TUC Secretary-General posed to the government.

The TUC's desire to participate in national decision making was revealed in a policy paper it released in 1970 entitled **Towards a Visible National Planning and Ways to Increase Productivity.** The TUC suggested that the government should establish a permanent consultative machinery in which the TUC and the Ghana Employers' Association would be actively involved in the formation and implementation of economic and social policies. Bentum, the TUC Secretary-General, even argued that government ought to consult the TUC in the formulation of the budget: 'the Congress cannot accept the principle that the destiny of the country should be determined only by a chosen few, neither can we accept that wisdom and knowledge is with a few' (**Ghanaian Times** 3 September 1971: 5).

The government interpreted TUC participatory demands as political opposition. From mid-1971 several PP members attacked the TUC on political platforms. Bruce-Konuah (Labour Minister) claimed that the TUC contained too many politicians 'who had identified themselves with trade unions in order to use them for political ends' (**Ghanaian Times** 17 August 1971: 1). The Labour Minister also rejected TUC demands to

participate in national decision making: 'the idea that we should practice democracy like America today is absolute nonsense. Did America have developed trade unions when she was fifteen years old? No, she had slave labour... What is the proportion of workers to the rest of the population? They are just a minority. It's all wrong for them to say, "the government must consult us"' (Jeffries 1978: 133).

Specific instrumental grievances of the TUC also brought it into conflict with the Busia administration. During the twenty-seven months of PP rule, trade unions in nearly every industry staged strikes, mainly in support of demands for wage increases. These demands were often met with violence by the police. For example, in March 1971 three strikers were killed by the police when workers of the Timber and Plywood Factory at Samreboi went on strike (**Africa Contemporary Record** 1971/72: 558). During the period of Busia's rule, the TUC persistently demanded an increase in the daily minimum wage from seventy pesewas to one cedis and fifty pesewas. The government argued that it could not give any worker the wage level demanded by the TUC in view of the country's economic predicament (**Africa Research Bulletin** 1-30 September 1971: 2243). To the TUC, the government's excuse (based on the poor economic conditions of the country) lost its force against the background of the government's inability to control the economic development of the country, especially the constant rise in rents and in consumer goods. The TUC also accused government officials of ostentatious living while appealing to ordinary workers to 'tighten their belts': 'Why should we shoulder more of the burden when they are not attempting to sacrifice at all?' (quoted in Jeffries 1978: 124).

The third factor explaining Busia's confrontations with the TUC was the hysteria the PP government developed over Nkrumah. This culminated in the amendments to the **Criminal Code** in August 1971 which, among other things, made it an offence to distribute photographs of Nkrumah. A brief description of the TUC and its leadership during the Busia period will indicate the source of Busia's apprehension.

The structure of the TUC during the Busia regime was basically inherited from the Nkrumah era. At the time of the 1966 coup, the TUC was one of the integral wings of the CPP. The 1965 Parliament,for example, had four leading trade unionists as members. Bentum, the Secretary-General of the TUC during the Busia regime,was a member of the TUC Executive Board and later a Minister of Forestry under Nkrumah (Gerritsen 1972: 81). Furthermore, the TUC was the only organisation affiliated to the CPP which was not dissolved or banned after the 1966 coup. More significantly, Bentum was the only CPP Minister to survive the 1966 coup in any official capacity. The reasons for this may be found in the legitimation strategies pursued by the NLC and the personal role Bentum played in the 1966 coup. The survival of the TUC in 1966 might have been a shrewd political strategy by the NLC to derive some legitimacy from permitting greater individual liberties and public articulation of diverse interests than Nkrumah did. Bentum's survival on the other hand was 'a reward for his behind-the-scenes role in the coup' (Gerritsen 1972: 74, 98).

On the other hand, the PP government saw the TUC as part and parcel of the Nkrumah threat. Later the principal justification for the PP government's dissolution of the TUC (discussed in greater detail below)

was that it was one of the organizations associated with the disbanded CPP. The government argued that the TUC should have been abolished after the overthrow of Nkrumah. To the PP, that the TUC survived the 1966 coup was an anachronism (**Africa Research Bulletin** 1-30 September 1971: 1971).

The final factor which explains the confrontation between the TUC and the Busia government related to suspicion within PP circles that Bentum was manipulating the TUC to fulfil his personal political goals. In September 1971 the Labour Minister, Bruce-Konuah, claimed that the government had evidence that Bentum was using the workers' platform to pursue his political ambitions. The Minister described Bentum's strategies as 'communist organizational tactics' (cited in **Legon Observer** 24 September 1971: supplement vii-viii). That the Busia government saw Bentum as a personal threat is also revealed in the attacks made on Bentum from other PP quarters. As early as 1970, the government sponsored a campaign to remove Bentum from the leadership of the TUC (Gerritsen 1972: 158). Then, in September 1971, Adade (Interior Minister) announced: 'We'll stop Bentum', before issuing a notice to freeze the assets of the TUC (Jeffries 1978: 134). Whether the government's suspicions were correct or not is difficult to tell. The important matter is that the government believed that they were and acted accordingly. 'The truth of the suspicions is only relevant to an attempt at deciding the fairness of government action, but is not relevant to understanding why the PP acted as they did' (Gerritsen 1972: 192).

The factors outlined above led to a series of confrontations between the TUC and the government. These confrontations reached their

climax between July and September 1971. In July, the government introduced its 1971/72 budget which embodied the measures discussed above. Specifically, the TUC objected to the imposition of the development levy. To the surprise of the TUC, the budget did not mention any pay increase to workers, contrary to an earlier promise by the government. Instead, the government sought to impose further taxes on workers. The TUC leadership accused the government of being insensitive to the demands of workers and of showing no understanding of politics: 'when your child asks you for food, you don't give him stone' (cited in Damachi 1974: 161). Bentum drew a comparison between Busia's development levy and Nkrumah's compulsory savings scheme which provoked the Sekondi-Takoradi strike in 1961: 'bad as the Compulsory Savings of Nkrumah were, there was always the hope that workers would one day get their contribution back. But in the case of the PP Government's development levy, no such hope could be nursed' (Damachi 1974: 161).

On 6 September 1971, a government Gazette notice announced that restrictions had been imposed on the assets of the TUC. The notice also prohibited the banks from paying money from the accounts of the TUC to any person without written permission from the Minister for Labour. Three days later, the government introduced a bill in Parliament under a certificate of urgency to amend the **Industrial Relations Act** of 1965 which provided the legal framework of the TUC's existence. The new Act, the **Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act** (1971) abolished the TUC as it then existed. The Act made it optional for workers to belong to a trade union. Union dues were no longer automatically to be deducted from workers' salaries. Furthermore, the registration of all the existing trade unions lapsed six months after the coming into force of the Act,

unless they were re-registered with the Registrar, who had the prerogative to refuse registration unless he was satisfied with the union's rules about election of officers.

The new legislation had a profoundly disruptive impact on the labour movement. It alienated unions from each other and resulted in a membership exodus from the existing unions (Damachi 1974: 107). Most significantly, by providing that union dues were to be deducted only when a member had contracted in, the legislation encouraged non-membership of trade unions, thus impoverishing the trade unions financially. Ironically this was similar to the colonial strategy of preventing trade unions from using their money to achieve political power (Damachi 1974: 103).

The TUC-government confrontation outlined above alienated support for the government coming from the urban working class. The dissatisfaction of the labour movement and workers with the PP administration was evident in the number of strikes in 1971. In the first six months of 1971, there were 46 strikes involving 25,169 workers and a loss of 49,115 man-days (Jeffries 1978: 115). Miners, railway and dock workers went on strike in protest against the cost of living, rising unemployment and against particular policies of the Busia government (Bennett 1975: 303). In 1970 the Ministry of Labour dealt with 55 strikes (Jeffries 1975: 280, note 27). The closeness of the figures for the first half of 1970 illustrates the discontent of the labour movement and urban workers with the PP government by 1971. The consequences for Busia of the loss of support within the TUC were revealed by Damachi's **post hoc** interviews. According to him, 'most of the people

interviewed in Ghana stated that the Union helped to bring about the downfall of Busia by persistently politicising the workers and masses against government policies and by instilling fear in them. Consequently, the army began to liken Busia to Nkrumah' (Damachi 1974: 107).

(3.8) Alienation of the Military and Police

A crucial group alienated by Busia's policies was the officer corps of the military and police; and it was from a section of this group that the successful challenge to Busia's administration came. Apart from the general factors noted above which had eroded support for Busia, two additional factors were specific to the military and police. The first was the disorganization of the military and police by the PP government. The second was the deprivation the officer corps suffered as a result of Busia's economic policies. These two factors, cumulatively, established conditions for the overthrow of Busia.

Before Busia assumed office, the armed forces had already suffered substantial disorganization at the command level. The NLC retired those officers associated with the Nkrumah regime. In 1967, more officers were retired following an abortive coup against the NLC in which General Kotoka (one of the architects of the 1966 coup) died. Then, before the NLC handed over power to Busia, all officers who were actively involved with the military regime were retired. Busia continued the reorganization on assumption of office. General Otu (then Chief of Defence Staff) had his rank changed by being transferred from the Air Force to the regular army and so retired. Brigadier Ashley-Larsen, Commander of the Air Force, was assigned to a course at the Indian Defence College.

Brigadier Kattah was posted as military attaché in India after being suspected of plotting a coup against the government. He was later recalled and prosecuted for theft arising from the 1966 coup. Brigadier Accquah was also forced to resign as Army Commander. He was replaced by Brigadier Twum-Barima who was believed to be Busia's supporter (Bennett 1975: 304). In addition, Busia effected a number of other transfers to consolidate his control over the army. For example, Brigadier Amenu was removed from the army to become the Director of the National Service Corps. Major-General Addo, Army Commander was appointed acting Chief of Defence Staff, which removed him from direct command of troops. Brigadier Osei Owusu was made the Commander of the Second Infantry Brigade and Colonel Acheampong (the eventual leader of the coup that toppled the Busia government) became Commander of the First Infantry Brigade in Accra (Bennett 1975: 304). The Police were equally affected by Busia's reshuffles. In mid-1971, the government dismissed the Inspector General of Police, B.A. Yakubu, and appointed a civil servant, R.D. Ampaw, to the post. Until the appointment of Ampaw, the post of IGP had always been held by a police officer.

The reorganization of the army and the police by Busia was probably influenced by two main motives. The first related to the ethnic composition of the government and its implications for the stability of the government. Of particular significance were the rumours immediately before the 1969 elections that Ewe army officers were going to stage a coup if Gbedemah did not win the elections. Probably in response to such rumours, Busia decided to remove Ewe army officers from command positions. In this connection, it is interesting to note that by the end of 1971, only one Ewe army officer, Colonel Tevie, remained in a

command position. Three Ewe Army Officers (Ashley-Larsen, Kattah and Amenu) were either posted abroad or seconded from the army. The second factor that most likely influenced Busia's policies in relation to the military and police was the general insecurity the PP government felt, especially because of its phobia over Nkrumah and the worsening economic situation after 1970. Many observers believed that Busia reorganized the army in order to place his supporters in sensitive command positions to forestall a **coup d'etat** (Bennett1975: 302).

The economic policies of the Busia government, especially the July 1971 budget and the devaluation, also affected the corporate interests of the military and police adversely. Firstly, defence spending was cut. Introducing the budget, the Finance Minister J.H. Mensah remarked that the government was faced 'with the problem of what to do about a level of defence expenditure which was clearly onerous for a small country such as ours' (quoted in Bennett 1975: 300). As a result of the cuts in defence spending, military equipment and spare parts purchases were reduced. There were also reduction in a number of military activities. For example, the Parachute Battalion of the Air Force was disbanded on economic grounds (Bennett 1972: 223).

Secondly, the general adverse effects of the economic policies of Busia, discussed earlier in this chapter were also felt by the military and the police. The development levy, the abolition of car allowances, increase in rents, and other policies also applied to military and police officers. The 1971 budget resulted in a reduction of the actual incomes of these officers. For example, 'a Major who was taking home ¢215 a month prior to July, received only ¢125 under the new budget'

(Bennett 1975: 301-2). The December devaluation worsened the situation for the military and police officers as it did for most wage and salary earners in the country. 'For those living in the quasi-European style of the Ghanaian elite, a 44 per cent devaluation represented a loss of as much as 25 per cent of purchasing power' (Bennett 1975: 302).

Two examples show that the factors above, especially the impacts of Busia's economic policies on the military and police officers, created resentment. Firstly, General Otu was known to have bitterly opposed the government's cut in defence spending. For that he was retired, while Major-General Addo, who did not publicly criticise the government's policy, was appointed as acting Chief of Defence Staff (Bennett 1975: 304). Secondly, in July 1971, government members received anonymous letters threatening a **coup d'etat** if conditions did not improve within the Police Force. In reply to the threat, Busia was reported to have said that if a coup took place, he would not offer any resistence (**West Africa** 25 July 1971). The reshuffles within the military and police noted above came shortly after the coup threat. The displeasure Busia's policies caused within the military and police was also revealed by **post hoc** statements by Acheampong after Busia was overthrown.

(3.9) Conclusion

After twenty-seven months in office, the PP government had, 'with remarkable fortitude ... engaged in battle with each section of its supporters' and succeeded in offending nearly all 'those who were most likely to sustain' it in office (Austin 1976: 160, 159). The general expectations built up in 1969 had all disappeared as the external eco-

nomy continued to deteriorate. The government then became increasingly apprehensive of dissent and opposition. This apprehension reached a climax between June and September 1971 and ,'in the name of democracy', the PP government 'performed actions scarcely compatible with their professed intentions' (Gerritsen 1972: 188). On 13 January 1972, Busia was overthrown by a section of the military led by Colonel (later General) Acheampong whom Busia had appointed as Commander of the First Infantry Brigade in Accra. Nobody (except those who benefited directly from the government or had invested in the PP) mourned the exit of Busia. Busia's departure from the Ghanaian political scene was hailed with jubilation and demonstrations in support of the new rulers as is usually the case in Ghana. 'The crowds which gathered to listen delightedly to the CPP leaders at independence in 1957 actually danced in the streets to welcome Kotoka in 1966. They queued patiently in the sun to vote for Busia in 1969, but were ready again to turn to Acheampong in 1972' (Austin 1975: 6). Evidently, Busia's political market had run out of goods. Not only that. The traders had also offended the customers (Austin 1976: 159).

Essentially, the Busia government was overthrown because Acheampong and his friends wanted political power. The overthrow succeeded for two reasons (apart from the obvious fact that the military controlled the guns). In the first place, the Busia government was less popular than it had been in 1969. As we have seen, the government had antagonised important interests - the civil service, the judiciary, the students, the TUC and, most importantly, the military and police. On the other hand, the PP government had built up solid (Akan?) rural support. As we have suggested in chapter two, the support a government

in Ghana receives from the rural people is less important to its legitimacy than one from urban elite groups. Busia needed the support of the latter more than the former to sustain him in office. Unfortunately for Busia, he succeeded in antagonising many of the elite-based groups. The PP government also had a whole range of hangers-on to the PP bandwagon. The government was (possibly?) not unpopular enough to lose any forthcoming election. But conversely, the legitimacy of the government was in question. The latter point is not necessarily the same as the former. We can speak of a loss of legitimacy only in terms of the aggregated loss of support by the government of the politically important groups in the country. This was what happened to the Busia government by the end of 1971.

CHAPTER FOUR

ACHEAMPONG IN POWER: PURSUIT OF LEGITIMACY

(4.1) Introduction

The main focus of this chapter is on the strategies Acheampong utilized to engineer legitimacy for his government. First, it is necessary to give a brief introduction to Acheampong's coup.

By the end of 1971, Busia's PP government had become generally unpopular. The July 1971 budget and the devaluation of the cedi in December 1971, more than anything else, sealed the fate of the Busia government. It was against this background that Ghanaians woke up on the morning of 13 January 1972 to hear the message of 'redemption'. Shortly after six o'clock in the morning, a voice identifying itself as that of Colonel Acheampong broadcast over Radio Ghana:

> Good morning, fellow Ghanaians...I bring you good tidings. Busia's hypocrisy has been detected. We in the Armed Forces have today taken over the government from Busia and his ruling Progress Party. With immediate effect the Constitution is withdrawn, Parliament is dissolved. The Progress Party and all political parties are banned. Dr. Kofi Abrefa Busia is removed from office. The Leader of the Opposition is dismissed. All Government Members of Parliament should report at the nearest Police Station for their own safety. (Acheampong 1973 (Vol. 1): 1)

Soon after the coup, Acheampong announced the formation of a National Redemption Council (NRC). On the first day of the coup, the NRC comprised Colonel Acheampong as Chairman and Head of State, Major Kwame Baah, Commander Boham, Major Solormey, Lt. Colonel Benni and E.N. Moore, President of the Ghana Bar Association, as Attorney-General (**West Africa** 28 January 1972: 109). A few days later, the membership

of the NRC was enlarged to ten. Two of the first set of names, Commander Boham and Lt. Colonel Banor, were dropped. Six new appointments were made. These included Brigadier Ashley-Larsen, Colonel Erskine, Commodore Quaye, Brigadier Beausoleil, Major Agbo and J.H. Cobbina (the newly appointed Inspector General of Police (IGP). Five days after the coup, Colonel Adjetey and Major Felli were added to the NRC, bringing its number to twelve (**West Africa** 4 February 1972: 137). Moore retained his post as Attorney-General but lost his membership of the NRC.

The changes in the composition of the NRC were accompanied by reshuffles in command posts in the Armed Forces. Brigadier Ashley-Larsen replaced Major General Addo as Chief of Defence Staff, Colonel Erskine became Army Commander in place of Brigadier Twum-Barima and Brigadier Beausoleil became the new Air Force Commander (**West Africa** 28 January 1972: 109). These measures were most likely intended to broaden the base of the government. The inclusion of the IGP ensured the co-operation of the police which, despite its role in the 1966 coup, was not active in the 1972 coup.[1] The reshuffle also removed army officers of doubtful loyalty from command positions. For example, both General Addo and Brigadier Twum-Barima, Busia's favourites, who were detained shortly after the coup (**West Africa** 28 January 1972: 109), were removed from their former command duties. Addo was later appointed Commissioner for Agriculture, not a sensitive post for the security of the government, while Twum-Barima was posted as Ghana's Ambassador to Zaire and Rwanda. One curious fact about the composition of the NRC was the over-representation of Ewe army officers (Ashley-Larsen, Selormey, Agbo and Quaye). This gave some credence to rumours that Ewe army officers master-minded the coup but tactically put Acheampong (an Ashanti) in

1. The NLC of 1966 comprised four police officers and four army officers, a ratio that reflected the role of the police in that coup (cf Saffu 1973: 3-4).

charge of affairs as a cover-up. Alternatively, Acheampong may have sought to placate Ewes for the bias against them during the Busia period. Or it may have been that Acheampong thought Ewes would be more trustworthy and anti-Busia while the consolidation of his government was underway. There is another possible interpretation of the motivation for Acheampong's coup, i.e., that it was engineered by people from the Nkrumahist camp (see 4.5).

The NRC was faced with the problem of establishing its legitimacy. However, the NLC did not start with a blank sheet. It achieved some initial legitimacy by overthrowing the PP government which, as we have seen above, had become unpopular by 1971. In other words, the coup itself brought some legitimacy to the NLC. The rest of this chapter outlines and discusses the major strategies Acheampong adopted to achieve legitimacy. The following approaches may be identified: establishing legal and political authority; justifying the coup; reversing the unpopular policies of Busia; exploiting political cleavages existing in the country; and adopting a nationalistic and militant stance on domestic and international issues. The details of these strategies are discussed in the sections that follow. These strategies were not pursued sequentially but concurrently.

(4.2) Establishing Legal and Political Authority

It is customary for coup-makers to take steps immediately following the success of their coup to establish legal and political authority to prevent any resistance to the new government. 'The absence of serious or widespread resistance to the coup is usually taken as a sufficient sign of popular acceptance' (Kasfir 1976a:67).

Acheampong's steps in this direction were contained in his first broadcast announcing the overthrow of Busia: 'with immediate effect the Constitution is withdrawn, Parliament is dissolved. The Progress Party and all Political Parties are banned. Dr. Kofi Abrefa Busia is removed from Office. The Leader of the Opposition is dismissed. All Government Members of Parliament should report at the nearest Police Station for their own safety' (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1): 1). Later the NRC issued a proclamation giving the government the legal power to rule by decree. The proclamation repeated the points in Acheampong's first statement on the day of the coup with regard to the 1969 Constitution, Parliament and political parties. It also provided for the continuity of a number of governmental institutions such as the Public Service and the Judiciary. The most important step Acheampong took to establish political authority was the arrest and detention of all members of Busia's government and some known PP activists.[2] These people were not released until the NRC was firmly in control of the country. The last of the detainees were released in 1974.

These measures were quite successful. There were no overt acts of resistance to the coup, apart from two cases which were easily suppressed. General Afrifa, who was earlier reported to have pledged his support for Acheampong on the day of the coup, was later arrested and detained, allegedly for plotting a counter-coup to reinstate Busia. The second case of resistance was reported in Kumasi (capital of Ashanti Region) where the Chief Regional Executive, Dr. Maxwell Owusu, was said

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2. The Prime Minister, Busia escaped arrest as he was away in England undergoing medical treatment when the coup occured, an interesting parallel with the 1966 coup when Nkrumah was away in Hanoi when the coup took place.

to have broadcast to the effect that the coup had failed (**West Africa** 28 January 1972: 109-110).

(4.3) Justifying the Coup

The next strategy Acheampong adopted to engineer legitimacy for his government was to justify the coup. This strategy is an obvious practice for coup-makers. The NLC for example utilised it in 1966 with success (Pinkney 1972: 1). Acheampong justified his coup on the basis of the shortcomings of the Busia government.[3]

Acheampong began by portraying Busia's rule in terms of the abuse of political power and economic mismanagement, similar to that under Nkrumah: 'On 24th February, 1966 the Armed Forces and the Police took over the reins of Government from Kwame Nkrumah because of arbitrary dismissals, arrests and detention without trial, economic mismanagement, maladministration in general and a host of other malpractices. ...Every honest Ghanaian will agree with me that the malpractices, corruption, arbitrary dismissals, economic mismanagement and the host of other malpractices have come back to stay with us' (Acheampong 1973(vol1):2). If the NLC had been hailed in 1966 for overthrowing Nkrumah on those grounds, the NRC should not be less acceptable to Ghanaians in 1972. Acheampong also accused Busia of having violated the 1969 Constitution and having 'made that document a mockery.... The Busia government flouted the Constitution time and time again and this, surely, was an index of lack of faith. People who drafted a Constitution, helped to promulgate it, come to power under the same Constitution, swear to uphold the Constitution and then immediately turn around and denigrate it

3. Material for this section is drawn exclusively from Acheampong's speeches during the first few days of the coup. I have used quotations in order to reflect Acheampong's rhetoric accurately.

cannot obviously be trusted' (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1): 7). Among the examples given by Acheampong were Busia's disregard of the judiciary in the Sallah case and the failure to declare assets. Presumably, these were the matters alluded to in Acheampong's earlier statement (the details of which were not spelt out) that 'Busia's hypocrisy has been detected' (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1): 1).

Busia's handling of the economy and the negative impact of his economic policies were also used by Acheampong to justify his coup. In his first press conference after the coup, Acheampong stressed that 'the coup was not staged for the selfish ends of the Armed Forces', but that it was staged to save the country from 'total economic collapse', when 'it became obvious that the Busia Government had no clue to how to arrest' the deteriorating economic situation (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1): 6). Specifically, Acheampong mentioned Busia's national development levy and the currency devaluation: 'then again taxes were imposed. Taxes which touched even the lowest paid worker. These taxes cut deep into the pockets of the worker and left most of them practically destitute. If anybody feels for his fellow man, he will not in the name of God, treat him as the Busia government treated the workers... Then the Devaluation; and you all know what the effect has been on everybody'(Acheampong 1973: (Vol.1: 7).

Acheampong also turned to the manner in which Busia handled some of the groups in the country as a justification for the coup. The military and police came first: 'the first people Busia put his eyes on were the Armed Forces and the Police. Some Army and Police Officers were dismissed under the pretext of retirement. Some Officers were put

in certain positions to suit the whims of Busia and his colleagues. Then he started taking from us the few amenities and facilities which we in the Armed Forces and the Police enjoyed even under the Nkrumah Regime' (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1): 2). Next came Busia's treatment of the civil service, the TUC and the judiciary: 'the Busia government on coming to power, immediately proceeded to dismiss civil and other public servants. Overnight, people with wives and children had their means of sustenance taken from them for no reasons whatsoever. Those of the civil servants who were left in the service were placed at the mercy of Ministers - against the provisions of the very Constitution which they had sworn to uphold. What became of the Public Services Commission is known to all of you. Rents of Public Servants living in Government houses were put up and their pay pocket almost cut in half. As if that was not enough, the TUC which was the organization fighting for the rights of the ordinary workers, was disbanded. The poor worker had no one to speak or plead for him and he was left at the mercy of the government... The Judiciary was interfered with in so many ways. The famous Sallah case is an example' (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1): 7).

Thus, for all the reasons outlined above, 'the Armed Forces have once again decided to take over the reins of Government to save Busia from total disgrace and prevent him from committing further blunders and totally collapsing the country before he runs away to enjoy the huge fortune he has acquired outside the country' (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1): 2).

Having drawn the attention of Ghanaians to Busia's failures, Acheampong then pledged to perform more creditably: 'We are soldiers. We

know one way of dealing with crisis situations and that is action' (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1): 9). The economy was to receive priority attention. Thus Acheampong emphasised: 'the economic position of the country presents us with our biggest problem and challenge... Ghana is facing the most serious economic crisis in its entire history.... In simple terms we are almost like a nation at war without an external enemy' (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1): 9). Accordingly, the NRC 'has...decided to place the economy of Ghana on war footing... We shall spare no effort, and no sacrifice will be too great for us in this gigantic task of winning a great economic war'. (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1): 9).

Acheampong's rhetoric was carefully and skillfully selected to include most of the grievances the politically important groups in the country had against Busia. And the reasons for the coup were broad enough to attract the support of a wide range of people, particularly those who had suffered some deprivation under, or were disillusioned with, the Busia government. Support for the NRC was instantaneous. Achebe was not writing on Ghana, but there could not have been a better description of the manner in which political allegiance was transferred to the NRC.

> Overnight everyone began to shake their heads at the excess of the last regime, at its graft, oppression and corrupt government, newspapers, the radio, the hitherto silent intellectuals and civil servants - everybody said what a terrible lot; and it became public opinion the next morning. And these were the same people that only the other day had owned a thousand names of adulation, who praise-singers followed with song and talking drum wherever they went (Achebe 1966: 148).

Within twenty-four hours of the coup, messages of congratulation from different parts of the country poured into the offices of the NRC.

Demonstrations were staged all over the country in support of the military government. The demonstrators (who represented groups such as the TUC and the **market women**) carried placards which envinced their disaffection with the Busia government: 'Down with Development Levy', 'No More Tribalism', 'We abhor false class Society and Aristocracy in Ghana', 'Down with the New Comprehensive Insurance' (**West Africa** 28 January 1972: 109;**West Africa** 4 February 1972: 137). The **Legon Observer** summed up the position of the intellectuals in these words: 'thus for ourselves, as for the economically beaten and socially despondent people of this proud and once prosperous and buoyant country, a change of the existing political order was clearly beginning to be felt as desirable, indeed this feeling was daily becoming perceptibly explosive' (**Legon Observer** 28 January 1972: 25). Thus, within a short time, 'the champions of yesterday are discredited, labelled villains, and replaced by new heroes whose virtues [although unknown] are proclaimed like angels trumpet-tongued as the scene changes and the new government is installed - unless, of course, the attempt fails' (Austin 1976: 156).

We have seen that one of the grounds for the coup against Busia, according to Acheampong, was that 'matters got steadily worse - especially in the economic field, and it became obvious that the Busia Government had no clue as to how to arrest the position' (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1): 7). As shown in the last chapter, the economy of Ghana at the close of 1971 was very weak. But Busia could argue with some justification that most of the economic problems during his rule were due to the drastic fall in the world price of cocoa in 1971, coupled with the huge foreign debts his government inherited. Domestically, Busia could also argue that his government redirected resources into rural develop-

ment and that it was in pursuit of this objective that the 'austere' economic policies of 1971 were introduced. Supporters of Busia have in fact argued that twenty-seven months was too short a period within which one could expect any perceptible signs of economic growth.

Acheampong's comparison of Busia with Nkrumah was also generally considered an overstatement (Austin 1975: 4-5; Austin 1976: 158). In 1966, the NLC rightly argued that Nkrumah could only be overthrown by the use of force (Pinkney 1972: 7). In fairness to Busia, the same could not be said about his rule. As Austin argues: 'Kotoka could point to the way in which Nkrumah had closed the door very firmly on any possibility of change under the CPP... The NLC could look at the mockery of the 1965 election and conclude that change could be brought about only by force' (Austin 1976: 158). In 1972, Acheampong's argument was not that Busia had closed the door on change, but that he was intending to do so.

> The PP had, by almost criminal extortions managed to build up such a massive capital, that in spite of their misrule, it was inconceivable that any party could mobilize the resources necessary to pose an effective challenge in the forseeable future. Moreover, some leaders of the Parliamentary Opposition had compromised their positions by pleading for and obtaining heavy loans from the ex-PP Government to an extent that laid them open to any form of political blackmail from the proscribed PP. Finally, it is an open secret that the machinery of the Electoral Commission was open to political adulteration in a manner that would have made any election in Ghana wholly farcical. (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1): 30)

The reasons why Acheampong overthrew Busia in 1972 have been in dispute. One view which is still commonly held in PP circles in Ghana is that Acheampong staged his coup simply to obtain political power, and that he merely 'masked his own ambitions by a cloak of reform behind an

ideology of salvation' (Austin 1975: 5). While this view ignores the level of discontent in Ghana immediately before Acheampong's coup, it nevertheless received support from Acheampong's own statement that he planned the coup six months after Busia assumed office (**Ghanaian Times** 19 January 1972). Whether Acheampong simply capitalised on existing conditions in Ghana to legitimatize his coup or not became immaterial. The most important consideration which influenced the attitudes of many Ghanaians to support the NRC was that Acheampong's stated reasons for staging the coup happened to coincide with people's grievances against the Busia government, a situation which renders an inquiry into his personal motives immaterial. Whether the existence of these grievances was sufficient to warrant a change of government and whether the change ought to have come through the barrel of the gun are moot questions which are beyond the scope of this study.

(4.4) Reversing Unpopular Policies of Busia

Another legitimacy engineering strategy of Acheampong concentrated on a systematic reversal of some of Busia's policies which had caused disaffection with sections of the population, a strategy designed to maximise the NRC's popular support.

The first target was the price of imported consumer goods (**essential commodities**). The price of these goods had risen following Busia's 44 percent devaluation of the cedi in December 1971. Two weeks after the coup, Acheampong announced that the prices of **essential commodities** were to revert to their pre-devaluation levels. The government also announced a 23 million cedi subsidy on the prices of **essential commo-**

dities. One effect of the subsidy was that, in some cases, the prices of consumer goods were sold in Ghana cheaper than the prices in the producing countries. For example, one tin of milk and one tin of sardines were sold in Ghana for three and four pesewas respectively cheaper than their prices in England (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.2): 58). These measures were followed by appointment of an eighteen-member committee known as the Essential Commodities Committee (later the Logistics Committee), headed by Colonel Harry Appiah to supervise the purchase and distribution of these goods. The government also immediately granted a 16.7 million cedi import license to the Ghana National Trading Corporation (GNTC) to 'flood the markets' with **essential commodities** (**West Africa** 10 March 1972: 297). The NRC took these measures despite Acheampong's earlier assertion that the country was living beyond its means and that too much scarce foreign exchange was spent by Busia on the importation of consumer goods (Acheampong 1973 (vol.1) : 14).

The NRC's policy on **essential commodities** was not motivated by strictly economic considerations. Acheampong acknowledged this when he stated that 'this situation will not make much economic sense' (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1):58). Rather, the policy was intended to achieve support for the government, as Acheampong himself confirmed: 'we have taken this measure because the NRC government is sensitive to the suffering and the plight of the average Ghanaians and is determined to do all in its power to alleviate their suffering' (Acheampong 1973(a): 15-16). In so doing, the NRC failed to balance economic and political realism, a failure, that later became one of the causes of the decline in the government's support. Nevertheless, Acheampong's **essential commodities** strategy showed his understanding of Ghanaian politics. As we have seen

above, the provision of consumer goods is the populist criteria used to evaluate the legitimacy of governments in Ghana. Acheampong was doing no more than responding to this reality.

Shortly after the coup, Acheampong also indicated that 'the devaluation of the cedi will be looked into by experts to be appointed later' (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1): 3). Three weeks later Acheampong announced that the NRC had decided to nullify in part Busia's devaluation. Accordingly, the cedi was re-valued. The extent of Busia's devaluation was reduced from 44 per cent to 26 per cent in terms of the US dollar (**Legon Observer** 11 February 1972; Acheampong 1973 (vol.1):20-28). The policy according to Acheampong, was 'meant to demonstrate our understanding of the human problems that face all of us' and to show the NRC's 'firm belief that through the easing of the cost of living problem, the atmosphere will be cleared for the creation of new enthusiasm' (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1): 21).

Acheampong also took steps to restore the "amenities" Busia denied the various groups in the country. For example, the **Civil Service Disciplinary Code Regulations** enacted by Busia was abolished; the rents of public servants living in government houses (which had been increased by Busia from $7\frac{1}{2}$ to 15 percent of their salaries) were reduced; the car maintenance allowances to public servants, abolished by Busia, were restored; the National Developent Levy introduced by Busia was suspended; the working hours of public servants which Busia had changed from 7.30 am to 3 pm from Monday to Fridays and a half-day on Saturday were reversed to 8 am to 12.30 pm, 1.30 pm to 5 pm. Saturday work was abolished. According to the NRC, Busia's system was inconvenient to

workers, a waste of man hours and a drain on productivity (**West Africa** 3 March 1972: 262). Other measures Acheampong announced included the following: the formula for calculation of retirement benefits for public servants was to be improved; victims of Busia's Apollo 568 were to be reinstated; salary increases to public servants, which Busia withheld, were to be granted; the Students Loan Scheme introduced by Busia under which university students were granted loans by the government to finance their studies, to be repaid by instalments after their graduation, was abolished; and the **Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act** (1971) passed by the Busia government to dissolve the TUC was repealed, and the Labour Movement restored to its pre-1971 status (cf Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1): 2f; **West Africa** 31 March 1972: 402; **West Africa** 20 October 1972: 1323).

Acheampong did not hide the NRC's legitimation intentions behind these measures. He reminded the beneficiaries of his 'magnanimity' and of their obligation to support the government in return. Despite the economic problems facing the country, the NRC had nevertheless

> taken steps to restore to the Civil Service the number of amenities taken away by the Busia administration. We removed the atrocious Civil Service Disciplinary Code. We have restored your maintenance allowance and reduced the rent for those living in government houses. We have halted the National Development Levy. It is our firm belief that these measures should raise the morale of all public servants, of all workers and give you the incentive to fight the war with all your might and all your main. It is now my duty to demand from you, from each and everyone of you, the highest possible standards of performance and personal conduct (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1): 34).

As an extension of the 'amenities restoration' strategy, Acheampong spoke to various groups and organisations, especially those specially antagonised by Busia. His handling of the students was a classic example of this strategy. The National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS),

as we have seen above, came into conflict with the Busia administration over the issue of declaration of assets. In June 1972 Acheampong invited the representatives of student organisaitons to Parliament House and addressed them. The address, which illustrated Acheampong's skills in political rhetoric, is worth quoting **in extenso.**

> Six months ago, your representatives on the executive of the National Union of Ghana Students were ordered to appear before the bar of this House. They stood right before this mace, surrounded by jeering Members of Parliament. One of you became an object of scorn because he had no tie. At the end of an unprecedented show-trial, you were cautioned and sentenced to be of good behaviour otherwise the powers of the House would be invoked to send you to jail.
>
> I listened to a radio report of the historic event from my office as Commander of the First Infantry Brigade of the Ghana Army[4] and I knew then that the time had come to call off the huge joke that had become of democracy. What had you done to deserve this coercion? As far as anyone could tell me, you had done no worse than have the courage to call upon the leaders of the nation to honour the constitution they themselves had drawn up and pledged to uphold, by declaring their assets. And if mere calling on MP's to honour their pledge was sufficient to earn a student - a young mind being trained in the tradition of critical enquiry - the threat of a jail sentence, then what price freedom and justice?
>
> Today, the World knows that a change has come about in Ghana. I have brought you into this same House, under the same conditions of six months ago, except that this time you occupy the place of honour which your accusers tried to desecrate with their manners...
>
> One of the greatest phenomena of our time is student power. This phenomenon is a positive manifestation of the fact that the modern student has a new awareness of the complex problems facing society and of the truth that whether they like it or not, it is they who will have to find solutions to many of these problems in future. The modern student therefore is anxious to make sure that 'the waters should not be muddled before he plunges in to swim'.
>
> I, for my part, accept the reality of this student power. I acknowledge its force for good, and I charge you: use your student power for good. Use your student power to create the unit of all our people, to bring about the new man of the Revolution, the January 13 Man. We need our power working with the farmers, the industrial and office worker, to promote a

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4. This was unlikely, for Acheampong did not take up his position until November 1971 (cf Bennett 1975: 304). The NUGS - PP confrontation was in May 1971.

> new national consciousness which will inspire us to the victorious tomorrow . (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1): 135-146)

Later, the government allowed the NUGS to stage a mock Parliament in the National Assembly. The Executive of the NUGS took over the Speaker's chair and presided over their meeting (**West Africa** 14 July 1972: 918). Students became prominent in promoting Acheampong's popularity. They championed the government's agricultural policy by voluntarialy harvesting sugar-cane at Komenda and Asutsuare and later digging canals at Dawhenya.

(4.5) Exploiting Political Cleavages in Ghana

Acheampong also engineered his legitimacy by exploiting existing polical cleavages in the country at the time of the coup. This occurred at two levels. The first target was the Nkrumah(ist)-Busia(ist) cleavage discussed in chapter two above. The second, and less important aspect of this strategy, concentrated on prominent members of the opposition during the Busia period.

Like the NLC in 1966 (see Saffu 1973 **passim**), the NRC capitalised on the political cleavage in Ghana to establish support. If the NLC became an obedient tool of the Busia faction (Hettne 1980: 179), the NRC era was a forum for reviving Nkrumahism. It is in this sense that Hettne describes military regimes in Ghana as constituting 'the mechanism whereby one civilian faction took over from another' (Hettne 1980: 182). Pro-Nkrumah tendencies became discernible in Acheampong shortly after he assumed office. Although Acheampong disclaimed several times that his coup was executed for the benefit of any particular political camp (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1): 12), 'it soon became evident that the breaking of Busia's power, in accordance with the logic of

Ghanaian politics implied an orientation towards Nkrumahism' (Hettne 1980: 182). Acheampong's government, in terms of power structure, ideology and rhetoric, at the initial stages was Nkrumahist.

The following points summarise some of the policies of Acheampong which illustrate his move towards the Nkrumahist camp. One week after his coup, Acheampong stated in very ambiguous terms that Nkrumah could return from exile as a private citizen, but that 'if a charge is retained against him he will have to respond before the court as will his former colleagues of the defunct Convention Peoples Party' (quoted in **West Africa** 4 February 1972: 137). Subsequent developments showed that the conditions Acheampong laid on Nkrumah's return were mere rhetoric. Shortly after the coup, Acheampong set up a special committee headed by Major-General Addo to reactivate state farms and the Workers Brigade, two of Nkrumah's projects which were abandoned after the 1966 coup (**West Africa** 18 February 1972: 202). Acheampong followed this up by repealing Busia's legislation prohibiting the revival of the CPP and the display of Nkrumah's photographs. Acheampong also revoked the price on Nkrumah's head which was offered by the NLC in 1966 (**West Africa** 25 February 1972: 235 ; **West Africa** 12 May 1972: 575). Later, when Nkrumah died in Rumania (and after some initial diplomatic obstacles), the NRC brought his body home to be buried. Before Nkrumah's death, the NRC sent a special mission to Bucharest (headed by Nkrumah's son, Francis) to discuss the possibility of Nkrumah returning to Ghana (**West Africa** 12 May 1972: 575).

Acheampong's adoption of pro-Nkrumah policies as a legitimation strategy was probably dictated by three factors. In the first place, these policies may have been the inevitable concomitants of the coup. Having antagonised the Busiaist group, Acheampong was forced to rely on the Nkrumahist **camp** for support. One way to achieve that support was to adopt policies favourable to the latter group. The NRC's pro-Nkrumahist leanings may also have been the result of Acheampong's accurate reading of Ghanaian public opinion before the coup. Sentiment became more favourable to Nkrumah contemporaneously with the decline in the legitimacy of Busia. One example was the NUGS resolution in April 1971, calling for the normalization of diplomatic relations with the Republic of Guinea (where Nkrumah had been living since the 1966 coup) and the granting of an amnesty to Nkrumah.[5] In a related development, the **Spokesman** (an opposition paper) hailed the Student's resolution as opening the way for the 'inevitable confrontation between the reactionary system represented by the government of the Progress Party and the radical policies essential for the welfare of the nation'. It went on:

> There are those who feel that Dr. Nkrumah should be treated as an elder statesman, honoured for his past achievements of which there are many and encouraged to live in retirement at home... The NUGS deserve the admiration of all Ghanaians...for their courage in bringing into the open what most Ghanaians are whispering in their homes (quoted in **West Africa** 30 April 1971: 491).

The third possible explanation of Acheampong's pro-Nkrumah policies was that the coup was instigated by people loyal to Nkrumah, in which case Acheampong could be seen merely as an agent of people from the Nkrumahist **camp**. This view is seemingly supported by the revelation at the 1973 trials of Imoru Ayarna, Kojo Botsio and John Tettegah

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5. The Busia government reacted angrily to the NUGS resolution. Richardson (Ministerial Secretary for Public Relations in the Prime Minister's Office) described the resolution as treacherous and treasonable and added that the government was in a position to contain the treachery of the 'frustrated politicians who want to use students' bodies as underground cells for the manipulation of their baneful contrivance'. On Nkrumah, Richardson added that he was a citizen of Ghana and therefore that he could return at any time but 'the law will have its course as the authorities think fit' (quoted **West Africa** 23 April 1971: 458).

(former prominent CPP activist), on charges of subversion, that the accused persons became disillusioned with Acheampong because they had collaborated in the plot to overthrow Busia but were then left out when it came to the distribution of posts after the coup. They were also allegedly angered because the aims and objectives of the coup (whatever these were) against Busia were being negated by Acheampong (**West Africa** 12 November 1973: 1587). A copy of part of the evidence given by Owusu-Boateng at the trial (which was heard in camera but later smuggled out of the country) further stated that the Soviet Union financed Acheampong's coup to the tune of over 40,000 dollars and that Ayarna was involved in the negotiations to raise the money (**Africa Contemporary Record** 1973/74 :649.

Acheampong's moves towards the Nkrumahist **camp** provided an immediate source of support for the NRC. On the domestic scene, former Nkrumah ideologues were attracted to the NRC. For example, John Tettegah, former Secretary-General of the TUC during the Nkrumah period returned to Ghana from exile in Cairo soon after the coup. He was received by government officials in the VIP lounge at Kotoka International Airport and then escorted to Burma Camp. One month later, it was reported that he had accepted an invitation to head the Greater Accra Regional branch of the Ghana Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of the TUC (**West Africa** 28 April 1972: 534). Internationally, Nkrumah's former foreign allies welcomed the coup and extended support to Acheampong. The Soviet Union congratulated Acheampong and offered assistance to reactivate Soviet projects in Ghana which had been abandoned after the overthrow of Nkrumah (**West Africa** 18 February 1972:202). The Republic of Guinea also extended to Acheampong a message of

'brotherly congratulations and encouragement for the development of an African policy completely anti-imperialist' and assured the NRC of Guinea's support in the struggle against internal and external reactionary forces (**Legon Observer** 28 January 1972: 42).

In addition to exploiting the Nkrumah-Busia cleavage Acheampong utilised the antagonism between Busia and the opposition parties to achieve support. Soon after the coup, K.A. Gbedemah and Joe Appiah, were appointed as roving ambassadors. Both Gbedemah and Appiah had been Nkrumah drop-outs. Gbedemah was for a time the leader of the National Alliance of Liberals (NAL), the main opposition to Busia. Appiah was the leader of the less successful opposition People's Action Party (PAP) and later the Parliamentary Leader of the Opposition following the merger of the opposition parties into the Justice Party. Gbedemah lost his post within a short time for unexplained reasons, but Appiah remained loyal to Acheampong and was instrumental in the emergence of the **Union Government** concept discussed below. Dr. G.K. Agama, who became Parliamentary leader of the NAL after the disqualification of Gbedemah in 1970,[6] was also appointed to the Chairmanship of the Debt Committee set up by the NRC (**West Africa** 4 August 1972: 1030).

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6. Gbedemah was disqualified from being a member of parliament by a decision of the Appeal Court in 1970 on the basis of Article 71 of the 1969 Constitution. The Article disqualified a person from membership of the National Assembly 'who has been adjudged or otherwise declared by a report of a Commission of Inquiry to be incompetent to hold public office, or that while being a public officer he acquired assets unlawfully or defrauded the State or misused or abused his office or wilfully acted in a manner prejudicial to the interest of the State'. According to the Court of Appeal, Gbedemah was disqualified because the Jiagge Assets Commission recorded over-expenditure by him between 1951 and 1960. Observers believed (although without evidence) that the above provision was deliberately inserted into the Constitution to disqualify Gbedemah.

(4.6) Nationalistic and Militant Stance

Acheampong also sought to bolster legitimacy through the adoption of a nationalist and militant stance on domestic and international issues. Acheampong's revolutionary rhetoric and policies immediately after the coup attracted support to his government. In a sense, this strategy was an extension of the move towards Nkrumah noted in the previous section . No sooner had the coup succeeded than were Ghanaians informed by the state-owned media that there was a revolution going on. Acheampong described his coup as a revolution. Thus, he argued: 'we did not merely stage a **coup d'etat** on January 13,... We did not merely replace the personalities of yesterday... We acted in order to bring an authentic, progressive, national revolution in this country' and 'we are embarked upon a Revolution of boundless dimensions - a revolution in our culture and values, a revolution in our concept of the good life, a revolution in the transformation of our economy' (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1): 32). Acheampong's revolutionary rhetoric was reminiscent of Nkrumah. Acheampong's statement that 'the Ghana Armed Forces believe that the principle of One Man One Vote is meaningless unless it is linked up with the principle of One Man One Bread' (Acheampong 1973 (Vol. 1): 29), was a domestic adaptation of Nkrumah's: 'there would be no meaning to the national independence of Ghana unless it was linked with the total liberation of the African continent' (Nkrumah 1970: 136).

Among other rhetorical measures Acheampong announced were the following: the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) was renamed 'GBC-Voice of the Revolution'. This change, according to the NRC, was 'in line with the spirit of the revolution' (quoted in **West Africa** 9 June

1972: 739). The word 'tribe' was also banned from Ghana's vocabulary (**Legon Observer** 7 April 1972: 173). Furthermore, the NRC directed that the 'display of symbols of prosperity and ostentatious living such as the use of sirens and motorcades and flashy cars' by government officials should cease (**West Africa** 18 February 1972: 202).

Perhaps, the most revolutionary step taken by the NRC was the repudiation of some of Ghana's foreign debts, a measure popularly referred to in Ghana as **yentua** (we shall not pay). Three weeks after the coup, Acheampong announced his government's policy on Ghana's debts. The government repudiated all debts whose contracts were vitiated by corruption, fraud and other illegality. The government also denounced all debt rescheduling agreements concluded by the NRC and the Busia administration with Ghana's creditor countries, and set out the conditions which medium-term debts, incurred prior to the overthrow of Nkrumah, should meet before their validity would be accepted. These conditions included proof to the satisfaction of the government that the contracts were valid, not vitiated by fraud or corruption, and meant for projects in Ghana which were technically and economically viable and productive. Finally, the NRC unilaterally rescheduled payment of the remaining medium-term debts whose validity was accepted. All such debts due for payment after February 1972 were to be repaid over a period of twenty-eight years at $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent interest, but only after a ten-year period (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1): 20-28).

The NRC's **yentua** policy, like many others, was a response to public opinion in Ghana both before and immediately after the coup. We have

seen in the last chapter that, before Busia was overthrown, there was some dissatisfaction with his debt policy. Three days after the coup, the government-owned **Daily Graphic** called on the NRC to 're-examine our external debts and take the bold step of repudiating the dubious and unfair ones' (**Daily Graphic** 15 January 1972). The independent newspaper, the **Echo**, launched a similar campaign when it called on the NRC 'to be bold to tell the world in no uncertain terms, that Ghana, in her present state, cannot pay all the debts she owes' (**Echo** 16 January 1972). It is possible that these organs were simply being used by the government to create the impression of a popular campaign over the debt question and hence to make bargaining with the foreigners easier.

Although it was debatable whether the NRC's decision to repudiate Ghana's foreign debts was a far-sighted economic and diplomatic strategy, in domestic politics the policy initially paid off. It boosted the legitimacy of the regime's accession to power with certain groups in Ghana. Indeed, 'all the revolutionary forces, fresh, youthful and dynamic' supported Acheampong (Austin 1972: 358). And as Botchwey argues, 'the government's militant policy...was immensely popular with all democratic forces in the country. From all indications, it looked as if the new regime was poised to lead these forces in an intensified struggle to consummate the nation's independence' (Botchwey 1981: 22). The Ghanaian press unanimously supported the government's policy and university students demonstrated in support of the NRC. The Legon Society on National Affairs, which had campaigned for the **yentua** policy noted through its official organ thus: 'we of the **Legon Observer** are happy to note that the stand taken by the present government generally coincides with what we had been advocating; this action was long overdue,

and we congratulate the government for having taken this initial step' (**Legon Observer** 11 February 1972: 45).

Acheampong also adopted a militant foreign policy, again reminiscent of Nkrumah; Acheampong's policy being referred to in Ghana as Nkrumahism without Nkrumah. The NRC made a noticeable move to the East. Ghana gave immediate recognition to the People's Republic of China. According to Acheampong, 'it is impossible to be concerned about world peace without according to China her rightful role in international relations' (quoted in **West Africa** 10 March 1972: 299). The government also sent delegations to Eastern European countries to discuss the resumption of commercial links which were suspended following the overthrow of Nkrumah in 1966 (**Africa Contemporary Record** 1972/73: 607).

On the African front, Acheampong consolidated relations with a number of Nkrumah's former allies. Diplomatic relations were re-established with Guinea (**West Africa** 28 April 1972: 534). Acheampong also pledged to promote a 'vigorous and dynamic African policy' geared towards the fostering of close relations with all African states and a commitment to the African liberation struggle (Acheampong 1973(vol.1:8). Acheampong denounced Busia's 'dialogue' policy and the Aliens Compliance Order. But because of the popularity of the latter within business circles in Ghana, Acheampong was careful not to reverse it. In a radio and television broadcast in May 1972 on the occasion of Africa Liberation Day, Acheampong called for the formation of an African Youth Command and renewed his pledge to the African Liberation Struggle: 'we stand ready to give active and relentless support to the liberation struggle in all

its forms. We shall support all the efforts of the Organisation of African Unity designed to intensify the struggle of our still colonized brothers' (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1): 126). Later, the NRC donated 380,000 dollars (US) to the African Liberation Committee (**West Africa** 22 January 1973: 99).

Like the **yentua** policy, Acheampong's radical foreign policy was very popular. Many Ghanaians felt they were regaining the prestige enjoyed during the Nkrumah regime, and which Busia was accused of having destroyed through his policy of dialogue with South Africa. Acheampong's foreign policy also received support, especially within OAU and Eastern European circles. No country withdrew its representation from Accra because of the coup. The immediate international repercussions of the **yentua** policy were cushioned by Acheampong's assurance that his government was prepared to go to arbitration in respect of all disputes arising from the repudiation of the foreign debts, and to submit to the jurisdiction of the International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1): 25). Accra once more became a centre for international conferences. Ghana offered to host the OAU Liberation Committee meeting and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa Ministerial Conferences (**West Africa** 6 November 1972: 1508). The Acheampong government's acceptance by the OAU community was summed up by General Aferi, the first Commissioner for Foreign Affairs during the 9th Summit of the OAU in Rabat (Morocco) in this way: 'Africa is now very happy with Ghana. The handshakes and back-patting all round show that the old spirit of Ghana is with us again...' (**West Africa** 7 July 1972: 853). Perhaps, the Francophone African countries (especially the Ivory Coast) were not happy with Acheampong because of Busia's

exceptionally cordial ties with them. Aferi's statement suggests within the OAU a unanimity whose existence in fact was (and still is) doubtful.

(4.7) Conclusion

By the middle of 1972, Acheampong had succeeded in establishing his legitimacy, mainly through the policies and measures outline above. The extent of the NRC's popularity and support among Ghanaians was revealed in public reaction to an alleged plot in July 1972 by 'some disgruntled businessmen and officials of the disbanded Progress Party, acting on the instruction of Busia, to subvert the NRC by infiltrating the armed forces for support' (Ghana Information Service Release, quoted in **Legon Observer** 28 July 1972: 361). The National House of Chiefs from the various regions condemned the plot. More convincing evidence of popular feelings was the demonstrations in Accra and other regional capitals in support of the NRC (**Legon Observer** 28 July 1972: 363).

The alleged plot provided a further opportunity for the NRC to strengthen its rule. A **Subversion Decree** (NRC Decree 90) was issued and made retroactive to Janaury 13, 1972. Among other things, it became an offence punishable by death to attempt to kill any member of the NRC 'with a view to securing the overthrow of the Government or with intent to coerce any other citizen of Ghana into opposing the National Redemption Council or otherwise into withdrawing or withholding his support for the National Redemption Council'. The **Subversionn Decree** also covered acts purely economic in nature. These included stealing and smuggling of gold, diamonds, cocoa or underground copper cables, unlawful dealing with foreign exchange, procurement of import licenses

through bribes, and organizing a strike. Presumably, the extension of the **Subversion Decree** to cover these offences was part of the NRC's 'war' on the economy.

News of the coup plot also coincided with the banning of the **Echo** and the **Pioneer.** A decree made it an offence not only to publish these papers but also to be in possession of copies. The two papers had Busia connections. The **Pioneer** (formerly **Ashanti Pioneer**) was banned by Nkrumah, and then revived by the NLC. The **Echo** was set up after the 1966 coup with B.J. da Rocha, General Secretary of the PP as one of its directors (cf **West Africa** 4 August 1972: 1030). The NRC's action on the two papers was hailed,especially within media circles. According to the **Daily Graphic,** the ban on the two papers was not 'a question of trampling on the freedom of speech but a question of silencing irresponsible, reactionary, vicious and disruptive criticism which, by all indications, was aimed at turning the revolution upside down', and 'the end result is that the **Echo** and the **Pioneer** have been silenced and no tears will be shed for them' (quoted in **West Africa** 4 August 1972: 1030-31). For the first time the NRC published an Executive Instrument authorizing the arrest and detention of Busia and offered to pay twenty thousand pounds sterling to any one who would abduct him to Ghana (**Legon Observer** 8 September 1972: 435).

The NRC's support was further enhanced after the trial of the subversionists. Eight of the nine accused persons, including Busia's Director of the Special Branch, George Ofosu-Amaah and his Press Secretary, Emil Adzima were found guilty and sentenced to death by firing

squad. Acheampong commuted the sentences to life imprisonment and was hailed. According to the **Legon Observer**, the government's action reflected 'mature judgment and self-confidence on the part of the NRC', which proved 'that military government is neither unduly vindictive nor bloodthirsty'. Rather, 'the sigh of relief and the satisfaction that greeted the announcement of the clemency are proof sufficient that the government correctly gauged the public mood... and is evidence of political realism which cannot but enhance the standing of the government, and contribute towards national reconciliation and unity' (**Legon Observer** 29 December 1972: 609). Undoubtedly, Acheampong thought it was politically expedient to grant clemency to the subversionists in order to throw a sop to current supporters but his potential critics, the intellectual/academic establishment. It cost Acheampong nothing to do this, but gained him much.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CRISIS IN ACHEAMPONG'S LEGITIMACY

> Many so-called revolutions have been mere nine-day wonders. Military intervention can be justified only if it opens the way to a genuine revolution that brings real benefits to the people, giving a new sense of meaning and purpose to their lives. Experience shows that the few successful revolutions were achieved by men of purpose and vision who captured the imagination of their peoples with organising ideas to guide their actions and help bring about fundamental changes in their lives (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1): 34).

> When a ... government is on its wave of popularity, those who advise such a government to stay in power in response to public opinion, will discover in the end that public opinion is volatile; public opinion does not flow like a river. It comes in or goes out, like a tide, so that it is difficult, after any particular wave, to know which way it is going (Armah 1974: 180).

(5.1) Introduction

The maintenance of the NRC's legitimacy depended upon the ability of Acheampong and his government to fulfil the expectations created in 1972. In this respect, the economic situation was particularly important. Busia's alleged 'mismanagement' of the Ghanaian economy was one of Acheampong's strongest justifications for the 1972 coup. Acheampong had, by implication, established the criterion by which his government's efficiency and legitimacy would be measured. The economic performance of the Acheampong government was also important to sustain its support. The instrumentalist approach Ghanaians adopt towards politics has been noted above. The economy had to be healthy for Acheampong to generate sufficient economic surplus to provide the universally-desired **essential commodities**. Acheampong's ability to retain his legitimacy also depended on a number of other factors. These included his ability to maintain

and provide the 'amenities' he restored to various groups in the country after his coup (the achievement of which also depended on the state of the economy); his capacity to manipulate the support of the Nkrumah **camp** and, if possible, to placate the Busia **camp**, and his competence in maintaining the 'revolutionary' spirit generated by his radical policies, especially **yentua**, which were immensly popular. In sum, the perpetuation of the legitimacy of Acheampong's government depended, to a large degree, on the extent to which the performance of the NRC was an improvement on the record of the Busia government.

Acheampong effectively maintained the popularity of his government for slightly over one year. Thereafter, he faced a host of problems which threatened to undermine the legitimacy of his government. This chapter delineates and analyses the major factors which led to the erosion of the Acheampong government's legitimacy. The factors to be examined include the following: economic decline; rumours of corruption (**kalabule**) within the government; the collapse of Acheamong's 'revolution'; Acheampong's method of achieving 'revolutonary discipline', and the conflict over participation.

(5.2.0) The Economy

The most important factor which contributed to the erosion of the legitimacy of the Acheampong regime was the decline of the economy. Acheampong's misfortunes like Busia's started with the deterioration of the economy. The NRC came to power in 1972 following a critical balance of payments crisis. On assuming office, Acheampong immediately initiated economic policies aimed at correcting the imbalances in the economy. Firstly, the NRC revalued the cedi by reducing the extent of Busia's

devaluation from 44 to 26 per cent in terms of the U.S. dollar. Secondly, the government halted Busia's liberalization of imports policy and imposed strict administrative controls on import licensing. In the 1972 fiscal year, the level of imports was fixed at 60 per cent below the 1971 level (IBRD 1975: 1). The government's restrictive policy was partly cushioned by an enhanced export incentives scheme. Between 1972 and 1973, a 30 per cent export bonus was granted by the government on all export products, except cocoa, timber and minerals - Ghana's traditional export products. The government also provided bonded warehouses for exporters and approved tax waivers on some export goods (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1972-74: 30). The government's policy was intended to broaden Ghana's export base with the view to increasing export earnings. The policy also served a political purpose. It minimised the business community's dissatisfaction with the government's import strategy. The third aspect of the NRC's economic policy was the unilateral repudiation of some of Ghana's external debts. As a corollary to this measure the government discontinued Busia's 180-day credit policy and resorted to sight payments for Ghana's imports. This was a necessity arising from the response of Ghana's creditors to the **yentua** policy. As a result of this policy, Western countries stopped virtually all credits and foreign assistance to Ghana (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1972-74: 2). For exmaple, the British Export Credits Guarantee Department (ECGD) withdrew its cover for British exports to Ghana (**West Africa** 10 March 1972: 289).

The most important economic policy pursued by Acheampong was based on the theme of Self-Reliance. Acheampong described this policy as involving 'cutting down the importation of things that are not totally necessary, in order to achieve self-reliance, the production of food to

feed our growing population, and raw materials for increased production'. (quoted in **West Africa** 19 May 1972: 609). The primary focus of the Self-Reliance policy was emphasis on agricultural production; consequently, the NRC launched an Operation Feed Yourself (OFY) programme in 1972. This programme was aimed at expanding domestic food production; the production of raw materials for domestic industrial use; and the diversification of and increase in exports. The primacy the NRC accorded to agriculture was shown in the agricultural budget for 1972/73. Forty two per cent of the estimated expenditure was allocated to the agricultural sector of the economy (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1972-74: 2). The OFY programme was supplemented by the Operation Feed Your Industry in May 1975. The latter programme, which was an extension of OFY, was geared towards industrial self-reliance, i.e., the local production of raw materials for Ghana's industries.

A further economic policy promoted by the NRC concentrated, in Bevanite phraseology, on capturing the commanding heights of the economy. This policy involved enhanced state and indigenous participation in the economy. In January 1973, Acheampong stated: 'the economy must be drastically restructured, moving the commanding heights of the economy from foreign monopoly control to Ghanaian control' (**West Africa** 22 January 1973: 97). The details of the policy were set out in two new decrees. In April 1975, the government passed a new Investment Code which reiterated its commitment to 'national development by self-reliance' and the capturing of 'the commanding heights of the economy'. The code decreed state acquisition of majority shareholdings in the mining and timber industries, indigenous majority shareholdings in a wide-range of businesses and complete indigenous take-over of others. These measures

were supplemented by the **Ghanaian Enterprises Development Decree** under which the government set up a commission to expedite the transfer of control of the economy to Ghanaians and to provide technical and financial assistance to Ghanaian business people and the government. This policy was a further development of a Progress Party (PP) government programme.

(5.2.1) The Performance of The Economy Under Acheampong

The last section outlined the major economic policies Acheampong pursued. This section summarises the essential characteristics of the economy under Acheampong, with the view to showing how developments in the economy affected the legitimacy of Acheampong and his government. The performance of the economy under Acheampong may be divided into two periods - an initial 'honeymoon' period between 1972 and 1973, followed by a period of economic deterioration from 1974.

(5.2.1.1) The 'Honeymoon' Period

From an economic point of view, the first two years of Acheampong's rule were successful. During this period the external economy improved. The current account which was in deficit by 202.4 million cedis in the 1971/72 fiscal year, recorded a surplus of 143.4 million cedis in 1972/73 and another surplus of 146.9 million cedis in 1973/74 (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1972-74: 77-96). The domestic economy during this period was less successful than the external economy (cf **Ghana Economic Survey** 1972-74: 77-96). However, the deficiencies in the internal economy were adequately compensated for by the improvements in the external account.

The favourable balance of payments recorded during the first two years of Acheampong's rule were due more to luck than to the results of the government's economic policies. Three factors provided the basis for a 'honeymoon' period. The first was the rise in world prices of cocoa (Ghana's main export commodity, which accounted for over 60 per cent of total earnings), gold and timber during this period. For example, the spot price of Ghana's cocoa in the London Market rose from 579 cedis per ton in 1971 to 902 cedis in 1972 and 1,695 cedis in 1973 (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1972-74: 83). The total export earnings from cocoa increased from 290.2 million cedis in 1971 to 305.3 million cedis in 1972 and 362.7 million cedis in 1973 (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1972-74: 84). In 1971 gold accounted for 29.0 million cedis of the Gross National Product. This increased to 49.6 million cedis in 1972 and 80.2 million cedis in 1973 (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1972-74:100). The foreign exchange contribution from timber exports in 1973 also amounted to 130.31 million cedis, an increase of about 105.3 per cent over 1971 figures (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1972-74: 93). However, these increases were very minimal in real terms, given that the cedi had been devalued by 26 per cent as a result of the NRC's revaluation and that the world inflational rate was on average about 8 to 10 per cent (**United Nations Statistical Year Book 1972-74**).

The second reason for the improved balance of payments between 1972 and 1973 may be attributed to the government's restrictive imports policy noted above. For example, in 1972 imports were reduced by about 192 million dollars in absolute terms. This represented a cash reduction of about 42 per cent over the previous year's figures (IBRD 1975:2).

The third reason for the improvement related to the suspension of service payments under the **yentua** policy on most medium-term debts in-

curred by previous governents (cf **Ghana Economic Survey** 1972-74: 29).

Acheampong was able to point to a record of successful economic performance, an achievement that had escaped the previous civilian and military regimes, and recalled the pledge he made in January 1972 that 'we shall spare no effort and no sacrifice will be too great for us in this gigantic task of winning a great economic war' (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.2): 9). In December 1972, Acheampong asserted: 'One of the important reasons for the 13th Janaury revolution was to arrest the rapidly declining economic situation. The facts show that the country's economic recovery in these few months since the National Redemption Council took over the administration of the country has been phenomenal' (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.2) : 17). In January 1973, Acheampong reiterated: 'from the worst balance of payments crisis in this nation's history, the January 13 Revolution has been able to guide Ghana ... to its greatest balance of trade surplus since the palmy days of independence' (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1:55). The NRC's economic success during this period also boosted the confidence of Acheampong. Thus, he stated: 'I am...optimistic about the future... The favourable trade surplus that we have made is an indication that we shall succeed if we maintain our present policies' (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.2): 3).

Probably encouraged by the economic achievements of its first year in office, the NRC issued a Charter (named the Charter of Redemption) in 1973 which reiterated its economic and political goals - 'a complete and systematic transformation of our peoples into a Self-Reliant Nation, unique in its economic, social, cultural, political, technological and all-round development, a united modern nation with a spirit of its own'

(Acheampong 1973 (Vol.2):36). The nineteen-page document pointed to seven goals of action: 'One Nation, One People, One Destiny'; 'Total Manpower Development and Deployment'; 'Revolutionary Discipline'; 'Self-Reliance'; 'Service to the People'; 'Patriotism and International Brotherhood'; 'Mobilization of Spiritual, Intellectual and Will Power' (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.2): 37-43).

More importantly, the economic success secured by Acheampong during his first two years in office enhanced the legitimacy of the NRC. The following observation on the NRC's first year's achievements was typical: 'It was certainly a remarkable development when inside ten short months the NRC government was able to secure a foreign trade surplus much in excess of a hundred million cedis. I doubt very much if any party-based civilian government could have brought this about. At least any foreign trade position remotely resembling this eluded the past civilian government' (Wiredu 1973: 26). Indeed, during the 'honeymoon' period, Acheampong succeeded in winning the 'support of critical social groups: urban workers, students, peasants, the chiefly class, and the petty bourgeoisie located in commerce and in the bureaucracy' (Hansen and Collins 1980: 7). Because the economy improved, most of the 'amenities' which Acheampong restored in 1972 were maintained. '**Essential commodities** also 'flowed'. The NRC was also able to finance a number of development projects in the country. In March 1972, the government launched a 'Low Cost' Housing scheme to provide houses for low-income workers. By May 1973, over two thousand such houses were reported to have been built throughout the country (**Ghana Economic Review** 1973-75: 22). In March 1973, the government established a Bank for Housing and Construction to provide capital for private housing and

industry. The educational budget was also increased from 6.9 million cedis in 1972/73 to 9 million cedis in 1973/74 (**Ghana Economic Review** 1973-75: 22).

The 'honeymoon' period was not without its problems. By the end of 1973, the main grievances of Ghanaians against the NRC related to occasional shortages of **essential commodities**, spare parts and petrol and high food prices. Reviewing the year 1973, the **Legon Observer** noted: 'among the more distressing features of life in Ghana during the year which is now ending...has been the inconvenience caused by the periodic but continual shortages of certain consumer items. Leaving aside the current colossal business about petrol, Ghanaians have in the last twelve months experienced difficulty in obtaining in sufficient quantity, if at all, such diverse items as sugar, sardines, corned beef, rice, meat , cooking oil, vehicle tyres, motor parts, cement, cutlasses, electric bulbs, toilet soap, detergents and toilet rolls...' (**Legon Observer** 14 December 1973: 285). Ghanaians also 'had to cope with the highest food stuff prices within many people's memory' (**Legon Observer** 28 December 1973: 610). In January 1973, the government had to fly plane-loads of **essential commodities** to Kumasi to avert shortages in the Ashanti Region (**Legon Observer** 26 Janaury 1973: 47). These shortages were in fact, the first setback to the legitimacy of the Acheampong regime.

A more significant source of grievance against the NRC was the withdrawal in 1973 of subsidies the government gave for some of the **essential commodities** in 1972 as part of Acheampong's legitimation strategy. This measure was initially unpopular (as the government

anticipated), and led to widespread cynicism. Many people questioned the moral justification of the government's action, especially since the high prices of **essential commodities** were among Acheampong's reasons for overthrowing the Busia regime in 1972. The following quotation is an accurate summary of that cynicism:

> But, verily, these contradictions were not new in the land for it had been said to them of old that because of uncontrollable world market forces which the then reigning chieftains [reference to Busia] did not understand, the subjects had to pay more for certain commodities. As could be expected the subjects were not amused and they started to murmur. Then Salvation arrived: a group of special citizens took it upon themselves to redeem the populace from the shackles of diminishing purchasing power in the face of rising prices. They strode up and down the land and proclaimed Father Christmas the most astute politician the world had seen: they displayed largesse and restored to the populace what the displaced chieftains had wrenched from them, and everybody was happy. Two summers did not run their course before the new masters, the proconsuls, came to the painful conclusion that Father Christmas was after all not the best politician, or even an average one. The bonuses that had been handed out in the right hand were gradually but studiedly and consistently withdrawn with the left to such a point that it became an interesting national debate to find out whether the citizens were regressing or at best stagnating (**Santrokofi** : in **Legon Observer** 14 December 1973: 607).

The government used rhetoric to justify the shortages and withdrawal of subsidies. One strategy the NRC used to fob off the shortages of **essential commodities** was to blame the Busia government. Initially, the NRC argued that the shortages were the ramifications of Busia's economic policies. Thus Acheampong stated: 'When the Armed Forces took over the reins of Government, we noticed that most firms and traders had not in fact placed any orders for goods because of the devaluation. In fact, they could not even clear their goods at the harbours until we revalued the Cedi. There was bound therefore to be some shortages' (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1):149). Later, the government shifted the blame from

Busia to hoarders, profiteers, smugglers, 'disgruntled politicians' and the imperialist countries who were conspiring to discredit the NRC by refusing to sell **essential commodities** to Ghana in retaliation to the government's progressive **yentua** policy (cf Acheampong 1973 (Vol.2): 58; **Legon Observer** 1 Janaury 1973: 263).

Another strategy the NRC used to explain the shortages of consumer goods between 1972 and 1973 was to play on the revolutionary and anti-imperialist sentiments that its radical policies and rhetoric had capitalised upon among Ghanaians. The government argued that the label 'essential' on these commodities was perpetuating a neo-colonial economic relationship with the producers of the commodities. In October 1972, the NRC changed the term **essential commodities** to **foreign food and commodities** and also redesignated the **Essential Commodities** Committee as the Logistics Committee. According to a government statement: 'most of these goods which are considered in Ghana as essential are looked upon as luxuries even in the very countries in which they are produced. They cannot therefore be essential commodities in Ghana, which is blessed with a variety of food items which have more nutrient value than these foreign foods' (**West Africa** 23 October 1972: 1437).

The NRC employed two arguments to excuse the withdrawal of subsidies on **essential commodities**. Firstly, the government justified the withdrawal because of the unpatriotic activities of hoarders, profiteers and smugglers (often referred to by the government as 'enemies of the revolution'), and argued that the reversion of the subsidy policy was in the ultimate interest of consumers. For example, according to Major Felli (then Commissioner for Trade and Tourism), although the sub-

sidies were 'introduced in the interest of the common people of this country...we have observed with regret that as a result of greed and unscrupulous trade practices of some of our countrymen, the consumers, that is you and I, are not benefiting from the subsidy. In fact, as a result of artificial shortages created through hoarding, smuggling and other trade malpractices, we are now paying more for the subsidised goods than we would have paid, if there were no subsidy on them. This means the moneys which the Government is paying as subsidies find their way into the pockets of selfish individuals and middlemen, without any benefits to the people. The Government will fail in its duty if it should allow this unhealthy situation to continue to exist (Ghana 1973 : 36). Felli also assured Ghanaians that even without the subsidies, prices of **essential commodities** in Ghana were still cheaper than in neighbouring African countries (Ghana 1973 :37).

Secondly, the NRC argued that the subsidies were withdrawn because the government needed the money for rural development projects. Ironically, this argument was similar to that Busia used to explain his austerity policies in 1971. Announcing the decision to withdraw the subsidies, Major Felli stated:

> But, considering the development needs of this country, and in line with Government's policy of self-reliance, it is the view of the NRC that the removal of the subsidy is long overdue .....We have alternative and more rewarding uses to which our expenditure on subsidy can be put which will be of lasting benefit to the people of this country as a whole. We need to develop our countryside, to improve the standard of living of our farmers and the rural folk. We need to provide houses for our workers in the urban areas. The basic infrastructure of our economy such as roads, health and water facilities need to be improved and extended to all the people. Another serious problem which we have to solve is unemployment. Many

> of our brothers and sisters are unemployed and are finding it difficult even to get their daily bread. The money which we are spending to subsidise mainly foreign foods can be profitably used on development projects which can create jobs for our less fortunate brothers who are still unemployed.
>
> You will appreciate that facilities such as hospitals, better roads, clean drinking water will be for the benefit of all. These cannot be smuggled away or hoarded. But the subsidy as we see it now is only benefiting a handful of selfish people. The Government considers this unaccpetable. We consider that the subsidy has outlived its purpose. It is also at variance with the spirit of the Revaluation (**sic**) and our policy of Self-Reliance....
>
> ....It is our moral duty as a people, to lay a firm foundation for the prosperity of this country, not only for ourselves, but also for our children and posterity. It will therefore be indefensible if our children should grow up to realise that the money which we could have used to develop the country was used to promote mass consumption of foreign foods which to most of us are of doubtful value (Ghana 1973 35 - 39)

Apart from a few critics (like **Santrokofi** quoted above), there was no evidence that the grievances arising from the shortages of commodities and the withdrawal of subsidies on **essential commodities per se** posed any serious threat to the legitimacy of the Acheampong government. The success of the government's rhetoric was due mainly to the high level of legitimacy it had achieved during its first year in office.

(5.2.1.2) The Period of Deterioration

The period from the beginning of 1974 witnessed the advent of a serious crisis in the legitimacy of Acheampong and his government. The favourable balance of payments position of 1972 and 1973 had proved short-lived. By 1974, the economy had begun to show signs of weakness. Consequently, public disaffection with the Acheampong regime emerged. This coincided with discontent within the military, resulting in a 'palace' coup in October 1975, as a result of which the NRC became the

Supreme Military Council (SMC). Opposition to the policies of the Acheampong administration reached a climax between 1976 and 1978 when students and professionals demanded the resignation of Acheampong. In this section, the economy from 1974 to 1978 is reviewed briefly.

In the 1974/75 fiscal year, the balance of payments account recorded a deficit of 102.8 million cedis, in contrast to previous surpluses of 143.4 million cedis in 1972/73 and 146.9 million cedis in 1973/74 (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1972-74: 31-50). Two reasons have been given to explain this development. The first was the international recession following the world-wide oil crisis in 1973. According to the **Ghana Economic Survey**, 'during 1974, the country was...caught up in oil crisis. The oil crisis eroded substantially the benefits derived from the export earnings...In the wake of the oil crisis, the government's financial position was not comfortable' (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1972-74: 2). The real significance of the 1974 oil crisis was not the rise in the oil price as such (though the oil companies ensured that they passed on price rises greater than the OPEC increase), but the repercussions it had on the entire economy. The significance was that the higher energy prices fed through into industry and fuelled the high inflation rates and economic stagnation of the 1970s. The difficulty for Ghana was that it could not pass on part of its higher inflation rates, as could the advanced capitalist countries through their trade in manufactures and capital equipment.

The balance of payments deficit in 1974/75 has also been attributed to the government's loose administration of imports after 1973. By the beginning of 1974, the government started to loosen the restrictive import policies pursued between 1972 and 1973. For example the import

bill for the first four months of 1974 rose by as much as 106 per cent over the corresponding period for 1973. In contrast, export earnings for the same period increased by only 35 per cent (**Africa Contemporary Record** 1974/75: 651).

In addition to the balance of payments crisis in 1974, shortages of **essential commodities** and the high prices for food which were noted above persisted. The consumer price index for locally produced food (1963 = 100) rose from 226.7 in 1972 and 266.4 in 1973 to 315.3 in 1974 (Central Bureau of Statistics, Accra 1975).

The econmic crisis continued through subsequent years. In 1975 and 1976, the economic situation of Ghana was described as 'critical' (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1975-76: 1). Although the balance of payments achieved a surplus of 58.5 million cedis in 1975/76 (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1975-76: 1), this was not sufficient to offset the previous year's deficit. The crisis was further deepened in 1976 and 1977. The balance of payments for this period was again in deficit, amounting to 39.4 million cedis (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1975-76: 1). Shortage of consumer goods continued. The worsening economic situation was fuelled by the failure of the government's agricultural programme. Despite the primacy the government had accorded to agriculture, and the huge sums of money invested in that sector, food was scarce and expensive. As the Central Bureau of Statistics noted: 'the consequent shortages of agricultural commodities, particularly local food, coupled with the soaring prices of imported crude oil aggravated the economic situation' (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1975-76: 1).

In 1977 and 1978, the Central Bureau of Statistics reported that 'the country experienced an economic crisis of unprecedented magnitude' (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1977-79: 1-2). The Bureau listed the features of the economy as an 'enormous' increase in money supply; 'a wave of unchecked inflation' rampant shortages of food; a 'critical foreign exchange situation'; and an 'acute shortage of imported raw materials and essential parts' (**Ghana Economic Survey** 1977-79: 1-2). In 1977, Ghana's inflation rate was officially stated as above 100 per cent and was described by the World Bank as the second highest in the World (IBRD 1979: 10). The food supply situation also worsened. By 1977, there were reports that there was famine in the North, which the government refused to acknowledge (Harrel-Bond 1978: 9). In the face of this economic crisis, the government increasingly resorted to deficit financing. The budget deficit for 1977/78 amounted to about two billion cedis, almost equal to the total expenditure for the previous year (IBRD 1979: 1). As we shall see below, this deterioration in the economy after 1973, ultimately destroyed Acheampong's legitimacy. Government policies aimed at halting this economic decline had the tendency of further eroding the support of the Acheampong regime.

As a result of the economic crisis, the government could no longer finance some of the 'amenities' it had restored in 1972. For example, in June 1974, the NRC withdrew subsidies on the remaining consumer goods which had not been affected in 1973. Announcing the decision, Acheampong stated: 'We are prepared to be judged by the ultimate well-being of the Ghanaian rather than the amount of sardines and corned beef we are able to subsidise' (quoted in **West Africa** 24 June 1974: 773). The government also re-introduced Busia's Students' Loans Scheme which it

had abolished in 1972.

In response to the economic crisis, the government introduced expenditure restrictions in its 1975 budget. The budget increased taxes on all petroleum products, books, tobacco products, drinks and some consumer goods. More taxes were also levied on some categories of professionals - lawyers, doctors, architects and surveyors. In his budget statement, Acheampong warned that Ghanaians must begin to face economic realities, for, 'the bottom has fallen off the price cushion and we must of necessity rearrange our priorities and husband our resources to at least maintain...the current level of economic activity' (quoted in **West Africa** 11 August 1975: 938). To redress the shortages of food and **essential commodities**, the government initiated new policies, which alienated it further from sections of the population. By a decree in 1976, the government banned **market women** and other petty-traders from selling **essential commodities.** Only government-designated supermarkets could deal in these commodities. It became an offence for anyone to purchase **essential commodities** from unauthorised traders. The government also abolished the sale of food through the Ghana Food Production Corporation. Kiosks were set up by the government in the urban centres to sell food direct to the workers. At the same time, the government resorted to increased use of military personnel to enforce price controls and to detect hoarders.

In order to minimise pressure on the use of foreign exchange and to reduce the black-market, the government introduced the Special Unnumbered License (SUL) in 1976. Under this scheme, individual importers were permitted to use their own foreign exchange to import some selected

goods, including trucks, agricultural machinery, food, spare parts and drugs. The SUL scheme did not solve the problem it was intended to resolve. Various commodities and foods outside those stipulated entered Ghana. The scheme also worsened the black-market situation and led to higher inflation (IBRD 1979: 29). The SUL was based on the assumption that some Ghanaians had hard currency abroad. In practice, Ghanaian importers had to buy foreign exchange at the local black-market to order their goods. This meant that goods brought into the country under SUL were sold at the black-market rates of the dollar, the pound sterling or the CFA franc (IBRD 1979: 29).

The government mis-calculated the micro-economics of the SUL policy. Even assuming that Ghanaian importers had foreign currency abroad, it would have been economically irrational not to buy foreign exchange at the black market. For example, a trader using hard currency overseas to buy goods for import, would, by selling them in Ghana, merely be converting hard currency into grossly over-valued cedis. It was far more sensible to buy hard currency on the black-market, converting cedis into more cedis at a profitable margin and retaining hard currency overseas. The operation of SUL-in practice a Ghanaian variant of Gresham's law - illustrates some of the problems of economic policy-making in Ghana. By simply tinkering with the foreign exchange crisis without solving the fundamental problems - over-valued currency, industrial stagnation, inefficient distribution of commodities etc., - the government simply perpetuated the country's economic difficulties.

The worsening economic situation between 1974 and 1976 increased urban discontent with Acheampong and his government. This

became open by the end of 1976. As early as 1974, people had started distributing copies of the National Alliance of Liberals (NAL) manifesto entitled 'Let the People Eat' (**West Africa** 23 September 1974: 1174). Although the government granted salary increases to workers in 1974, by raising the minimum wage from 1.29 cedis per day to 2 cedis, and the producer price of cocoa from 15 cedis to 16 cedis per load, the worsening economic situation adversely affected the real incomes of workers. Acheampong admitted this: 'I know that the ordinary people - those with fixed salaries and wages - will face some hardships and difficulty in spite of recent increases in salaries and wages' (quoted in **West Africa** 20 January, 1975: 8). Many people began to compare the economic situation with that under Busia in 1971 and 1972, and questioned the justifications of Acheampong's coup, hence the significance of the unreconciled Busia **camp**. The difference between the salary and wage increases for urban workers and the producer price increase for cocoa farmers is a good example of the urban bias that is the bane of Ghana's economic recovery and is characteristic of all governments' attitudes. While urban workers had salary and wage increases of about 66 per cent, farmers had a mere 6.6 per cent increase. This disparity underscores the relative importance of the perceptions of urban workers on one hand and rural people on the other for the legitimacy of governments in Ghana.

More significantly, the economic crisis threatened various politically important groups in the country. The elites as a whole were antagonized because of the general breakdown of the **essential commodities** distribution system 'since their most important class distinction was their westernized consumption pattern' (Hettne 1980: 183). Commercial interests were also alienated. The government's policy restricting the

sale of **essential commodities** to government designated supermarkets alienated the **market women** and small-scale business people whose economic activities depended on the distribution of consumer goods. The shortage of foreign exchange also meant that import licenses could not be approved and letters of credit could not be established by importers. The President of the Ghana Manufacturers' Association summed up the sentiments of the business interests thus: 'not only are the promised commanding heights [of the economy] fast receding from our horizons; they are no longer in view as we sink gradually under the weight of government policies' (quoted in Botchwey 1981: 23).

Acheampong's handling of the food situation also discredited his government. In 1977 the government was caught up in a 'yellow corn' scandal. Large quantities of yellow corn imported into the country and sold for human consumption were alleged to be of inferior quality. It was widely rumoured that the consignments of yellow corn were a gift from the Canadian government and meant for poultry feed. In reply to people who blamed his government for the food crisis, Acheampong replied: 'Let us stop blaming Acheampong for food shortages. Have we forgotten that the rains were bad last year?' (quoted in **West Africa** 13 September 1976: 1345). Under more pressure, Acheampong reiterated: 'Am I God to let the rain fall?' (quoted in Oquaye 1980: 16). Many people regarded these statements as impertinent and marking apathy inappropriate for a Head of State.

(5.3) Kalabule

Another factor which contributed to the erosion of Acheampong's legitimacy was the emergence of what is popularly known in Ghana as **kalabule.** This is a descriptive term whose essential features consist of hoarding of consumer goods, black marketeering; smuggling and profiteering. The latter example (generally described in Ghana as 'selling above the controlled price') was the most obvious form of **kalabule.** Traders sold their goods about four or five times above the official prices, often with impunity. The following examples illustrate the point.

> **Kalabule** did not only mean the taxi-driver charged what he pleased, but also that the gari seller took ¢40 for an 'American' tin that should have been sold at ¢10... The prices of vehicle spare parts became prohibitive as **kalabule** captured the nation... A Peugeot 404 Pick-Up crankshaft [was sold] at ¢700 instead of ¢150. A gear-box seat sold at ¢300 instead of ¢53. A rim of 15 outer-cover type sold at ¢250 instead of ¢53... (Oquaye 1980: 18).

At the official level **kalabule** assumed another form - corruption. Top government officials 'issued chits to young women who paraded the corridors of power offering themselves for libidinal pleasures in return for favours' (Oquaye 1980: 17). Oquaye describes how this operated: 'young women obtained millions of cedis worth of import licenses which they often resold at about three times the value... The number of women-contractors shot up with amazing speed and women who could hardly understand even the rudiments of building or road technology, obtained millions of cedis worth of government contracts with huge advances paid to them irrespective of what amount or kind of job was done. Big-turbaned, pretty women bought and sold every conceivable item... With the right introduction in green ink to the Bank Manager, a young woman got a huge advance, bought a whole consignment of goods which she promptly resold to others for fantastic profits' (Oquaye 1980: 17).

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1. The exact origin of the word **kalabule** is controversial. Many people in Ghana think it was coined by Acheampong. Others argue the word was derived from the Hausa expression **kar kabuure** meaning 'do not open the lid'.

By 1974, rumours began to circulate widely that **kalabule** at the official level 'enjoyed the privileged sponsorship of General Acheampong himself and his henchmen' (Oquaye 1980: 17). The aspect of these rumours which, most discredited Acheampong and his government, was that Acheampong himself illicitly awarded contracts, granted import licenses or allocated large quantities of **essential commodities** to his girl-friends, family members and business and political contacts. Rumours about the Acheampong regime actually began between late 1972 and early 1973. Among the early rumours were that Acheampong was not an Ashanti but a Nigerian and that his actual first name was Kuti and not **Kutu.** Another rumour was that two kiosks (named **Lomnava** and **Sly Corner**) situated near the Continental Hotel in Accra, which were always full of **essential commodities,** belonged to top members of the government. In response to these rumours, Acheampong issued a **Rumours Decree** in 1973 which made it an offenced to reproduce any statement, rumour or report which was false or likely to cause alarm or despondency to the public or to disturb the public peace or cause disaffection with the NRC. This decree was later repealed at the insistence of the Ghana Bar Association, only to be re-issued in 1977 when opposition to Acheampong increased. Suppression of rumours has in fact, been a dominant pattern with Ghanaian governments. Both Nkrumah and the NLC legislated against rumour mongering, while the PP sought to protect Busia from insults.

Rumour mongering is an essential aspect of political life in Ghana. This is partly due to the fact that in Ghana there is always a communication gap between the government and the governed. The result is that rumours become the unofficial method of dissemination of information about governmental activity. In Ghana,

rumour-mongering is also one of the strategies opponents of a regime use to undermine its legitimacy, irrespective of the truth of these rumours. For example, Nkrumah was said to be a Sierra-Leonean. Others claimed his paternity was not known. It was also rumoured that Busia's father came from the Ivory Coast. These types of rumours emerge mainly when the legitimacy of the leaders begins to decline.

Essentially, rumours begin with those who are opposed to the government - the opposite **camp**,- and so it was with Acheampong. Acheampong never had universal legitimacy because important elements of PP supporters - Akan chiefs, professionals, businessmen and academics - never accepted the NRC as legitimately overthrowing the PP. These groups, from the beginning, started alleging that the NRC members' wives were buying buildings; the Commissioners were involved with Lebanese in business ventures; some Commissioners were taking foregoing exchange out of the country. However, it is at the point where the disinterested believe these rumours, and the government **camp** becomes aware of them, that we can talk about rumours contributing to the erosion of the legitimacy of a government. Acheampong reached that situation in 1974, for in that year, the government was compelled to appoint a Commissioner for 'Special Duties', initially Major General Ashley-Larsen, whose responsibilities, **inter alia**, included the refutation of rumours about the government (**Africa Contemporary Record** 1974-75: 643).

Although rumours about Acheampong and other members of his government engaging in **kalabule** remained largely at the level of speculation throughout the rule of Acheampong, they were nevertheless widely

believed by many Ghanaians. The rumours were given some credence by a few isolated cases, particularly after 1973. In mid-1973, the Logistics Committee (formerly the Essential Commodities Committee) headed by Major Weir was suspended because its members were allegedly corrupt (**Africa Contemporary Record** 1973-74: 646). Towards the end of 1973, Lt. Colonel Benni (then Commissioner for Information) was reported to have held a press conference at which he called on his colleagues to go back to the barracks because they were no less corrupt and incompetent than civilian politicians. According to the report, armed soldiers broke up the press conference and seized copies of Benni's statement (Harrel-Bond 1978: 7). Benni resigned from the government later in that year. Then, in 1977, two members of the SMC, namely, Major General Okine (then the Chief of Defence Staff) and Brigadier Beausoleil (Air Force Commander) were retired from the government and from the Armed Forces for their involvement in the Briscoe affair.[2] Rumours about the involvement of government members in **kalabule** also gained some credibility from the fact that senior military officers and members of the government openly displayed their wealth and affluence contrary to the position Acheampong promoted in 1972. They drove conspicuously expensive cars and acquired considerable real estate in the exclusive residential areas of the Kotoka International Airport, Dzorwulu, Roman Ridge and Ablenkpe.

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2. **Briscoe** is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the East Asiatic Company of Copenhagen, Denmark. In 1975, the Acheampong government accused the company of engaging in restrictive trade practices. The Joe Appiah Committee of Enquiry into the affairs of **Briscoe** found that it had indulged in over-invoicing and under-invoicing and had contravened the currency regulations of Ghana. The two members of the SMC were among six persons whose assets were frozen by the Acheampong government and who were ordered to pay back about 910,851 cedis to the government in respect of unpaid taxes and duties on motor vehicles imported through **Briscoe**. Interestingly, the two officers were promoted before being dismissed.

Rumours about corruption in government, which were partly validated by the examples above, eroded public confidence in the Acheampong regime. However, it should be noted that this was not a phenomenon unique to Acheampong's government, for, as Le Vine points out: 'by the end of the 1960's Ghana had developed what we term a culture of political corruption. It had been a long time in the making, but then its outlines were unmistakable. Bribery, graft, nepotism, favouritism, and the like had become commonplace at all levels of officialdom; and what is more, much of the public had come to expect officials to conduct their business in a spirit of subterfuge, dishonesty, and mendacity on all sides' (Le Vine 1975: 12-13).

The only problem was that, this time, there were quantitative as well as qualitative jumps in the level of corruption to the point where it became a societal epidemic. In an emotive, but nonetheless accurate analysis, Oquaye presents the following manifestations of **kalabule** under Acheampong.

> Ostentatious display of wealth and vanity, hitherto unknown, became rampant as wild parties and flamboyant outdoorings were held for newly-born babies, where mere friends or associates donated over a thousand cedis per person just to show off. As the rich young women exhibited their ill-gotten gains, and as young girls sold their bodies for whatever material benefits they could get therefrom on an amazing scale, the national morality sank to its lowest nemesis.
>
> Men abused their offices and defrauded their employers in desperate attempts to satisfy the tastes of their women as a new craze of free-spending spread across the country. The few honest ones who refused to make money by fair or by foul suffered humilitations and women taunted them as being useless, senseless and dull. The situation so degenerated that some homes were broken as a result and wives packed away to seek their pleasures with richer, free-spending but fraudulent men (Oquaye 1980: 26).

Rumours of corruption against the Acheampong government became particularly damaging for its legitimacy because one of the reasons given by Acheampong for the overthrow of Busia in 1972 had been Busia's corruption. To demonstrate his abhorrence of corruption, Acheampong had set up a Commission of Inquiry into the Busia government. He had also allowed the Anin Commission into bribery and corruption set up by Busia to continue its report. Furthermore, Acheampong ordered members of his government to declare their assets on assumption of office and even went to the extent of issuing a decree, the **Subversion Decree** (NRCD90), which among other things outlawed some of the activities which **kalabule** involved - bribery, smuggling and currency trafficking. As a result of the rumours about government involvement in **kalabule** (which people had come to believe by 1974), coupled with the concrete cases noted above, many people began to challenge the moral justification for Acheampong's coup in 1972. The consequence for Acheampong's legitimacy will become evident in chapter eight when we discuss the reasons for opposition to Acheampong and his **Union Government** concept which was initiated in October 1976.

(5.4) Collapse of The 'Revolution'

As noted above, one of the strategies Acheampong used to engineer legitimacy was to proclaim his coup a revolution. He was playing on nostalgia for the past when Ghana was considered 'radical' and important. He was being a 'revolutionary' to justify the coup overthrowing the 'neo-colonial' image of Busia as displayed by the latter's 'dialogue' with South Africa, fondness for Oxford, and excessive

Westernism.[3]

One of the factors which contributed to Acheampong's loss of popularity and support, and consequently the decline in the legitimacy of his government was the collapse of the 'revolution'. Barely one year after the 'glorious revolution' was launched, there were signs that its tempo was slowing. As early as 1973, Major Kwame Asante (Transport Commissioner) described a call to the government by Dr. Arthur, a lecturer at the University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, that the revolution should be backed by ideology as 'subversive' (cited in **Africa Contemporary Record** 1973-74: 646). By 1975, when the NRC had become the SMC and when economic crisis appeared imminent, the 'revolution' had lost substance, if it ever had any. The Charter of Redemption, issued in 1973 and intended as the central philosophy of the government, had failed to sustain the 'revolution'.

The first clear sign that Acheampong's 'revolution' was declining was the reversal of the **yentua** policy. By 1973, the NRC began negotiations with Ghana's creditors for another debt agreement, contrary to the 'revolutionary' action of unilateral and unconditional repudiation of some of these debts in 1972. This was inevitable given the fact that Ghana remained an appendage to the global (capitalist) economic system. In March 1974, the NRC signed an agreement in Rome with Ghana's creditors. Ghana undertook to pay all her debts, including the ones abrogated by Acheampong. Although no explanations were

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3. Busia's fondness for Oxford is illustrated by a statement he made in 1950: 'Oxford has made me what I am today. I had eleven years contact with it and now consider it my second home. Most of my friends are here' (Harrell-Bond 1978: 3). After his overthrow in 1972, Busia lived in exile in Oxford until his death in August 1978.

offered by the NRC to justify the abjuration of its debt policy, one can reasonably conclude that diplomatic pressures and, more importantly, economic considerations were the explanatory factors. Presumably, Acheampong entertained fears about the ultimate economic and political implications for his government of a continued aid and credit embargo. The need to reverse the **yentua** policy might have become more pressing after the 'honeymoon' period.

Acheampong's investment policy was another case in point. After his first year in office, Acheampong had started to speak of a 'pragmatic' and realistic economic policy approach. Calls to the government to nationalise foreign businesses in Ghana in accordance with the 'spirit of the revolution' (**West Africa** 24 March 1972: 370) were ignored. The government resorted to the less radical policy of acquiring majority shareholdings in some foreign companies. Acheampong declared: 'some have asked whether a revolutionary government should not do more than this. My answer is that our revolutionary zeal must be tempered with realism and it is this which makes us opt for participation rather than nationalization' (quoted **West Africa** 22 January, 1973: 97).

Acheampong's quiet 'revolution' corroded his popularity and support. His early revolutionary stance had been immensely popular in Ghana and attracted a lot of initial support. The decline of the tempo of the 'revolution' therefore produced the opposite result. The reversal of the **yentua** policy was particularly damaging to Acheampong's legitimacy. Although the 1974 agreement was more favourable to Ghana in terms of repayment than those previously signed by the NLC and

Busia[4], many Ghanaians regarded the government's sudden shift of policy as a betrayal of faith and as a sign of weakness. When it became public that Acheamponng was negotiating another debt agreement the **Legon Observer**, which had initially campaigned for the **yentua** policy, cautioned: 'the government....needs to be reminded that a considerable portion of its popularity was generated by the courageous stand it took on our debts and that political booster must be too precious to fritter away wantonly and unadvisedly' (**Legon Observer** 30 November 1973: 570). After 1973, there was a noticeable isolation of Acheampong's government from many left-wing radical Ghanaians, including students and some academics. These radicals especially the students, had been important in establishing Acheampong's support in 1972. The political implications of the loss of this support were therefore considerable.

(5.5) 'Revolutionary Discipline'

The Acheampong regime also became unpopular because of the use of force by military and police personnel against civilians. This was usually referred to in Ghana as 'drilling'. The government regarded the 'drillings' as 'revolutionary' action, aimed at instilling moral discipline in Ghanaians. The 'drillings' took various forms, and the newspapers often carried reports with illustrated pictures of late-comers to

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4. Under the terms of the previous debt agreements, Ghana was to pay between 40 and 43 million (US) dollars from 1974 to 1978 as debt servicing on the pre-1966 suppliers credits. The 1974 Rome agreement on the other hand required payment of 14 million dollars from 1974 to 1978, followed by payments of less than 10 million dollars annually from 1982. This would increase to about 20 million dollars after 1983 when the amortization of the resheduled debts was to begin. Commenting on the favourable terms of payment under the Rome agreement, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) noted: 'By agreeing to such an agreement, the creditor countries have made a significant contribution to Ghana's development potential by freeing foreign exchange that would have been absorbed in debt servicing' (IBRD, 1975: annex 4).

work being caned, of striking workers being bullied, of suspected criminals and prostitutes being made to roll in the mud or being shaved with knives and broken bottles. Ansah describes one of such incidents thus: 'some young men who were suspected of being cattle thieves were arrested and subjected to rigorous drilling lasting three and a half hours, after which they were paired up to fight each other and then later taken into custody' (Ansah 1973: 76).

'Drilling' during the first few months of the Acheampong government was largely popular. Initially, many people concurred with the government on the usefulness of 'drilling' to cure absenteeism and petty malpractices. But as the practice continued, and as more people became victims and as the military's hypocrisy became more widely known, 'drilling' became unpopular. This was the case, particularly after 1973, when the economy began to show visible signs of deterioration; when the shortages of **essential commodities** persisted; when rumours about the government's involvement in **kalabule** increased; and when the 'revolution' was on the decline. At this stage, many people within the civilian population started to regard the 'drillings' as unnecessary and irrational military and policy brutality against defenceless civilians.

Continued reports of 'drilling' incidents after 1973 alienated the civilian population from the government. In 1974, the government-owned paper, the **Ghanaian Times** warned the government in an editorial entitled 'Armed Forces, Your Honour Is At Stake' that the public's complaints about brutality 'posed serious challenge' to the honour and image of the armed forces (cited in **Africa Contemporary Record** 1974-75: 645). Before 1973, the **Legon Observer** had carried a few letters written by civilians,

deploring the government's use of force on civilians to achieve 'revolutionary' discipline. One such letter entitled 'Stop this Bullying Now', complained about subjection by Colonel Bernasko (Commissioner for Agriculture) of striking workers at Komenda to a 45-minute 'drill'.

> Admittedly our economy is in such a parlous state that we cannot afford strikes, but this is no excuse for subjecting workers to bullying and humiliation, especially not at a time when some other categories of workers have had their allowances and other privileges restored. Putting the economy on a war footing... is not tantamount to turning the whole country into an Army camp. This country cannot be built through threats and exhibitions of force.
>
> It is true that as a people, we are lazy and that we should be made to change our attitude to work in a radical way. But is it not possible to achieve this goal without resorting to such disciplinary histrionics? People need to be disciplined, but there are well-established methods like suspension etc. for doing this. Drilling late-comers and those who threaten to go on strike is a crude form of disciplining people outside military camps and academics.
>
> Even in the critical situation of the country's economy, it is important that basic human dignity and rights should not be trampled under foot through bullying and other unnecessary forms of coercion (**Legon Observer** 10 March 1972: 120).

After 1973, as the NRC popularity started to decline, it became increasingly intolerant of dissent. Consequently dissatisfaction with the government's method of 'revolutionary' discipline were expressed in 'hushed tones for fear of possible reprisals if one raised one's voice too loud' (Ansah 1973: 76).

In February 1974 Acheampong had his first major confrontation with students of the country's three universities. The cause of the clash was the 'drilling' of a University of Ghana student by military personnel at Ho. This incident sparked off student demonstrations against the government. The National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS) issued a

statement explaining that the students' demonstrations were against 'the indiscriminate acts of military brutalities on defenceless civilians' (**West Africa** 4 March 1974: 249). The government responded to the demonstrations by closing down the three universities. Students were not readmitted until they signed bonds to be of good behaviour. The NRC issued a statement warning that: 'while the government has shown its willingness to co-operate fully with students and has supported their legitimate aspirations, [it] cannot tolerate acts of lawlessness and vandalism which are not in tune with the revolutionary spirit of building a new Ghana' (**West Africa** 18 February 1974: 191). A few weeks after the student demonstrations the government alleged that some students were engaged in activities to subvert the NRC (**West Africa** 8 April 1974: 420). The government's reaction to this situation revealed a growing prejudice towards dissent and opposition.

The NUGS-government confrontation in 1974 was an important development, with serious implications for Acheampong's legitimacy. The **Legon Observer** criticised the government and stated that it had 'over-reacted and flexed its muscles in quite an unnecessary way' and that the universities were closed down 'only as a punitive measure to teach students how to behave properly' (**Africa Contemporary Record** 1974-75: 645). The Ho incident and subsequent events, weakened the previously cordial relationship between the government and the students. Acheampong's handling of student dissent belied one of his stated reasons for the 1972 coup, thereby attenuating the viability of his regime's claims to legitimacy. As we shall see in later chapters, university students were active in opposing Acheampong's rule after 1976.

(5.6.0) Conflict over Participation

The foregoing sections have so far outlined and analysed some of the major factors which eroded Acheampong's support and popularity. Another factor which damaged the legitimacy of Acheampong was his refusal to widen the scope of participation in his government to the satisfaction of politically important sections of the Ghanaian polity, the military, the Nkrumahist camp, and the professionals and bureaucrats. To some extent, the problems that Acheampong faced in this regard are inevitable for military regimes. As Kasfir argues: 'in the short run military regimes are likely to take actions popular with large numbers of people...But in the longer run the military grows increasingly out of touch unless it can design and implement new participatory structures through which it can maintain support' (Kasfir 1976a:67). The rest of this section considers at length relations with the three groups with which Acheampong faced problems concerning their demands for participation.

(5.6.1) Relations with the Military

The first participatory demands to Acheampong came from senior military officers, especially the service commanders who resented the bias the composition of the NRC reflected against them. The NRC was formed mainly by the architects of the 1972 coup and their associates. The implication of this was that mere seniority in the military was not necessarily the criterion for one's membership of the government. For example, in 1974 the military component of the NRC consisted of a mixture of middle-level to senior officers - five Majors, two Lieutenant-Colonels, six Colonels, one Brigadier and two Major-Generals (**Africa Contemporary Record** 1973/74: 655). Acheampong himself was a Colonel. Initially, Acheampong

devised several co-operative strategies, presumably with the intention of preventing dissent of participatory nature within the armed forces. For example, the NRC set up a **Military Advisory Council** (MAC) to serve as an advisory body to the government. The MAC comprised of mainly Unit and Service Commanders. Another strategy Acheampong adopted was to second several military officers to head public boards and corporations.

Apparently these measures did not satisfy some senior military officers. The problem was resolved through a **palace coup** in October 1975 when Acheampong 'staged a coup against his own regime' (**Africa Contemporary Record** 1975-76: 693). This event is referred to in Ghana as 'Drama at Sundown' or the 'Great October Purge'. The NRC was superseded by the Supreme Military Council (SMC). Three of the original architects of the 1972 coup - Agbo, Baah and Serlomey (all Majors) were deprived of membership of the SMC and later retired from the army. Acheampong retained his position as Chairman of the SMC and Head of State. Fourteen Commissioners lost their posts. The SMC was created with seven members - Acheampong; the Chief of Defence Staff; the Army Commander; the Navy Commander; the Airforce Commander; the Boarder Guard Commander and the Inspector-General of Police. Unlike the NRC, members of the SMC held their offices by virtue of their service appointments (**Africa Contemporary Record** 1975/76: 694). The NRC co-existed with the SMC but only in name. After October 1975, it was composed of all members of the SMC, Commissioners and the Commanders of the First and Second Infantry Brigades.

The circumstances leading to the birth of the SMC were not clear. Two interpretations may be suggested: firstly, that it was possible that the Service Commanders forced Acheampong to either include them in the

government or face a revolt; secondly, that Acheampong might have effected the change on his own initiative to prevent an imminent participation crisis. Either interpretation fits into the objective which, according to Hettne, was 'to restore the military hierarchy that had been disturbed by the 1972 coup' (Hettne 1980: 183). Cameron Duodu (a Ghanaian free-lance journalist) came to a similar conclusion when he argued that the change from NRC to SMC streamlined the relationship between the armed forces by making it clear that it was the top men of the armed forces who ruled the country, and not just a 'junta' (cited in **Africa Contemporary Record** 1975-76: 694).

The Hettne and Duodu point, that the 1975 reshuffle re-established military hierarchy, is an important one which demands further analysis. The point illustrates the varying perceptions of governmental legitimacy by different groups. For civilian groups, the military ranks of their military rulers may not be a relevant consideration when it comes to granting legitimacy to such a government. The ranks of military rulers are more relevant within the military itself. An interesting paradox of legitimacy is created when Commissioners are out-ranked by officers not in the government, like the situation under the NRC. One solution would be for the Commissioners to promote themselves to more appropriate ranks, then out-ranking their previous military superiors. This method is, however, a two-edged sword. On the one hand, it may remove or reduce the problem of legitimacy within the army. The military rulers are now of such a senior rank that they compel obedience in accord with the military value system. On the other hand, military officers who see their former colleagues being promoted, or superior officers who are now out-ranked by the Commissioners, could be alienated and so threaten the

stability of the government by organising **coups d'etat** as was the case during the NLC period in Ghana (cf Saffu 1973: 110-114). Civilians also see the commissioners' military promotions as corrupt or at least self aggrandisement. Ultimately, the support of the government is weakened in the eyes of both military and civilian groups.

(5.6.2) Relations with The Nkrumahist Camp

Acheampong also had to confront participation demands from the Nkrumahist **camp**. Many of the people in the Nkrumahist **camp** thought that the pro-Nkrumah policies of Acheampong immediately after the coup in 1972 meant that they were going to play an influential role in his administration, as did some members of the Busiaist **camp** under the NLC between 1966 and 1969. The appointment of Gbedemah as a roving ambassador soon after the coup seemed to confirm this expectation. The Nkrumahist **camp** thought that Acheampong was ultimately going to hand over power to them. It soon became clear that Acheampong was not prepared to relinquish power. More importantly, Acheampong began to 'steer his way through the Ghanaian political minefield' (**Africa Contemporary Record** 1974-75: 640) without identifying closely with either of the two dominant political **camps**. This had serious consequences for the legitimacy of Acheampong's government.

From the start, Acheampong co-opted some members of the Nkrumahist **camp** into his administration. The civilian personnel set-up around the NRC weighed heavily in favour of the Nkrumahist **camp**. For example, Kwesi Amoako-Atta (Finance Minister under Nkrumah) was the Economic Consultant to the NRC. Other Nkrumahist elements closely associated with the NRC included Emmanuel Ayeh-Kumi (Nkrumah's main business

adviser); Kofi Badu (former CPP parliamentarian and 'socialist boy'); Kojo Botsio (prominent member of the CPP and Minister under Nkrumah) and John Tettegah (TUC leader during the Nkrumah period) (**Africa Contemporary Record** 1973-74: 647). However, after his first year in office, Acheampong started taking a middle course between the Nkrumahist and the Busiaist **camps**. He also continued to justify the 1966 coup against the Nkrumah government. As early as 1972, Acheampong made his position **vis-a-vis** the two political **camps** clear in an interview with **Togo Press**.

Togo Presss: If you were to choose between Busia and Nkrumah, which would you prefer?

Acheampong: I will choose neither of the two. I have my own line of conduct which I follow. Their time is past. (Acheampong 1973 (Vol.1) :92-93

To show his determination, Acheampong launched an Operation Reconciliation campaign in 1973, aimed at reconciling the two dominant political **camps** in the country. Addressing the nation on radio and television on the occasion of the first anniversary of his coup, Acheampong said:

> The National Redemption Council has committed itself to a policy of national reconciliation. What does this imply?
>
> You will realise that this nation has a history of political strife which has divided many families and deprived many citizens of their rights to decent living. There are many who, having been laid off in 1966, have still not found jobs for themselves, try as they would. There are some of the victims of the infamous Apollo 568 who have still not been found jobs. This situation has been created because we decided not to seek vengeance by driving the people employed by the previous government out of job in order to absorb those who had been compelled to leave. That would have meant replacing the woes of one set with the woes of another set of people.

> A revolution committed to the welfare of all the people cannot justify such a stance. Our aim therefore has been to maintain those whose actions may reveal disloyalty, while working to create more opportunities for the others. The pace of this, however, has been distressingly slow.
>
> Moreover, it seems to me that some efforts should begin now to rehabilitate some of the genuine political followers who have got into difficulties not of their own making. I refer in this particular instance to some members of the disbanded political parties whose rehabilitation will help to create a stable climate for the prosecution of the revolution. I have decided that as soon as practicable, we shall work out guidelines for the rehabilitation of former political rivals. We are hopeful that this will help us lay more solid foundations for the unity and solidarity of our nation and for the total commitment of all sections of the people to this Revolution which cannot be temporary but a permanent phenomenon in our lives. I hope all those concerned will begin now to stop thinking of themselves as having belonged to the CPP, UP, Justice Party or the PP and consider themselves only as Ghanaians with a duty to work for the betterment of their nation. (Acheampong 1973(vol. 2):62-63).

Acheampong took several steps to implement Operation Reconciliation. In 1973, the NRC issued a charter which according to Acheampong, was a'deliberately brief statement that must guide our action ' (Acheampong 1973 (vol.2):35)The first principle of the charter, 'One Nation, One People, One Destiny', reiterated Acheampong's call for reconciliation. 'The unity of people is absolutely essential for our success as a self-reliant nation. This truth must be embraced by all, and fought for. We depend on each other and we must love and respect each other. The destiny of each of us and of our ethnic groups is locked up in one common destiny - Ghana's destiny' (Acheampong 1973 (vol 2):37-38). Acheampong also tried to win the support of the Busiaist **camp**. In July 1973 the NRC released from detention some of the PP politicians detained following the coup and also granted loans to some members of the Busiaist **camp** (Hansen and Collins 1980: 8).

Although Acheampong's reconciliation manoeuvres proved largely rhetorical, they did not add to the legitimacy of his regime. We have seen that, in Ghana, the position of a government **vis-a-vis** the basic cleavage is an important determinant of its legitimacy. Acheampong put his government in an ambivalent position but neither **camp** had faith in the NRC. The Busiaist **camp** remained unreconciled by Acheampong's moves. Many peole in this **camp** still believed they were unjustifiably removed from power in 1972 by Acheampong. More ominous for Acheampong's legitimacy was that the reconciliation campaign alienated the government from the originally supportive Nkrumahist **camp**. So, 'by adopting a middle course between Nkrumahists and Busiaists', Acheampong 'merely succeeded in falling between two stools' (**Africa Contemporary Record** 1973-74: 645). The dissatisfaction of some members of the Nkrumahist **camp** with Acheampong was revealed in late 1973 by two coup plots to overthrow his regime. The first involved three former prominent CPP activists - Imoru Ayarna, Kojo Botsio and John Tettegah - all of whom had been closely associated with the NRC regime in 1972. Shortly after the trial and conviction of these people, Alex Harmah, another ex-Nkrumahist ideologue, was also tried and found guilty of subversion. These former CPP activists were probably 'doing no more than putting pressure on Acheampong to hand over power to them' (Hansen and Collins 1980: 7).

(5.6.3) Relations with Professionals and Bureaucrats

Acheampong also alienated the professionals and bureaucrats when he refused to co-opt many of them into his administration. Another factor which set the professionals and bureaucrats against Acheampong was his

unwillingness to commit his government to any specific time-table to handover to a civilian regime. Initially at least, the failure both to co-opt many civilians into his administration or to produce a time-table to transfer political power did not hurt Acheampong's legitimacy. In the first two years of Acheampong's rule, many people opposed direct civilian involvement in the NRC because they thought the civilians would be incapable of bold action and would takeover or 'colonize' the government as they did under the NLC. Many people were also led into thinking, as a result of Acheampong's economic success during the **honeymoon** period, that the soldiers were more efficient than civilian politicians. The failure to open up wider avenues for participation or to specify a date to handover power became part of the critique of Acheampong's legitimacy after he had become unpopular, when the economy started to decline, shortages of consumer goods persisted, and when **kalabule** emerged.

At the beginning, Acheampong tried to co-opt some civilians into his administration. Shortly after his coup, Acheampong stated that 'civilians with the requisite competence and experience' would be appointed by his government and assigned 'responsibilities for various ministeries as was previously done' (Acheampong 1973(vol.1): 11). There were precedents for this arrangement, and Acheampong committed his government to following them. Between 1966 and 1969, the NLC had appointed civilians as Commissioners who were also members of the Executive Council (Pinkney 1972, Saffu 1973). The NLC was thus preponderantly civilian with a token, but nevertheless powerful, military and police base.

The following examples illustrate some of the attempts Acheampong made to co-opt civilians into his administration. The first was the appointment of a nine-member all-civilian National Advisory Committee in February 1972[5]. However, the Committee was suspended within forty-eight hours of its appointment on the recommendation of its members. There were public criticisms of the composition of the Committee. Among other things, it was argued that 'the Committee was unduly biased in favour of the older men', that 'the business connections of some of the members raised doubts as to the ultimate effectiveness of the Committee in tendering advice to a government which has put the econmy on war footing', and that 'the ability of some of the members to survive all the successive regimes' in Ghana 'showed a certain lack of commitment' which was 'undesirable at the time when sitting on the fence should be properly frowned upon' (**Legon Observer** 25 February 1972: 88). Following the publication of the Charter of Redemption in 1974 the NRC also appointed Committees (on which civilians served) in each region to implement the principles of the Charter. Another illustration was in the establishment of District Councils in 1974 which were headed by civilian District Chief Executives[6](Austin 1981 : 433).

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5. The Members of the National Advisory Committee included: Nii Amaa Ollenu (as Chairman) - Speaker of the National Assembly during the Busia period; A.L. Adu - Resident Director of the Consolidated African Selection Trust (CAST); Nana Agyeman Badu - Paramount Chief of Dormaa Traditional Area; D.A. Chapman-Nyaho - a director of the Pioneer Tobacco Company; Robert Gardiner - Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA); Professor K.A.B. Jones-Quartey - Director, Institute of Adult Education, University of Ghana; D.A. Lartey - an Accra businessman; J.V.L. Philips - Resident Deputy Manager of Volta Aluminium Company (VALCO); and Alhaji Yakubu Tali - (Tolon NA), Paramount Chief of Tolon and Ghanaian Ambassador to Yugoslavia during the Busia regime.

6. However, the proposed District Council elections were not held until after the overthrow of Acheampong by Akuffo in July 1978.

With the exception of the above measures, the pattern of Acheampong's administration was in sharp contrast to the NLC. Acheampong completely 'militarised' all public institutions. Military personnel headed the Boards, Public Corporations, the Civil Service, the Committees and were present in the Diplomatic Service. Acheampong increasingly revealed his unwillingness to co-opt as many civilians into his administration as the professionals and bureaucrats demanded. In response to such demands, he asserted: 'we appreciate the concern of genuine Ghanaians to widen the scope of participation in the government... but we are not going to be pressured into opening channels for political machinations which will detract us from the tremendous job that must be done' (quoted in **West Africa** 28 May 1973: 718).

In 1973, the professionals and bureaucrats became critical of what they described as military 'colonization' of 'areas that have been traditionally considered the preserve of civilians' (Ansah 1973: 76). One particular criticism was that Acheampong's structures to encourage civilian participation at best encouraged only co-operation and compliance but not concrete decision making. This was probably Acheampong's real intention in setting up these structures. As Austin argues: 'the obvious problem here was to devise a structure, in the absence of parties, which would facilitate collaboration but not encourage substantive decision-making' (Austin 1981: 433). Furthermore, by establishing military tribunals to try some offences such as smuggling, stealing of cocoa and bribery, the Acheampong regime was seen by the Ghana Bar Association to have ursurped the powers and functions of the ordinary courts. In 1973, Quarshie-Idun (the President of the Ghana Bar Association) stated: 'we at the Bar are very disturbed whenever there is

legislation which tends to take judicial power from the traditional courts, or which creates other tribunals with concurrent jurisdiction' (**West Africa** 5 November 1973: 1576).

A related area of conflict between Acheampong and the professionals and bureaucrats was Acheampong's failure to commit his government to a specific programme to hand over political power to civilian politicians, again in contrast to the NLC which outlined its programme for military disengagement from politics fairly early (Pinkney 1972, Saffu 1973). In October 1973 Acheampong remarked: 'we shall not hand over power to politicians today or tomorrow, because we know if we do so, they cannot achieve any better results for the nation' (quoted in **Legon Observer** 19 October 1973: 511). He reiterated this view in 1975. Speaking to Scandinavian journalists in Accra in November 1975, Acheampong asserted: 'the SMC as a military government believes that it has an uphill task ahead and until the job is completed, it would be premature to think of handing over power now' (**West Africa** 24 November 1975: 142). Acheampong revealed one of the reasons for his decision to hold on to power when he stated that soldiers were better trained for 'administering with competence the affairs of the nation than civilians' (**West Africa** 4 November 1974: 1357). The professionals, bureaucrats and the civilian politicians might have felt insulted when in the face of visible economic crisis, Acheampong declared again: 'our performances and achievements during the past five years have proved that zealous and dedicated soldiers can govern a country better than professional politicians' (Acheampong 1978: 380).

(5.7) Suppression

Apart from Acheapong's conflict with sections of the military, which had resulted in the emergence of the SMC, all the other factors discussed above remained unresolved by the end of 1976. A combination of these factors culminated in open challenges to the legitimacy of Acheampong and his government from late 1976. In September 1976, the Ghana Bar Association called on Acheampong to handover power to civilians not later than 1978. In a resolution to that effect, the Bar Association recalled Acheampong's earlier assertion that his government would not transfer power to civilians until the economy of Ghana was on 'sound footing', and noted: 'it is the considered view that the inherent right of the people to representative government cannot depend on the economic situation of the country at any particular time' (**West Africa** 4 October 1976: 1465). Then, in May 1977, students of the country's three universities demonstrated against the government and demanded the resignation of Acheampong.

Acheampong became less and less tolerant of dissent and opposition as his support declined, that being the case particularly after 1973. This became one of the justifications for the demands by Acheampong's opponents that he must resign.

The situation noted above was not unique to Acheampong's regime. This was a general pattern with Ghanaian governments before Acheampong. Governments in Ghana have been established in a political climate of general optimism and have been tolerant of opposition and dissent activity; they grow less tolerant as their economic and political problems increase.

The following points illustrate this argument in relation to Acheampong. In October 1974, the government suppressed the **Legon Observer** by refusing to grant it a licence to publish. The **Newspaper Licensing Decree** which was issued by the NRC in 1973 had made it an offence to publish or circulate any newspaper without a license from the Commissioner responsible for Information. In one of its editorials before it was suppressed, the **Legon Observer** made mention of molestation by the government: 'in our own operations in the last 12 months or so we have experienced interference and harrassment of all kinds - sometimes direct, sometimes indirect, official and unofficial, subtle as well as crude' (quoted in **West Africa** 5 August 1974:971).

The **Legon Observer** was not the only media source to attract attention. Ghanaian freelance writing for overseas newspapers was neutralised by the NRC. In October 1975, the government detained two freelance journalists - Adolphus Patterson (the long-time correspondent for the (London) **Daily Times**) and Kwame Kesse-Adu (a veteran journalist for the **Pioneer**), allegedly for writing sensitive articles on Ghana's economy in the foreign press (**West Africa** 19 February 1976: 169). Acheampong had earlier foreshadowed this action by attacking the foreign press for publishing false reports on Ghana's economic situation (**West Africa** 22 September 1975: 1133).

Former ministers of the Progress Party attracted harsher treatment than the Legon Society on National Affairs (the publishers of the **Legon Observer**). In 1975, J.H. Mensah (Finance Minister under Busia) was tried for sedition and sentenced to eight years imprisonment. Mensah had circulated some pamphlets critical of the government's economic

policies (**Africa Confidential** 14 May 1976: 7).

During 1976, 'preventive measures' against the critics of the NRC increased. The government resorted to the use of 'preventive detention' and the deportation of foreigners. In the first six months of 1976, at least nine people were known to have been detained under the **Preventive Custody Decree**. During the same period, the government ordered the deportation of five aliens (possibly business associates of the government). According to an official statement, the presence of these people in Ghana was 'not conducive to the public good' (**West Africa**, 23 August 1976: 1234).

(5.8) Conclusion

Busia's regime lost the support of urban-based groups in 1971-72, in part because the PP government transferred real resources to rural dwellers. Acheampong initially had high support from these urban groups because of the **camp** effect of Ghanaian politics and because he pursued policies beneficial to their interests. The fatal contradiction of Acheampong's economic policy was that to restore and maintain the productive base of the economy (i.e., cocoa) required exchange rate and wages and import policies that negatively affected the urban groups, and helped dissipate Acheampong's claims to legitimacy. Acheampong lost his initial supporters (urban-based), did not gain any (rural-based) new supporters and did not solve the basic contradiction in the economy of Ghana. If he had been luckier with continuing high cocoa prices, he might have maintained his support, but the economic recession in the 1970's ended that hope. Unsatisfactory economic performance unmasked the other failures

of the Acheampong regime which its opponents used to delegitimatize it. These delegitimatization tactics by the opposition/Busiaist **camp** began to work after the SMC's economic policies (its major claim to legitimacy) began to unravel. Opposition to the SMC grew and became more concerted towards the goal of deposing the government. It was against this background of declining regime legitimacy that the **Union Government** concept emerged.

CHAPTER SIX

THE UNION GOVERNMENT PROPOSAL

> We regard the Union Government as a Commonwealth in which people of all shades of opinion will meet to discuss and formulate realistic policies, devoid of partisan interests, and in a joint effort the well-being of our dear country (sic). That form of Government envisaged is the type which will allow members of Parliament to adopt an independent and fearless opinion on national issues without interference from party whips. (Acheampong 1978: 365)

> Since I mooted the idea of Union Government, I have been misunderstood in some quarters; others have called me names; a few Ghanaians have even imputed ill motives to me, but I leave the benefit of my suggestion to future posterity. (Acheampong 1978: 10)

(6.1) Introduction

The last chapter examined the major factors that threatened the legitimacy of Acheampong and his government. The demand by the Ghana Bar Association in September 1976 that Acheampong should hand over power to an elected government by 1978 indicated the questioning of the legitimacy of the Acheampong government. A month later, Acheampong proposed the formation of a **Union Government (Unigov)**, a non-party government comprising the military, police and civilians. This proposal was the focus for a political and constitutional crisis lasting almost two years, and ending only with the downfall of Acheampong in July 1978.

This chapter forcuses on that **Unigov** proposal, and argues that **Unigov** was Acheampong's response to a crisis in the legitimacy of his government and an attempt to create a new basis for regime legitimacy. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first provides a brief history of the emergence of the **Unigov** proposal. The second examines its definition and scope. The third concentrates on the arguments

the SMC used to obfuscate the legitimacy question and the fourth argues the legitimation **raison de'être** of **Unigov**

(6.2) Emergence of Unigov.

The origin of the **Unigov** concept may be traced to a lecture given by Joe Appiah (Acheampong's Roving Ambassador and later special adviser) in 1974. While delivering the J.B. Danquah Memorial Lecture in February 1974, Appiah argued for the formation of a new system of government that would involve the armed forces. He suggested that such a government be a presidential type with the President having powers to select ministers of state (**Africa Contemporary Record** 1974-75: 641). However, Acheampong did not show public interest in a new form of government until 1976. At a news conference to mark the 4th anniversary of his coup in January 1976, Acheampong stated that his government was considering a programme to return Ghana to constitutional rule (**West Africa** 19 January 1976: 89). Then, in an interview with **West Africa** in March 1976, Acheampong expressed the wish that Ghana find a political system which did not require political parties (**West Africa** 15 March 1976: 333). Acheampong first made public reference to the formation of a **Unigov** in an address to inaugurate the reconstituted National Charter Committee[1] on 12 October, 1976. The relevant portion of Acheampong's speech stated: 'Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, the National

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1. The National Charter Committee was first set up by Acheampong in 1973 to implement the aims and objectives of the Charter of Redemption. There were also Regional and District Committees. By 1976, these committees existed only in name. Acheampong's interest in **Unigov** led to a revival of the Charter Committees. They became instrumental in propagating the **Unigov** concept.

Charter portrays a vision of a new Ghana - a new Ghana of a Union Government to which everybody would belong, not the party type of Government that brings in its trail, division, hatred, sectional and tribal interests'[2] (quoted in Ad Hoc Committee Report 1977: 140). The change in Acheampong's thinking may be explained in terms of the crisis in the legitimacy of his government.

By the beginning of 1977, it became evident that Acheampong and his government were committed to the establishment of some form of non-party government whose essential features included the combined participation of the military, police and civilians. From January 1977 to March 1978, the government mobilised the entire machinery of the state to support a campaign aimed at making **Unigov** a reality in Ghana.

In January 1977, the government appointed an Ad Hoc Committee on **Union Government** under the Chairmanship of the Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, Koranteng-Addow. Essentially, the committee was required 'to find the form which Union Government should take' (Ad Hoc Committee Report 1977: 1). The Committee's report (issued in October 1977) recomended, **inter alia**, the formation of 'a government of national unity' without political parties - 'a broadly based government in which all segments of the population would actively participate at appropriate levels', and 'some kind of participation' by the military and police 'in a future government' (Ad Hoc Committee Report 1977: 66).

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2. Acheampong was not the first Ghanaian to suggest the formation of a non-party form of government. To quote the Ad Hoc Committee on Union Government: 'It is historically interesting to note that before the adoption of party political activity into Ghana body politics, eminent Ghanaian nationalists including the late Kobina Sekyi and J.E. Casely Hayford had had the occasion to express views on its relevance to our circumstances and had foreseen the failure of the importation of Western political practices'. (Ad Hoc Committee Report 1977: 33)

Eventually, a referendum was held in March, 1978 to determine the popularity of **Unigov.** The referendum resulted in a majority of the total valid votes being cast in favour of the **Unigov** proposal. From this, the government claimed a mandate from the Ghanaian people to introduce **Unigov.** As a result of the referendum in March 1978, the government appointed a Constitutional Commission to draft a **Unigov** constitution. This process was to pave the way for Acheampong's transfer of power to a **Union Government** in July 1979. But what was this **union government** concept?

(6.3) Definition and Scope of Unigov.

The **Unigov** concept was surrounded by a 'thick fog of obscurity' (**Legon Observer** 14 September 1978: 1). The proponents of the concept failed to give it a coherent definition. The Ad Hoc Committee on Union Government recognised the definition problem when it stated: 'no-one has as yet given a comprehensive definition of the concept of Union Government. Many of those who publish the nomenclature have so far only described certain constituent elements of such a system of Government and have stated what the system is expected to achieve. Others have proceeded with a negative definition by stating what Union Government does not entail' (Ad Hoc Committee Report 1977: 35).

From reading the various statements on **Unigov**, especially the Ad Hoc Committee Report, two features of a **Unigov** system of government emerge. In the first place, **Unigov** involved a non-party system of government. Secondly, **Unigov** embraced a corporate governmental structure comprising the three dominant 'estates' in the country, the army,

the police and the civilians. According to the **Legon Observer,** the implication of this tripartite alliance of the 'estates' is that 'two tiny but well organized groups in the nation (i.e., the military and the police) were to be given separate and distinct representation whilst the remaining civilian millions were to be represented in their formless mass' (**Legon Observer** 14 September 1978: 1). On the basis of these two features of **Unigov** , the Ad Hoc Committee on Union Government officially defined the concept as 'a form of representative government of the people, having as its philosophical foundation the concept 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 institutionalised political party or parties'(Ad Hoc Committee Report 1977: 35). In theoretical terms, there are obvious corporatist overtunes in the **Unigov** proposal. Schmitter's definition of corporatism has some semblance to the **Unigov** concept. He defines corporatism as a 'system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, non-competitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports'(Schmitter 1974: 93).

The Ad Hoc Committee on Union Government on the other hand, argued that the **Unigov** proposal was derived from what it described as the 'integrational model' of government and defined this model as a system in which 'society is viewed as an association of individuals and groupings that complement each other in the achievement of collective

purposes for the common good of the society. It is a society premised on the theory of communalism. In such a society each group, instead of existing for itself, acts as its brother's keeper. In the political arena, the society seeks to realise the common good by means of an institutional framework that ensures co-operation, consensus, consultation, and complementary activity in the socio-economic administration of the community; that is, a framework that ensures real community government' (Ad Hoc Committee Report 1977: 36).

(6.4) The Unigov Argument

Acheampong's motive for proposing **Unigov** remains a controversial issue. According to Acheampong himself, the genesis of the **Unigov** proposal was in his concern over political instability in Ghana. **Unigov** reflected a desire to devise a constitutional and political framework 'to minimise, if not entirely eliminate, the sources and causes of political strife and the negative aspects of government which provoke military intervention; a framework that would transform social conflict into co-operation and unity' (Ad Hoc Committee Report: 33).

To Acheampong **Unigov** was the most appropriate form of government to achieve political and economic stability in Ghana. The conclusion was based on three main advantages a **union government** was said to have over a party form of government. In the first place, it was argued that coups in Ghana have been one of the major destabilizing factors, in both political and economic consequences. The involvement of the military and police in **Unigov** , it was argued, would ensure stability for, 'neither the army nor the police can legitimately turn round to

stage a coup against a government of which it is an integral part' (Ghana n.d. : 6). Specifically, it was contended that a major reason why the attempted counter-coup of 1967 against the National Liberation Council (NLC) regime, as well as the several attempted coups against the National Redemption Council (NRC) and the Supreme Military Council (SMC) regimes, had not succeeded was the presence of the military in government. (Ad.Hoc. Committee Report 1977 : 66).

Furthermore, the proponents of **Unigov** attributed political and economic instability in Ghana to conflict generated by the 'alien institution' of political parties. Thus Acheampong stated: 'party politics in this country brought division, tribalism, victimization and various forms of social evil and this is what we do not want again in this country. It will bring division, nepotism and all other social evils' (quoted in Ad Hoc Committee Report 1977: 143). General Kotei, Army Commander and Member of the SMC, supported this: 'in **Unigov** lies Ghana's salvation, torn and divided by the ravages of the party system (**sic**)' (**Ghanaian Times** 6 March 1978).

Thirdly, it was argued that **Unigov** would ensure stability because it was based on Ghanaian traditional political practice. To General Kotei, **Unigov** was an attempt to re-unite Ghanaians 'with the spirit and form of Ghana's traditional political expression' (**Ghanaian Times** 6 March 1978). According to the Ad Hoc Committee on Union Government, **Unigov** implied 'eliciting from our cultural heritage the principle of giving everybody in the society the right to express his views for or

against community issues irrespective of social background, status, sex or creed, and arrival at a consensus based on our own philosophical maxim of **Tikoro nko agyina** (literally meaning, 'one head cannot decide for all', but in political parlance meaning 'wisdom or the art of government is not the prerogative of one man or one lineage but the prerogative of all') (Ad Hoc Committee Report 1977: 44). That the 'traditional' base of **Unigov** would ensure stability was forcefully stated by Acheampong when he argued: 'the main reason why there is so much instability in Africa is that instead of searching for a form of government that will suit us, we find it easier to transplant foreign systems into our countries with little or no modification or adaptation. This is what I think we in Ghana should break away from' (quoted in Ad Hoc Committee Report 1977: 143). These assertions deserve further scrutiny, from which it will become clear that the above arguments were merely rhetoric designed to obfuscate the political motives behind **Unigov**.

The first argument that the military and police would not stage coups to overthrow a government in which they had a share was a fallacy in both constitutional and political terms. The view was based on a misconception, popularly held in Ghana, that the military and the police constitute a single corporate class. This type of thinking is part of a wider view which projects Ghanaian society as a homogeneous entity. Thus, one often hears collective references being made to the 'people'; 'Ghanaians'; 'the army';'the police'; 'Ewes'; Ashantis' etc. Interpreting Ghanaian society in this way distorts the realities of social alliances or divisions based on class, profession, or tribe or which may cut across the boundaries of class, professional, or tribal entities.

There is no guarantee that ambitious individuals or aggrieved factions within the military and police would not sabotage the constitutional process in which the military and police as a whole are presumed to have a corporate interest as 'estates'. Submissions before the Ad Hoc Committee on Union Government reinforced this argument. As the Committee reported:

> Several counter-arguments were advanced against participation in a future government by the Armed Forces and Police. These representations rejected the argument that participation would eliminate or even minimize the incidence of coups. For instance, it was argued that in the experience of this country, coups had been staged, not by the top men in the Armed Forces and Police, who were likely to be appointed to participate in the government, but rather by men in the lower ranks. Therefore the mere inclusion of the Armed Forces in future governments would not necessarily prevent coups. (Ad Hoc Committee Report 1977: 68).

Also the argument that the inclusion of the military and police in **Unigov** would ensure stability is discredited by the empirical evidence. There were numerous examples in Ghana when sections of the military have attempted to overthrow their military counterparts in government. In 1967, Lieutenant Arthur led an abortive coup against the NLC, as a result of which General Kotoka, one of the leading architects of the 1966 coup, was killed. The Acheampong period had already seen several coup attempts against the NRC/SMC. There were at least six major Military Tribunals which tried various persons on charges of subversion during the Acheampong period (Oquaye 1980: 75). In July 1972, five months after Acheampong came into power, five soldiers were arrested and subsequently put on trial for plotting in collaboration with some supporters of Busia to overthrow the NRC (**Legon Observer** 11 August 1972: 386). In January 1976, two retired Military officers (Captains Sowu and Von Backustein) were tried together with other military per-

sonnel and found guilty of plotting to overthrow the Acheampong government. Then, in June 1976, Captain Kojo Tsikata, Captain Gustav Banini and others were found guilty by a military tribunal on charges of subversion (Oquaye 1980: 76). These examples expose the misguided assumption by the protagonists of the **Unigov** concept that military and police representation in **Unigov per se** would prevent coups. The only empirical evidence was that previous attempted coups against the NLC and NRC/SMC had failed. That some coups against military-based regimes have failed is hardly evidence to support the proposition that military and police participation in **Unigov** would ensure stability. The vital issue is not the success or failure of a coup endeavour, but whether there was a coup attempt in the first place. In this respect, it makes no difference whether the coups were successful or not.

The second piece of reason used to support the introduction of **Unigov** was that party political activity generated conflict in Ghana. There are two issues here: firstly, that party political activity led to conflict in Ghana, and secondly, that the **Unigov** formula would avoid conflict.

The argument that party political activity bred conflict in Ghana was one of the strongest cases proponents of **Unigov** made against party politics, an indictment which, in the view of Nii Amaa Ollenu, was 'unanswerable' (Ollenu in **Ghana Times** 11 June 1977). Evidence to support this argument was drawn mainly from the conflicts between the CPP and the National Liberation Movement (NLM) before Ghana's independence and between the CPP and the Opposition parties immediately after independence. Even opponents of **Unigov** admitted that party political activity

led to conflict in Ghana. As William Ofori-Atta (Paa Willie), one of the veterans in Ghanaian politics and an opponent of the **Unigov** concept argued:

> I am not unaware that in the early days of independence some excesses and abuses were committed in the name of party politics. My own brother died through it, my uncle Dr. Danquah died through it, and our family was violently ripped into two opposing camps. I myself was stoned on many occasions, sometimes good humouredly, and I earned the title **OGYEABOO** and I was imprisoned twice. (Ofori-Atta nd: 8).

In Ghana political parties have institutionalised conflict, evidenced in the antagonism between the two political **camps** discussed above. However, conflict in Ghanaian society is not peculiar to party political activity alone. Confict is ubiquitous, whenever there is contest. There are multitudinous examples of serious conflict between competing soccer clubs, between rival ethnic groups, and between opposing parties in chiefteincy and land disputes. **The fact is that the existence of political parties in Ghana was a sympton rather than the cause of conflict in Ghana society.**

The claim that **Unigov** would end political conflict was unreasonable. So long as elections were to be conducted under **Unigov**, conflict between supporters of different candidates would result. Examples from some 'non-competitive' political system in Africa prove the point. Writing on the Cameroon, Boyart found that competition did not disappear from elections despite the adoption of the single party, the suppression of federalism and the setting up of a single national constituency for the legislature: 'elections give rise ot the exacerbation of local conflicts, particularly between cadres of the party and administrative

authorities, in a way that is generally deplored by the political secretariat of the UNC' (Boyart 1978: 80). Martin also argues that in Tanzania, there is often 'bitter competition between candidates for a position that carries both prestige and material advantage' (Martin 1978: 111).

That party politics **per se** is not the generator of conflict in Ghana, and that **Unigov** politics would not end conflict, were illustrated by the bitterness, schism, division, acrimony and rancour (to use some of Acheampong's favourite expressions) that characterised the **Unigov** referendum campaign. A later Constitutional Commission in Ghana noted:

> It is a fact of history that the proposal, made on the 12th of October 1976, by the then Head of State, for a new form of government which he described as 'a Union Government', immediately set in train a debate which became more and more acrimonious. Rather ironically and quite contrary to what was given as the most potent justification for this new form of government to do away with the 'division, hatred, sectional and tribal interests which came in the trail of the party type of government' - the Union Government debate divided the country into two bitterly opposing camps of supporters and opponents, each convinced beyond the slightest shadow of doubt of the soundness of its views and the correctness of its stand and above all, the perverse and irredeemably pernicious nature of the position of the opposing group (Ghana 1978: 5-6)

The claim that coups and conflict generated by political parties cause economic instability in Ghana was also misleading. The advocates of the **Unigov** concept did not specify what they meant by political stability. If it referred to lack of regime change, then the argument cannot be sustained. For example, the reign of Nkrumah (1957-1966) could be said to be a stable one, yet Ghana experienced serious economic problems during that period. The view that political stability promotes a degree of economic stability is widely held, and admittedly with some justification, though it is ultimately reductionist. Among other things, foreign

investment is encouraged in a stable political system. Although the relationship between economic and political stability can be fixed, the converse equally could be true. In the case of Ghana, it is mainly economic crisis that has led to regime change.

In Ghana, it has been the inability of governments to cope with economic problems that has triggered each and every change of government. The type of government is not the critical issue causing political instability in Ghana. Rather, 'the critical issue is the ability of any form of Government to respond effectively to the pressing economic problems that have for so long been unresolved' (Hitchens 1979: 175). The crux of this thesis is that in Ghana, economic stability is the **sine qua non** for stable legitimate government. Governments are expected to deliver instrumental goods and enjoy high legitimacy when they do so. As they fail to deliver these economic goods their legitimacy declines and they are forced to become more coercive. Attempts to overthrow begin. The incidence of regime overthrow is therefore directly related to continuing economic failure.

The third reasons used to justify **Unigov** was its basis in Ghanaian tradition. To recapitulate, the argument for the 'traditional' model was that **Unigov** reflected the traditional Ghanaian political system which operated on consensus. In post-war Ghanaian politics, 'tradition' was frequently evoked 'to justify whatever was thought desirable in current practice' (Austin 1964: 34). Nkrumah, for example, justified single-party rule on the basis of African traditional politics (Austin 1964: 32-33), as did Senghor, Sekou Toure, Nyerere, **et al.** (Friedland

and Rosberg 1964). The ridiculousness of Nkrumah's arguments has been well demonstrated by Austin.

> The difficulties in the way of accepting such arguments were immense. It required an act of faith, rather than the exercise of reason, to believe that a constitution designed by party leaders in 1960 for a modern state should owe very much to the traditional institutions of a pre-colonial era. Was it Akan, Dagomba, Ewe or Ga patterns which re-emerged? Perhaps such doubts would be considered frivolous or pedantic; it might be argued that there were underlying principles of African traditional rule which were able to find modern expression under African self-government. But if Akan government were taken as the model, then what appeared to be the collective uniformity of local society dissolved, on closer inspection, into a number of opposed groups, whether in state matters over Stool disputes, or in civil cases over land boundaries and private feuds. Indeed, had it been argued that the struggle between rival royal houses for the succession to a Stool provided an excellent training ground for the operation of a modern two-party system, it would have been hardly less plausible than the assertion that the obligations of a common allegiance to the chief implied acceptance of a uniform political system. In fact, it was dificult to believe that either assertion had much validity. 'African government' was too vague a concept to be of use in assessing particular forms of rule, and 'tradition' became a bottomless well of uncertain practice from which endless arguments could be drawn to justify whatever was thought desirable in current practice (Austin 1964: 34).

There was nothing inherently 'traditonal' about the **Unigov** proposal. The format of **Unigov** as recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee and approved by Acheampong did not 'hark back to any African or Ghanaian tradition'. Rather, 'the proposed constitution is generally in the Western mould; original only in that it would ban all political parties' (Chazan and Le Vine 1979: 84). The proponents of **Unigov** argued that the traditional element in the concept was based on consensus as opposed to conflict. The assumption here was that the traditional political system was devoid of conflict (though to which traditional system reference was being made is not clear). This argument does not withstand

scrutiny. In the first place, to speak of African or Ghanaian political culture in homogeneous terms is not only simplistic but also misleading. It is common-knowledge that the country now called Ghana was, before the era of colonization, inhabited by political communities whose cultures and institutions were not necessarily similar. For example, while many of the societies such as the Akan groups, the Dagomba, the Mamprusi and the Gonja lived in centralised states (Boahen 1975: 2), others like the Tallensi and the Kokomba may be described as acephalous (Horton 1972:81, Manoukian 1952b: 47). In addition, there was the Islamized North. One may ask the advocates of **Unigov**,as did Austin of the apologists of the single party, what Ghanaian tradition was being evoked? 'Was it Akan, Dagomba, Ewe or Ga patterns which re-emerged?' (Austin 1964: 34).

The view that Ghanaian traditional societies were devoid of conflict was also a sweeping generalization and largley erroneous. There is some anthropological evidence from Ashanti to justify the proposition that some Ghanaian traditional societies operated on consensus: 'action, even thoughts, certainly speech on all special occasions, were corporate affairs. It is not easy for us to realise what must have been the effect of untold generations of thinking and speaking, not in terms of one's own self but in relationship to a group' (Rattray 1929: 403). But as Austin points out, this description was a romantic representation of Ashanti traditional village life (Austin 1964: 34, note 56).

The weight of historical evidence supports the view that conflict was ubiquitous in Ghanaian traditional societies. Writing on the Dagomba, Staniland finds that 'conflict and rebellion was predominant'

and that 'there are several recorded occasions on which divisional chiefs or dissident royals either took up arms against the king or called on outside powers to intervene' (Staniland 1975: 73). And according to Datta 'in the Fante political system, competitive segmentation has traditionally been a built-in structural feature' (Datta 1972: 312).

In some Akan traditional societies, **asafo** companies were also said to perform the functions of the opposition. The term **asafo** is normally used to describe 'the traditional military companies to which one belongs through the father's line' (Datta 1972: 305). According to de Graft Johnson, **asafo** may refer simply to the young men in the society (de Graft Johnson 1932: 308). Other commentators argue that the **asafo** groups may include older men and women (Ansu and Porter 1971: 280). The **asafo** companies are said to perform a variety of functions, including the apprehension of criminals, the organizing of search parties for missing people or clearing the neighbourhood (Ansu and Porter 1971:281). The **asafo** groups also perform a political function. Manoukian argues that the **asafo** 'occupy an important place in the political system of the Akan state, as it is through them that public opinion and criticism of the government are expressed' (Manoukian 1950: 39). Christenen is of the same view. He argues in relation to the Fanti that the **asafo** was the medium through which the common man secured his voice in government and that members of the **asafo** served as the opposition to the chief (Christenen 1954: 107-118).

From the foregoing, it can be seen that the assumption that there are forms of Ghanaian government (whether 'traditional' or 'non-traditional') in which there are no opposition groups is mistaken. Thus, the

idea of a union government in which there was to be no social conflict - a 'community administration of socially differentiated groups acting in co-operation for the common good' (Ad Hoc Committee Report 1977: 45) - was a myth or at best a utopia, not a recall of fact.

(6.5) Unigov as a Legitimation Strategy

The official rationale for the **Unigov** proposal was thus without foundation. This section argues that the **Unigov** concept arose as a direct response by Acheampong to the crisis in the legitimacy of his government. In this respect, **Unigov** was a strategy to establish new forms of regime legitimacy.

The timing of the **Unigov** proposal provides the most compelling piece of evidence to support the proposition that **Unigov** was a legitimation strategy. Shortly after Acheampong came into power the establishment of some form of 'national government' without political parties was proposed by various people in the country, including the government-owned press, but Acheampong ignored such suggestions. For example, in one of its editorials, the **Daily Graphic** urged the government to consider the formation of a 'national government' to solve the political problems of Ghana. The reasons given to support the desirability of 'national government' were similar to some of those Acheampong used to justify **Unigov** four years later. To the **Daily Graphic**, the 'fact cannot be hidden that on account of extreme partisan governments in the past and the fanning of tribal sentiments in the Second Republic, the country was divided into two main political blocks and tribal division became more pronounced'. The solution to this problem, according to the

Graphic, was to evolve a system of government which was not representative of tribes and political parties but of groups such as the farmers, workers, the churches, educationists, civil servants, and scientists (**West Africa** 30 June 1972: 842). At the same time, a correspondent in the **Legon Observer** argued that:

> A National Government would certainly preserve the unity of the country, make Ghana, instead of a party, of prime importance, and obviate the folly of setting a party above the state in glorification, service and considerate treatment. We are tired of party leaders and officers, their arrogance, possessiveness, self-aggrandisement and corruption. Twice in our life-time we have been disappointed by a party government. Twice in our life-time military officers, as rulers, have shown much greater discipline and better moral stamina. In the confidence that his majority party and supporters are his unfailing security of tenure of office, the African political leader in power has no respect for anyone except his party members and known supporters. In the result any views proceeding from a source outside his party are regarded as trash. In a National Government no leader of such a complex can stay in office a day longer if found to be arrogant • (quoted in **Legon Observer** 25 August 1972: 406)

It was not until Acheampong faced a serious economic crisis and growing dissatisfaction with his government that he espoused the **Unigov** idea. Before 1976 Acheampong consistently refused to discuss the question of disengagement from politics. The sudden shift of policy in 1976 can only be understood against the background of the crystallization of the economic crisis in Ghana, coupled with open disillusionment with the Acheampong government. It was not a coincidence that Acheampong officially announced the **Unigov** proposal shortly after the Ghana Bar Association called on him to transfer political power to a representative government.

There are two possible reasons, both related to resolving the crisis in his legitimacy for Acheampong favouring **Unigov**. In the first place, Acheampong wanted to establish a new base for his legitimacy. This involved strategies for re-establishing the regime's popularity and ensuring his succession to the presidency of a **Union Government**. That Acheampong sought to become the first president under **Unigov** was universally accepted in Ghana during the **Unigov** period, and was promoted in statements emanating from supporters of the government. For example, in April 1978, Dr. D.K. Poku-Amanfo (a Kumasi lawyer who supported **Unigov**) circulated a pamphlet in which he argued strongly that Acheampong be made president. According to him,

> The Union Government idea...was conceived by the Head of State and in fact the concept is new in this country, and for that matter, all over the world. Therefore whether the idea will work in practice or not is not certain by any means. It is in the light of this consideration that there must be a SPECIAL TRANSITIONAL Provision for the FIRST PRESIDENT. If General Acheampong should be made the First President under a transitional provision, it would be a great challenge to him. He would then be given the opportunity to bring out what the Union Government concept would mean to the posterity, and the contemporary Ghanaians.
>
> The result of my suggestion would mean that there would be no Presidential election to elect the First President, and that General I.K. Acheampong would be declared the First President (Poku-Amanfo 1978: 4).

Acheampong denied this possibility several times. The only time he came close to admitting that he would accept the presidency if it was offered to him was when he replied to the question whether he would be a candidate in the first **Unigov** presidential election: 'It is up to the people. It is up to them to decide whom they want to elect' (quoted in **West Africa** 5 June 1978: 1058). The indications that Acheampong wanted to be president convinced some people that **Unigov** was to be another **coup**

d'etat 'whereby Acheampong handed over power to Acheampong' (Oquaye 1980: 57).

What was not so easily discernible was the institutional form the **Union** government was to assume. The Ad Hoc Committee prescribed 'a non-party system of government in which candidates for election would be required to stand as independent candidates and would be elected on their individual merits' (Ad Hoc Committee Report 1977: 84). Beyond this recommendation, the actual institutional form of the **Unigov** which Acheampong was supposed to head remained largely speculative. In fact, unless the people who were associated with the concept decide to speak out (and that is unlikely), arguments about the nature of **Unigov** will forever stay vague.

One supposition, which was canvassed by the opponents of the **Unigov** concept, was that Acheampong's strategy was to create a non-party state under his presidency. Thus, according to the **Legon Observer**, **Unigov** was to be a facade behind which Acheampong was to impose his presidency on the country on the basis of a one-party system' (**Legon Observer** 14 September 1978: 1). William Ofori-Atta, one of the opponents of **Unigov**, expressed similar views. According to him, under **Unigov**, 'there will be a constitutional provision to make it impossible, even illegal, for any group of citizens in or outside Parliament to organize in opposition to the government'. This, Ofori-Atta contended, 'will lead inevitably to a one-party state or fascist state in which those who are opposed to the government and are in favour of party politics will be branded as subversionists of the state and will be proscribed and persecuted (Ofori-Atta nd: 2).

These views lacked the support of concrete evidence. Most probably, this interpretation by the opponents of **Unigov** was influenced by the open identification of former CPP activists with the **Unigov** proposal, coupled with the similarities between the arguments Nkrumah used to justify the single party and those Acheampong used to justify **Unigov**.

Hansen and Collins, arguing from a neo-Marxist perspective, come to a slightly different conclusion about the form **Unigov** was to have taken. According to them, 'Acheampong's strategy was to use his formal structure of **Unigov** as a framework to institutionalize his own petty-bourgeois coalition in an attempt to solve the dilemma of military disengagement from politics (Hansen and Collins 1980: 10). How did Acheampong intend to do this? Hansen and Collins' answer is that:

> Within this structure (**Unigov**), he [Acheampong] could be sure of support from the army and police representatives, and within the civilian representatives his group would have the dominant voice... This having been done, he [Acheampong] would formally hand over power without fear. This corporate structure could be counted upon to protect: **(1)** the interest of Acheampong's faction within the armed forces; **(2)** the class interests of the petty bourgeoisie located within the army; **(3)** the class interests of the petty bourgeoisie located in commerce...; **(4)** the corporate interests of the army and the police as a whole; **(5)** the interests of the petty bourgeoisie located in the state bureaucracy; **(6)** the faction of the CPP he [Acheampong] was nurturing into a position of dominance within the civilian structure (Hansen and Collins 1980: 11).

The second possible reason why Acheampong favoured **Unigov** was to break the two-**camp** mould of Ghanaian politics. It was argued in chapter two that the period 1947 to 1951 created two political **camps** in Ghana and that a consequence of that development was that the legitimacy of subsequent governments was vitiated by the hostility of the out-**camp** towards the in-**camp**. **Unigov** was partially a way to break this destruc-

tive impasse: to recast Ghanaian politics. In this sense, **Unigov** can partly be seen as a precursor to Rawlings' attempts to revolutionize Ghanaian politics in reaction to Limann's victory in 1979, a Nkrumahist **camp** victory over the Busiaist **camp**. The above interpretation is consistent with Acheampong's 'Operation Reconciliation' strategy discussed earlier. The significance of Acheampong's arguments about the destabilizing effects of political parties in Ghana must be seen in relation to the two political **camps**. Interpreted in this way, it was likely that Acheampong was not denouncing political parties as such but the existence of two irreconcilable **camps** and the subsequent implication for the legitimacy of governments in Ghana.

(6.6) Conclusion

It can be seen from the foregoing analysis that the **Unigov** concept was not clear; but it was with hopes of political advantage rather than structural change that Acheampong advocated the concept. This chapter has argued that **Unigov** was a legitimation strategy designed by Acheampong in response to the crisis in the legitimacy of his government. It will be seen below that in attempting to accomplish his objective, Acheampong mishandled the campaign leading to the referendum and the referendum itself, thus providing additional grounds for challenge to the legitimacy of the SMC. Three months after the referendum, Acheampong was removed from office by his SMC colleagues and later reduced to the rank of mister. The **Unigov** concept was abandoned by Akuffo, Acheampong's successor, after some initial persistence.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE UNION GOVERNMENT CONFLICT

> I really do not see the crime I or the Supreme Military Council have committed by asking Ghanaians to unite or by asking Ghanaians to go to a referendum to decide on the form of government they want (Acheampong 1978: 194).
>
> Now that the rains are coming, and a good harvest is expected, these forces have diverted their attention from the food situation and are attempting to poison the people's mind through posters and placards to the detriment of the country as a whole (Acheampong 1978: 148).

(7.1) Introduction

The **Unigov** proposal precipitated open political conflict in Ghana lasting for almost two years. The **Unigov** conflict was enacted through mechanisms such as demonstrations in support of and against the government, pamphletering, lectures and addresses and rallies. This chapter concentrates on three aspects of the **Unigov** conflict germane to the legitimacy question. The first part analyses the nature of the participants in the conflict. The seocnd outlines the events subsequent to the **Unigov** referendum and examines the referendum's relevance to the legitimacy issue. The third concerns the strategies which the SMC adopted to spread its propaganda. The importance the SMC attached to **Unigov** and the referendum will become apparent from the analysis in the final part.

(7.2) Participants in the UNIGOV Conflict

As early as the beginning of 1977, the participants in the **Unigov** conflict could easily be identified. One notable feature of the people on

either side of the conflict was that they all belonged to the dominant social classes in the wider Ghanaian society. Chazan and Le Vine bring this characteristic out clearly when they argue that: 'examined more closely...champions of Union Government and the opposition were not very different save in their allegiances. What is perhaps most interesting about the array of people active on both sides of the campaign is the similarity in their background, social position, economic standing, and even political predilections' (Chazan and Le Vine 1979: 187). A point worth nothing at this stage is that support for and opposition to the government determined the position of the participants in the **Unigov** conflict.

At the forefront of the supporters of **Unigov** were senior members of the SMC (mainly Commissioners) led by Acheampong himself. These people were actively supported by some people from the Nkrumahist **camp**.[1]

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1. The reasons for the support some members of the Nkrumahist **camp** gave to Acheampong and **Unigov** were obscure. One interpretation that has been advanced is that this probably was because of the substantial Busiast composition of the opponents of Acheampong/ **Unigov**. Another plausible interpretation may be that these people from the Nkrumahist **camp** supported Acheampong in order to organise themselves politically. The Nkrumahist **camp** had suffered substantial disorganization since Nkrumah was overthrown in 1966. They were barred by the NLC from contesting the 1969 elections with the result that Busia had an easy win (Saffu 1973). Although Acheampong initially allied with the Nkrumahist **camp**, he later steered a middle course. Acheampong's ban on the formation and revival of political parties also remained in force. The trial and detention of Kojo Botsio, Imoru Ayarna, **et al.** in 1973 was sufficient warning to the Nkrumahist **camp** that Acheampong was not going to hand over power to them. The **Unigov** period therefore created favourable opportunities for members of the Nkrumahist **camp** to re-group. The alacrity with which the People's National Party (PNP, headed, by Dr. Limann, was formed after Akuffo lifted the ban on party political activities showed that a clandestine political organization existed during the **Unigov** period. The PNP claimed to be a direct descendant of the CPP. A third plausible interpretation of the presence of ex-CPP activists in the **Unigov** camp was that these people were attracted to Acheampong because of financial and business advantages such an alliance promoted.

Among the most prominent of these ex-CPP activists were Krobo Edusei, Tawia Adamafio, and Kodwo Addison. Another person who was energetic in the **Unigov** camp was Joe Appiah[2]. As Roving Ambassador, Appiah had the responsibility of seeking international support for **Unigov. Union Goveernment** also received the support of some chiefs, especially those less politically and economically secure. The position of the chiefs was not unusual. Since the colonial times, chiefs have always backed the government of the day, mainly for political and economic reasons (cf Busia 1951). The support **Unigov** received from the chiefs was therefore of little significance and does not warrant further scrutiny.

The following description by Chazan and Le Vine attested to the composition of the supporters of **Union Government:**

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2. These people played very influential roles under Nkrumah. For example, Krobo Edusei was a member of of the CPP Central Committee and held various Ministerial portfolios during the Nkrumah period (including Transport and Communications, Agriculture and Interior). Tawia Adamafio was one of the founders of the CPP and a close companion of Nkrumah. In 1962, he was detained in connection with a bomb attack on Nkrumah at the northern Ghanaian village of Kulungugu. He was later acquitted (cf Austin 1964 **passim**). Addison was the former Director of the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute. Joe Appiah may be described as a defector from the Nkrumahist **camp.** In 1955, he, together with R.R. Amponsah, Victor Owusu and Kurankyi Taylor defected from the CPP to join the National Liberation Movement (cf Austin 1964: 268). Between 1969 and 1972, Appiah was in opposition to Busia. Following the merger of the minority parties into the Justice Party in 1971, Appiah became the Leader of the Opposition. In 1972, he and Gbedemah were co-opted by Acheampong into the NRC as Roving Ambassadors. Appiah was the first to hint at the formation of a government with military **ex officio** representation. During the **Unigov** period, he became 'special adviser' to Acheampong and made several trips abroad campaigning for the international acceptance of **Unigov.** On one such visit, he rejected rumours of corruption about the Acheampong regime, stating: 'if I had seen one provable instance of corruption in the present regime, I would have left it' (quoted in Oquaye 1980: 85).

> the shock troops of the proponents were, understandably, members of the higher echelons of the government. Officers of the army, navy,and police were everywhere giving speeches and making statements at durbars, rallies, "spontaneous demonstrations", meetings of pro-government groups, opening of new public projects, and local councils. Colonel Acheampong and the members of the SMC themselves undertook tours of the country's several regions... A number of civilian employees of the State were also highly visible. These included special advisor Joe Appiah, Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, Kofi Badu, and Tawia Adamafio of the Africa Youth Command . (Chazan and Le Vine 1979: 184)

The supporters of **Unigov** were an agglomeration of a number of voluntary associations and organizations which operated under the umbrella of the National Charter Secretariat - the administrative centre for the National, Regional and District Charter Committees. These associations/organizations will be discussed more extensively below.

The opponents of the government (and for that matter **Unigov**) comprised three different groupings. The first may be described as political, the second as professional/academic and the third as a student group. The members of the first group were mainly politicians from the Busiaist **camp**. These included former ministers in Busia's government such as William Ofori-Atta, Victor Owusu, Dr. Safo Adu, Jato Kaleo, and Jones Ofori-Atta. Others included such well-known supporters of Busia as General Afrifa (**inter alia** member of the NLC and Chairman of the short-lived Presidential Commission under Busia), Nana Akuffo-Addo (lawyer and son of Akuffo-Addo, President during the Busia period) and Professor Adu Boahen (Professor of History at the University of Ghana and an old friend and supporter of Busia). The political wing of the opposition also included defectors from the CPP, such as K.A. Gbedemah and P.K.K. Quaidoo (Gbedemah defected from the CPP in 1961, see Austin 1964: 406-7 . Quaidoo was a Minister for Trade and a Minister for

Social Welfare under Nkrumah). Right-wing politicians, who usually identified more with the Busiaist **camp** than with the Nkrumahist one, such as John Bilson, formed another sub-group of the politicians. These politicians grouped into three organizations, namely: the People's Movement for Freedom and Justice (PMFJ), led by General Afrifa and K.A. Gbedemah[3]; the Movement for the Prevention of Dictatorship (MPD), led by Victor Owusu and Safo Adu; and the Third Force Movement (TFM), led by John Bilson.

The professional/academic component of the opposition was made up of people from the professions (lawyers, architects, accountants, planners, veterinary surgeons and medical officers), and university lecturers. The students were mainly from the universities. The professionals, academics and the students also organised into three associations: The Association of Recognised Professional Bodies (ARPB), the Ghana Association of University Teachers (GAUT) and the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS). These associations, with the exception of the NUGS, were formed during the **Unigov** period with the main aim of opposing Acheampong and **Unigov**. The NUGS is the established Student's Union. Traditionally, it has been one of the first groups to support a new government; it has also been among the first to shift to opposition.

These associations were not united. The shared antagonism to Acheampong was the sole ground upon which they agreed among themselves. The inability of the opposition groups to form one coherent anti-govern-

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3. The alliance between Afrifa and Gbedemah surprised many people. Since 1969, the two people were opposed to each other. Afrifa was a supporter of Busia while Gbedemah was in opposition to Busia. This unity between Afrifa and Gbedemah illustrated the manner in which people change **camp** in Ghana. Acheampong's description of the Afrifa-Gbedemah alliance as 'an unholy alliance designed to do mischief' (**Africa Contemporary Record** 1977-78: 644) reflected his bewilderment.

ment front rendered them volatile. 'There is little question that the regime took advantage of this fact in its efforts to intimidate the opposition' (Chazan and Le Vine 1979: 186).

Two important lessons can be drawn from the nature and composition of the participants in the **Unigov** conflict. The first relates to similarities in their social background, reflecting the tradition that it is the perceptions of the dominant classes which are crucial for determining the legitimacy of governments in Ghana - that 'political struggles in Ghana tend to become, however they begin, intra-elite conflicts' (Chazan and Le Vine 1979: 190). The bulk of the population was removed from the arena of political activity and conflict. This pattern became clear during the **Unigov** conflict when the participants on either side tried to win and maintain the support of the rural peasantry and the urban working class.

The composition and nature of the parties in the **Unigov** conflict also highlighted another important underlying factor in Ghanaian politics relevant to the legitimacy of governments - the significance of the two political **camps** in Ghana. The **Unigov** debate, which began as a non-partisan issue, quickly became engulfed in the politics of faction. Although the motives behind the support the members of the Nkrumahist **camp** gave to the SMC and to **Unigov** were not clear, it is probable that it was the early emergence of an opposition with substantial Busiaist connections which determined the allegiance of the ex-CPP activists. This argument can also plausibly be reversed, i.e., that it was the open identification of the Nkrumahist **camp** with **Unigov** which shaped the attitude of the Busiaist **camp** towards the conflict, though the latter

camp had not been reconciled to their removal from power in 1972. Thus, the opposition of the Busiaist **camp** to Acheampong and his policies from the start of his regime was more clearly determined than the position of the Nkrumahists.

The complexity of the **Unigov** conflict can only be grasped by analysing the events leading to the government's resolution to call a referendum and the manner in which the government conducted the subsequent referendum campaign. These are discussed below.

(7.3) The UNIGOV Referendum

In July 1977, Acheampong announced that a referendum would be held to determine the acceptability of **Unigov**. This decision was part of a package of measures introduced by Acheampong to defuse the crisis in his legitimacy. Acheampong, who had until then declined to specify a definite programme to transfer power, suddenly announced what he described as a 'detailed timetable for a return to civilian rule'. The timetable contained a ten-point programme which, among other things, envisaged general elections in June 1979 and a transfer of power in July 1979.

The government created the impression that the referendum was merely an exercise to determine the approval of the **Unigov** concept. This was the ideology/rhetoric of the politics of the referendum. The objective reality was that the referendum was itself a legitimation tactic. Acheampong's decision to hold a referendum was made in response to continuous challenges (couched in terms of strikes and demonstrations against the SMC and demands for Acheampong's resignation) after the

announcement of the **Unigov** proposal in October 1976). While the **Unigov** idea was Acheampong's first major strategy to resolve the crisis in the legitimacy of his government, the decision to hold a referendum was the second.

Historically, referenda have been one of the devices governments have utilized to establish their legitimacy (Butler and Ranney 1978: 3). Acheampong's use of a referendum to seek legitimacy was not a novelty in Ghanaian politics. In March 1960 Nkrumah used a referendum to introduce a republican constitution. Then, in January 1964, Nkrumah again used a referendum to establish a single-party state.

A survey of the major events leading to Acheampong's decision to hold a referendum proves that the referendum was a legitimation strategy. Between October 1976, when Acheampong first mooted the **Unigov** concept, and July 1977, when the referendum was announced, there were several challenges to the legitimacy of Acheampong and his government. In February 1977, the Ghana Bar Association again called on Acheampong to hand over power to a constitutional government by 1978. The Bar Association also rejected the appointment of the Ad Hoc Committee on Union Government and demanded its immediate dissolution. In a statement to that effect, the Bar Association described the Ad Hoc Committee as a 'sham' and a 'waste of public funds' (Ghana Bar Association Resolution, February 26 1977, cited in Ad Hoc Committee Report 1977: 148).

This was followed in May 1977 by university student demonstrations demanding the immediate resignation of Acheampong and his government. The government reacted by closing down the country's three universities.

When they were re-opened, students refused to resume lectures until Acheampong resigned. In a declaration, the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS) made its position clear: 'you [Acheampong] have displayed enough ignorance, lack of sympathy and empathy, greed and avarice to be unworthy to rule the country' (NUGS Statement May 1977: 3).

One month after the student demonstrations, the Association of Recognised Professional Bodies (ARPB) also demanded the resignation of Acheampong and his government on the grounds that 'in recent times the Government of the Supreme Military Council has shown by various acts and omissions that it has become increasingly incompetent to govern the country' (ARPB Resolution June 23 1977). During the same period, the Ghana Bar Association repeated its previous resolutions calling on Acheampong and his government to resign. The Bar Association threatened to withdraw its services from the public if the government failed to resign.

The government responded negatively to these demands. In a statement on 9 July 1977, the SMC alleged that 'some foreign power...had funnelled huge sums of money to some irresponsible, over-ambitious, disgruntled and unpatriotic, power-seeking Ghanaians to be used to overthrow the Government of the Supreme Military Council and to replace it with its lackeys', and that, 'in pursuance of this objective, these same persons, using the masks of some lecturers of the nation's universities, arrogated to themselves the role of the mouthpiece of the people to dictate terms of the Government in the most arrogant and peremptory language'. The government also described the ultimatum by the opposition as 'ridiculous', and stated that 'no government, however kind,

however patient, and however magnanimous and tolerant, would consent to abdicate its responsibility to the people and surrender its authority on this most extraordinary and unreasonable demand by some irresponsible, selfish and callous few who are bent on destroying Ghana' (Acheampong 1978: 163-64).

As a result of the intransigeance of the government in July 1977, the professionals embarked on a strike which lasted for almost three weeks. It was during this strike that Acheampong published the timetable to hold the referendum. By deciding to organise the referendum, Acheampong was responding to the legitimacy question in two major ways.

In the first place, the government used the referendum decision to deflect the demand for its resignation, thereby changing the agenda of Ghanaian politics. The government manipulated its commitment to hold the referendum to bargain for a 'truce' with the opposition. Following the announcement the government entered into a 'dialogue' with the ARPB (**Daily Graphic** 12 July 1977). Although the 'dialogue' ultimately collapsed because of failure to agree on a timetable to return to constitutional rule within one year (ARPB News Bulletin July 28 1977), the government succeeded in ending the professional strike (ARPB News Bulletin, July 28 1977). The SMC's announcement of the referendum also succeeded in preventing - **albeit** temporarily - the crisis in its legitimacy from reaching a climax. Between July 1977 (when the government declared its intention to hold the referendum) and 30 March 1978 (when Ghanaians went to the polls), the opposition's demand that the government should resign was not again strongly articulated. During this time, the opposition became pre-occupied with a campaign to have **Unigov**

rejected at the referendum. It was after the referendum that demands for resignation were resurrected.

The second way in which the decision by Acheampong to arrange the referendum responded to the legitimacy question was in that the decision held out the promise of democratising the government. Acheampong could have decreed the creation of **Unigov**. By deciding to hold a referendum, Acheampong could claim that his government was democratic and thereby neutralise claims by his opponents that the SMC was a military dictatorship. A claim of this type was implicit in the statement of Captain Kyeremeh (Commissioner for Cocoa Affairs) that the resolve to hold the referendum showed the SMC's respect for Ghanaians (**Ghanaian Times** 15 March 1978: 3).

By electing to subject the **Unigov** proposal to a referendum, the SMC sought to ehance its legitimacy by the use of persuasion rather than force. Persuasion, as opposed to coercion, would enable the government to repair its damaged legitimacy with minimum political costs. Presumably, by this time, the SMC had realised that the utility of repression was marginal at best. Butler and Ranney in examining the rationale for referenda refer to the futility of coercion in achieving legitimacy when they argue: 'the long history of despotisms, ancient and modern, teaches that although the compliance of most subjects can be compelled most of the time by government force and intimidation, both methods are costly and their unit costs grow higher, not lower, the more they are used. Even repressive regimes therefore seek ways of persuading their subjects of the legitimacy of their rulers' decisions' (Butler and Ranney 1978: 25). Herein lies the sense behind Acheampong's several

assertions that he was not forcing the **Unigov** proposal on Ghanaians but that it was a matter entirely for the people to decide (Acheampong 1978). With the government's control over the state machinery - the means of coercion, financial resources and information - it could effectively control and channel the popular vote to have **Unigov** endorsed.

The referendum also promised legitimacy for Acheampong's leadership of any future **Unigov**. In the liberal democratic schema, decisions arrived at through the popular will are said to be the most democratic and legitimate. As Chunkath argues: 'one of the fundamental axioms of democratic government is that political power flows from the people, so it is in the fitness of things that the people must be the last court of appeal' (Chunkath 1977: 981). Furthermore, the very existence of the Western type of democracy also 'rests upon the willing acceptance by minorities of decisions made by majorities' (Butler and Ranney 1978: 25). The referendum provides one of the mechanisms through which the majority view is determined. Acheampong's choice of a referendum as an instrument through which **Unigov** was to materialise would have made such a government a choice by the people rather than an imposition by Acheampong. This would have forestalled any doubts about the formal legitimacy of a future **Unigov.** The opponents of the **Unigov** proposal, by accepting the referendum as an arena for conflict, would also have been compelled to accept the legitimacy of the new regime.

(7.4.0) The Government's Campaign Strategies

The referendum on **Unigov** thus held considerable significance for the SMC. Colonel Enninful (Military Assistant to Acheampong) confirmed this view when he stated that the SMC regarded the referendum as 'a matter of life and death' (quoted from Abban's letter to the Secretary to the SMC 21 March 1978). This was underscored by the government's campaign strategies, which demonstrated the SMC's determination to have **Unigov** endorsed at the referendum. The strategies the SMC adopted to win support for the **Unigov** proposal included: pro-Nkrumah manoeuvres co-option; the use of money and resources; divide-and-rule; publicity; intimidation; and suppression.

(7.4.1) Pro-Nkrumah Manoeuvres

During the referendum campaign Acheampong intensified the pro-Nkrumah manoeuvres commenced in 1972. We saw in chapter five that, towards the end of 1973, some members of the Nkrumahist **camp** had become dissatisfied with Acheampong and attempted to overthrow his government. Acheampong's Nkrumahist postures during the **Unigov** period can be seen as based on a plan to placate the Nkrumahist **camp** and win their support. This strategy operated at both domestic and international levels.

At the domestic level, Acheampong sought alliance with some members of the Nkrumahist **camp**. Acheampong did not appeal to the CPP as a whole, but to some 'elements he thought owed enough loyalty to him and had enough political clout to constitute an organizational base for power' (Hansen and Collins 1980: 10).

In January 1977, Kojo Botsio, who was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1973 for attempting to subvert the Acheampong government, was released from jail. The government's explanation was that Botsio was released from prison for purely humanitarian reasons, on account of his ill health (Acheampong 1978: 41). Most probably, Acheampong was not prepared to antagonise the Nkrumahist **camp** by letting Botsio die in detention. In the same month Acheampong invited Geoffrey Bing to Ghana as a Special Guest of Honour during the 5th anniversary celebration of the 13 January coup. Bing had been Attorney-General under Nkrumah and was credited with the passage of the **Preventive Detention Act** (PDA) under which many opponents of Nkrumah were detained without trial[4] (Austin 1964). Bing was invited by Acheampong ostensibly to help draft a **Unigov** Constitution (**Africa Confidential** 4 February 1977: 6).

Two other significant developments occurred in March 1977. Firstly the SMC instructed that the statute of Nkrumah, which was demolished following the 1966 coup, be repaired and placed in the National Museum (**West Africa** 4 March 1977: 527). This measure symbolised the implementation of part of the findings of the Casely-Hayford Committee appointed by Acheampong in 1973 to advise the most fitting way to honour Nkrumah. The Committee recommended **inter alia** that a mausoleum be built at Nkroful, Nkrumah's home village, that Nkrumah's Egyptian wife, Fathia, and his children be repatriated to Ghana and be cared for at state expense; and that the State House (**Job 600**), the venue for the 1965 summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), be named after Nkrumah. In other developments, the SMC established an organization it described as a National Reconstruction Corps and appointed Sappong Kumankuman, a former Director of Nkrumah's Young Pioneer movement, as

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4. Bing later wrote an apologia entitled **Reap the Whirlwind: An Account of Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana from 1950 to 1966** (1968).

its Director. Among other things, the National Reconstruction Corps was to run farms and reactivate cottage industries abandoned after the overthrow of Nkrumah.

More significant concessions were made from the middle of 1977. In June, Acheampong appointed five former CPP activists as his 'special aides'. These were S.K. Danso, Sam Boateng, Kwesi Ghapson, Ben Kumah and S.O. Lamptey[5] (Acheampong 1978: 152). The 'special aides' later performed important roles in directing Acheampong's **Unigov** propaganda machinery. As one writer puts it, they 'toured the country with official backing and sponsorship, selling **Unigov** and Acheampong to the people' (Oquaye 1980: 85). During the same period, the SMC appointed Alex Quaison-Sackey, Nkrumah's Foreign Minister, as Ghana's Ambassador to the United States of America. Then, in August 1977, the SMC lifted the ban which excluded former CPP Ministers from holding any public offices in Ghana (**Africa Research Bulletin** 1-31 August 1977). This ban had been imposed in 1969 by the NLC to prevent members of the Nkrumahist **camp** from contesting the 1969 elections that brought Busia to power (cf Saffu 1973: 266-284).

As a corollary to these actions, the SMC passed the **Investigation and Forfeiture of Assets (Amendment) Decree No.2** (SMCD 126). Under this decree, Acheampong returned the confiscated properties of five former Nkrumah ministers: Kwaku Amoah-Ewuah, E.I. Preko, A.E. Inkumsah, Joseph Hagan and Krobo Edusei. The assets had been confiscated on the recommendation of the Sowah and Jiagge Commissions set up by the NLC after the overthrow of Nkrumah in 1966. Acheampong also announced that his government was 'seriously considering the full restoration' of the assets of other

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5. Some of these people were also leaders of associations supporting **Unigov**. Ghapson was President of the Peace and Solidarity Council while Boateng and Danso respectively were President and Vice-President of the Ashanti Youth Association.

ministers and members of the CPP. According to Acheampong, these people had 'suffered too much and far too long'; therefore, the time had come to liberate them from 'the thraldom of victimization' (quoted in **West Africa** 10 October 1972: 2089).

Acheampong's rhetoric during the **Unigov** period also revealed traces of Nkrumahist ideology. Acheampong constantly referred to his government and the proposed **Unigov** in populist or socialist terms as governments for the 'ordinary man' or the 'common man'. An example of this kind of rhetoric was Acheampong's statement at a durbar of the National House of Chiefs in September 1977: 'the Supreme Military Council is determined to continue to fight till the ordinary man can stand up with chest out and feel that he is somebody too' (Acheampong 1978: 220).

Another focus of Acheampong's pro-Nkrumah postures during the **Unigov** conflict was international - increased ties with Nkrumah's former international allies in the Eastern bloc. Several delegations from Eastern Europe visited Ghana during this period (Acheampong 1978: **passim**). The government also sought Soviet assistance to reactivate a number of projects started by Nkrumah which were abandoned after his overthrow. An example was the Kwabenya atomic reactor. The SMC further requested the Yugoslav government to revitalise a tomato canning factory at Pwalagu in the North of Ghana (**West Africa** 31 January 1977: 186).

It was rumoured in Ghana during the **Unigov** period that the Soviet Union financed part of the **Unigov** referendum campaign which was estimated to have cost the government at least 80 million cedis (Harrel-Bond 1978: 10). It is possible that the above rumour was fabricated by

the opposition to discredit Acheampong and **Unigov**. However, earlier revelations or rumours that the Soviet Union financed Acheampong's coup in 1972, coupled with the Soviet Union's praise for **Unigov** gave some credence to the rumour just noted. The Soviet analysis is worth quoting at length.

> Among those who support the idea of setting up a government of unity are the country's leading and influential organizations such as the Congress of Trade Unions, the African Youth Command, the Council of Peace and Solidarity. These organizations unite representatives of the working people, progressive intellectuals and students. The organizations underline that in the opinion of the groups of the population they represent, any future government must promote profound social and economic reforms in the country and work for the building of a society free of exploitation. This is fully in keeping with the goal the military proclaimed in January 1972 after toppling the reactionary regime of Kofi Busia.
>
> The Government has underlined in public statements [that it] intends to build a society where every citizen will have equal opportunities and the national resources will be used in national interests. This is the kind of society the first President of independent Ghana, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, wanted to build. The present military leaders have already carried out a whole number of projects planned by the late President. As a result, Ghana's gold, diamonds and bauxite are no longer a source of profit for foreign and local businessmen, but serve the entire people (Radio Moscow 15 April 1978, quoted in Harrel-Bond 1978: 10).

Acheampong's support-gaining strategy of fostering closer relations with the Nkrumahist **camp** during the **Unigov** period was a clear indication that he had abandoned 'Operation Reconciliation'. This was one of the major limitations of the **Unigov** proposal. For one thing, the Busiaist **camp** became increasingly suspicious of Acheampong's intentions in proposing a Union Government. It was likely that the identification of Nkrumahist elements with **Unigov** partly explained its rejection by the Busiaist **camp**.

(7.4.2) Co-Option

The co-option of people into government is a strategy familiar to governments seeking to consolidate their rule and to silence dissent and opposition. As Wriggins argues: 'the strategy of broadening participation has certain advantages for the man in power who wishes to prevent an opposition from gaining a popular base or to weaken the position of his well-established but sufficiently acquiescent allies' (Wriggins 1969: 215). The SMC adopted this strategy to canvass support for **Unigov.** The SMC's first targets were the labour movement and the religious establishment. In June 1977, Acheampong appointed Alhaji Issifu (Secretary-General of the TUC) and John Amissah (Catholic Archbishop of Cape Coast) as his 'special advisors' with the rank of Commissioner (Hansen and Collins 1980: 10). The two appointees refused their positions for reasons that were not fully explained. According to Acheampong, the appointment of Issifu was withdrawn by the SMC in the 'national interest' because 'the enemies of the Revolution' had misconstrued Issifu's appointment to mean an attempt by Government to gag the workers' (Acheampong 1978: 156). Considering the events that followed Issifu's appointment, it may be surmised that he declined the post to prevent internal TUC dissent.

Shortly after Issifu's commission was announced, pamphlets were circulated in Accra denouncing him and labelling him a traitor to the Ghanaian working class. One such pamphlet stated:

> the appointment of A.M. Issifu, the Secretary-General of the TUC as one of Acheampong's Advisors has several important implications. On the face it appears that the workers are being given a say in the policy-making process of state. A little reflection should indicate that, that is only a great trap set to muzzle the ordinary Ghanaian worker by offering him a false sense of security. Why should Acheampong bring TUC Boss only when he has lost control of state affairs and the country is in ruins...?

> The workers should also realise that Issifu can no longer serve their interest by acting as an active external pressure force. Since Issifu has obviously been bought by the Government he should be regarded as an enemy just like Acheampong. Ghanaian workers must therefore immediately reject him. That is the only way to safeguard their interest. The workers must weed out all the traitors among them. We told you long ago that Issifu is a traitor. You did not believe us. Now you know. Remove him and save the TUC.

Most trade union officials believed that Issifu clandestinely performed the advisory function during the months following. This belief was fortified when the TUC refused to join the professionals' strikes against the SMC. The refusal, which earned the commendation of Acheampong (Acheampong 1978: 156), was probably one of the decisive factors saving the Acheampong regime from collapse in the middle of 1977. This was similar to the TUC-CPP relationship when Tettegah was Secretary-General (Gerritsen 1972: 9). The TUC later declared its support for **Unigov** (**Africa Contemporary Record** 1977-78: 641). Issifu was reported to have stated that 'the TUC had never been in doubt about the sincerity of government' and that regardless of his unwillingness to serve as Acheampong's 'special adviser' , 'the TUC would continue to render worthy service to the nation and co-operate with Government' (quoted in Acheampong 1978: 156). Hansen and Collins fail to bring out the complexities in Issifu's case when they state simply that Acheampong's offer to him 'was politely refused' (Hansen and Collins 1980: 10)

The co-operative relationship between Acheampong and Issifu and the TUC during the **Unigov** period may be traced back to 1972. The TUC had been one of the principal beneficiaries of Acheampong's coup. In September 1971 the TUC had been abolished by the Busia government (cf 3.7). We saw earlier that as part of Acheampong's initial legitimacy engin-

eering strategies, he repealed Busia's **Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act**, and restored the TUC. Shortly after this the TUC Secretary-General, Bentum, was appointed to a position with the International Labour Organisation and the TUC was faced with a contest among John Tettegah (TUC Secretary-General under Nkrumah), R.M. Baiden (General-Secretary of the Maritime and Dockworkers Union) and A.M. Issifu, as Bentum's successor. The Acheampong regime intervened in support of Issifu (who had been appointed by the NRC as acting Secretary-General) by cancelling the elections scheduled for 13 May 1972, three days before they were due to be held. The reason given by the NRC was that the government had not completed the re-organization of the TUC (**Legon Observer** 19 May 1972: 246). Many people in TUC circles believed that the government's action was to prevent Tettegah (whose loyalty was doubted by Acheampong) from becoming Secretary-General. Tettegah was rumoured shortly after his arrival from Cairo to have been invited by Major Asante, the Labour Commissioner, purposely to become TUC Secretary-General. Towards the end of 1973, Tettegah and two other former CPP activists were tried and found guilty of subversion. It was not until May 1974, when the TUC held its first Quadrennial Conference, that Issifu was officially elected as Secretary-General.

The government's intervention in 1972 had given Issifu some advantage over other aspirants to the post of Secretary-General during the 1974 elections. That Acheampong would have intervened again in 1974 had Issifu's position been threatened was a strong possibility. Issifu's support for Acheampong during the **Unigov** conflict must therefore be seen as a fulfilment of a reciprocal personal obligation.

Acheampong's choice of Issifu and Amissah as his advisers at a time of crisis was based on a prudent political calculation, since the TUC and the religious establishments in Ghana are forces for social mobilization and their relationship with a government is important for the government's legitimacy. The support the TUC gave to the SMC during the **Unigov** period illustrated Acheampong's success in patronising leading members of the labour movement. The relationship between the TUC and Acheampong was not unique in Ghana's political history (cf Gerritsen 1972). But it was the first time a government had received the unanimous commitment of the organised labour movement during a period of economic crisis. Even Nkrumah could not prevent the 'wildcat' 1961 strike which directly attacked his regime's policies.

Acheampong's attempt to co-opt the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Cape Coast reflected the political significance of the Christian churches in Ghana. Acheampong might have regarded the appointment of Ammissah as 'adviser' as an effective method to win the support of both the 'shepherds' and the 'flock' or at least to maintain their neutrality. Subsequent developments demonstrated the fears of Acheampong about the loyalty of the clergy. A few days before the **Unigov** referendum, the Catholic hierarchy of Ghana, consisting of seven Bishops and two Achbishops (including Amissah), issued a joint pastoral letter on the referendum. The letter contained a strongly-worded condemnation of the government's handling of the referendum campaign, especially what was described as 'absolutely inexcusable and damnable thuggery', 'unnecessary excessive use of violence and force by some officers of the peace and the neglect of their duty to prevent assault on peaceful citizens'. The pastoral letter also criticised the government's suppression

of freedom of the press and called on the SMC to turn the 'media into a just and fair forum for free public discussion of the various issues involved in the debate, and into a forum for free, uninhibited expression of differing and even contradictory views on these issues and others of national interest' (quoted in **The Standard** 19 March 1978). The Protestant clergy released a similar letter.

The appointment of civilians as commissioners to replace military appointments was a further use of a co-option strategy. Among civilians co-opted into Acheampong's administration were the **La Mantse** (Paramount Chief of Labadi), Nii Kwakwranya, as Commissioner for Labour and Social Welfare; E.R.K. Dwemoh, as Commissioner for Transport and Communication; C.K. Tedam as Commissioner for Local Government; Abayifa Karbo as Commissioner for Health; and A.K. Appiah as Commissioner for Finance (Acheampong 1978: 11). Later in the same year (1977), Kofi Badu, the Managing Director of the government-owned **Daily Graphic**, was added to the team as Commissioner for Consumer Affairs. The appointment of Badu as Commissioner must also been seen as part of Acheampong's alliance with the Nkrumahist **camp**. Badu was one of the 'socialist boys' who first rose into national prominence in the early 1960s. He was an unsuccessful NAL candidate in the 1969 elections, and during the Busia period edited and owned the oppositionist **Spokesman**. Until the middle of 1977, there were only two civilians (Koranteng-Addow, who replaced E.N. Moore in 1975 as Attorney-General, and Robert Gardiner formerly of the Economic Commission for Africa, as Commissioner for Economic Planning) directly involved in the Acheampong government. By the end of 1977, there were twelve civilians and four military personnel in the government. The military members of the executive included Acheampong

(Head of State); Colonel Akwagyiram (Commissioner for Agriculture); Lt. Colonel Grant (Commissioner for Special Duties); Colonel Roger Felli (Commissioner for Foreign Affairs) (**Africa Contemporary Record** 1977-78: 647).

The phenomenal increase in the civilian component of Acheampong's government during the middle of 1977 served two purposes. Not only was it a response to civilian criticisms that the SMC had 'militarised' all political institutions in the country, but it was also an attempt to gain support for **Unigov**. The new civilian appointees campaigned vigorously for **Unigov** and helped the government counteract the claims by the opposition that he was attempting to institutionalise a military dictatorship by advocating a union government. The presence of the civilians in the government was used by the SMC to lessen the intensity of the **Unigov** conflict. For example, during the 'dialogue' between the SMC and the professionals in July 1977, the government was represented by Koranteng-Addow and Gardiner, rather than by its military personnel.

(7.4.3) The Use of Money and Resources

A further strategy the SMC employed during the **Unigov** conflict was the use of money and resources to buy support. Three aspects of this strategy may be identified: the sponsorship of organizations/associations to back **Unigov**; patronage; and the inducements provided by the government to various groups. These will be discussed in turn.

The **Unigov** period saw the rapid formation of various associations and the reactivation of hitherto defunct ones. There was no doubt that

the government sponsored these associations in aid of **Unigov** and most were led by ex-CPP activists closely associated with Acheampong. The activists of the associations/organizations were supervised by the National Charter Secretariat, which meant that the government assumed full financial responsibility for their operations.

The Peace and Solidarity Council became the most important single organization in the **Unigov** campaign. It was not only the most widely publicised but also the one which co-ordinated the biggest rallies and the one most closely linked with violence against and intimidation of opponents of **Unigov** (see 7.4.6 for examples). Other **pro-Unigov** organizations included the Ghana branch of the Africa Youth Command (led by Tawia Adamafio - 'special aide' to Acheampong), the Ghana Patriots, the Friends, the Kumasi Youngster Club, the Asante Youth Association and the Volta Youth Association (Chazan and Le Vine 1979: 185).

Apart from the presence of ex-CPP activists at the helm of these associations, they had another noteworthy feature - the prominent use of the term 'youth' to describe them. Chazan and Le Vine argue that this was 'possibly a way of recalling Nkrumah's "youngmen"' (Chazan and Le Vine 1979: 185); but this explanation is too romantic. It could be simply that youth associations, youngsters'clubs etc were a very popular term for political organizations in the tradition of the **asafo** discussed above. Many villages in Ghana have one or more of these youth associations. There was therefore nothing particularly Nkrumahist about youth associations.

There were also rumours that Acheampong was buying support for **Unigov** by granting import licenses to various people; by allocating **essential commodities** to **Unigov** campaigners; or by paying people to demonstrate in favour of **Unigov**. Alex Hutton-Mills was alleged to be in charge of organising people each morning to demonstrate in Accra to promote **Unigov**. Participants in these demonstrations were allegedly each paid five cedis or more, more than the daily minimum wage at that time, for every demonstration.

Another aspect of the above strategy may be described as 'mass bribery'. This consisted of the offer of material benefits to groups by the government in return for their loyalty. A case in point was Acheampong's decision in June 1977 to increase the minimum daily wage by almost 100 per cent. The rural peasants were also awarded increases in the producer price of cocoa and other agricultural export produce (cf Acheampong 1978: 157). The timing of these producer price and urban wage increases, in the middle of the **Unigov** conflict, suggested that the government's motive was to win general support for its particular objective. Another illustration was the increase in the maintenance allowance of university students from 900 cedis to 1,200 cedis in November 1977 (Acheampong 1978: 276).

A further component of 'mass bribery' is described thus by Chazan and Le Vine: 'in the six months preceding the referendum, the government also took pains to publicise and launch new development projects, took measures to provide scarce commodities and relieve shortages and acted to increase and improve public services' (Chazan and Le Vine 1979: 180). In some rural areas, the government distributed **essential commodities**

either free or at grossly reduced prices. One specific example was the donation of a bus to the Nkwanta Secondary school in the Volta Region during one of Acheampong's regional tours immediately before the referendum. The majority of votes in the Nkwanta constituency were cast in favour of **Unigov.** Many people in the Nkwanta ward stated that they were persuaded into endorsing **Unigov** by what they described as Acheampong's 'generosity'.

Rumours that Acheampong used material benefits to buy support for his **Unigov** proposal became authoritative after Acheampong was removed from office by his SMC colleagues and after the SMC was overthrown by Rawlings in June 1979. Following the removal of Acheampong, his SMC colleagues accused him of committing a number of offences, including the following: 'personally interfering in the economic and financial management of the country'; 'interfering in the normal operation of the Bank of Ghana thus causing the over-printing and over-issue of cedi notes'; 'indiscriminate personal and arbitrary issue of import licenses to favourites and close associates and awarding contracts to incompetent contractors'; and 'personally granting undeserved concessions to favourites and business houses in contravention of existing government policies and regulations' (**Armed Forces (Miscellaneous Provisions) Decree).** Evidence produced before the Archer Commission, set up by General Akuffo, which probed the Cocoa Marketing Board also showed that Acheampong authorised the use of large sums of money from the funds of the Cocoa Marketing Board to finance the **Unigov** referendum (Oquaye 1980:47). Copies of letters Acheampong had written to some officials at the Ministry of Trade directing that import licenses be granted to his associates were also published after the overthrow of the SMC by Rawlings

and his colleagues in June 1979 (cf Oquaye 1980: 33-36). These disclosures gave credence to the rumours after 1973 that Acheampong was actively promoting **kalabule.**

(7.4.4) Divide-And-Rule

Acheampong also adopted divide-and-rule strategies during the **Unigov** period to obtain support and to neutralise opposition to his government. This involved the sponsorhip of splinter groups from some of the associations and organizations opposed to **Unigov.** Two examples illustrate Acheampong's use of this strategy.

The first anti-government association Acheampong tried to break was the Ghana Medical Association, one of the constituents of the Association of Recognised Professional Bodies. In October 1977, a group of doctors calling themselves the 'Progressive Medical Officers' formed the Association of Soviet-trained Doctors. The members of this association had received their professional training from eastern European medical schools. They were accorded lower status in the Ghana medical profession on the grounds that their qualifications were inferior to those of their Ghanaian counterparts trained in western Europe, North America or Ghana.

The Association of Soviet-trained Doctors broke away from the Ghana Medical Association. It also affirmed its support to Acheampong for his 'dedication and selfless course in leading the nation', and stated that its members had supported Acheampong since 1972 and therefore deemed themselves the 'disciples of the good message of Union Government' (quoted in Acheampong 1978: 231). Acheampong directed that the members

of the association be promoted to the ranks of doctors trained in western Europe, North America and Ghana, and that back-pay be given to them, retroactive to the dates they were enrolled in the Ghana medical profession (cf Acheampong 1978: 321). The alliance between Acheampong and the eastern-European-trained doctors proved particularly useful to the SMC after the referendum when these doctors refused to join the professionals' strike organised against the SMC's handling of the referendum (cf Chapter 8 below).

Acheampong, as had Nkrumah and Busia before him (cf Gerritsen 1972), also tried to infiltrate the Ghana Bar Association. This was the most vocal of the professional groups that led the opposition to the SMC and **Unigov**. It was the Bar Association's resolution in September 1976, demanding the transfer of power to civilian administration, which precipitated the **Unigov** proposal and subsequent conflict. Early in 1978 a group of lawyers announced their decision to break away from the Bar Association. The group, comprising Kofi Gyambrah of Sunyani and D.K. Poku-Amanfo of Kumasi, formed a rival association, the Congress of Ghana Lawyers (**Daily Graphic** 30 January 1978). The Congress attacked the Bar Association 'for kicking against the proposed **Unigov**' (quoted in **West Africa** 13 February 1978: 314). The Bar Association denied that the Congress of Ghana Lawyers even existed and stated that 'the comment of its formation was calculated to discredit and embarrass the Ghana Bar Association on its stand against Union Government' (Ghana Bar Association Public Statement No.5 March 15 1978). Nevertheless members of the Congress continued to campaign in favour of **Unigov**. It was a Congress member , Poku-Amanfo, who championed the campaign aimed at making

Acheampong the first President under **Unigov**. He also recommended that Acheampong be awarded a 'Honorary Doctorate Degree in Civil Law or in Political Science for mooting the **Unigov** concept which professors from Harvard, Oxford or London University never thought of' (Poku-Amanfo 1978: 4).

While there was no direct evidence that Acheampong sponsored the Congress of Ghana Lawyers, his conduct in relation to the Soviet-trained doctors, led to the suspicion that he had similarly sponsored the Congress . It was rumoured that Acheampong allocated large sums of money to members of these splinter groups and regularly allocated **essential commodities** or government contracts to their members. Like many such rumours, this was validated by the revelations of Acheampong's corrupt practices after his overthrow.

(7.4.5) Publicity

Publicity, gaining public attention and, consequently, approval was another strategy the SMC utilised to win support during the **Unigov** period. As part of this strategy, Acheampong undertook tours of the nine administrative regions, in many cases, visiting remote villages. Acheampong's statements and activities during these visits provided the clearest illustration of the contents of his propaganda. A government publication provided the following description:

> The year 1977 also saw the Head of State in an unprecedented country-wide tour which took him to many small towns which had never received a Head of State before. It was on these visits that one had a vivid idea of the hope that the ordinary Ghanaian had for the qualities of General Acheampong as a

> leader. His message on all these trips was simple - love, peace, unity and harmony for Ghanaians, and the need to evolve a system of government which would promote these ideals (quoted in Acheampong 1978: 14)

Acheampong used these occasions to outline and announce the development projects his government had brought to Ghana since 1972. For example, at Kpando Acheampong enumerated his achievements for the Volta Region:

> the ¢4.5 million water project which will cover the entire Kpando District; the ¢12 million Ho District Water Supply and the Anum Water Supply; the ¢½ million electricity supply for Kpando; the fishing harbour complex at Torkor; the ¢10 million Regional Hospital at Ho; the State Registered Nurse School and hygiene School Complex and roads construction, in the area... With these few projects from the long catalogue of Government developments in the region there can be no doubt that no other regime has ever been so conscious of the needs of the Volta Region as the Supreme Military Council Government (Acheampong 1978: 195).

The media also carried daily reports on demonstrations in favour of **Unigov**, speeches and addresses of various **Unigov** campaigners, and the government sponsored radio and television programmes which highlighted the virtues of **Unigov**. A television series called **The Search** aimed at discrediting party politics. Radio Ghana adopted the song 'Nkabom Aban' (**Unigov** in the Twi language) as its signature tune and this was played frequently. Oquaye observed that 'there was endless advertisement on radio and television in favour of **Unigov** and that 'whether one was walking down the street, no five minutes went by without hearing a song on **Unigov** followed by various incantations and exhortations, urging one to vote for **Unigov**' (Oquaye 1980: 84). In addition the Information Services Department undertook exercises code-named 'Operation Talking-Drum'. These involved the distribution of leaflets in many parts of the country, sometimes with the use of helicopters and military aircraft,

explaining the virtues of **Unigov**. Mobile cinema vans toured the rural areas with loudspeakers singing songs in praise of Acheampong and **Unigov**, screening films about Acheampong and Nkrumah and handing out **essential commodities** or selling them at reduced prices.

During the **Unigov** conflict, Acheampong tried to manipulate Ghanaians' reverence for God by linking government and state to the supernatural. In January 1977, Acheampong proclaimed a three-day period of 'National Meditation and Repentance'. Special church services were held throughout the country. In a speech to the nation to mark the 'repentance' week, Acheampong stated: 'I am confident that if we wake ourselves up and listen only to the Universal Mind, victory will certainly be ours' (Acheampong 1978: 154). Acheampong further claimed that the **Unigov** proposal was an inspiration from God (**Pioneer** 27 February 1978).

Acheampong also invited religious personalities from abroad to give spiritual support to **Unigov**. These foreign clerical visitors included Benson Idahosa (the Nigerian evangelist) and the Brazilian, Geziel Gomez (Acheampong 1978 **passim**). The most celebrated of these visitors were two Americans, Mrs. Elizabeth Clare Prophet and Morris Cerullo. Clare Prophet became famous for her 'Holy Trinity' doctrine of **Unigov**. According to her, the military representation in **Unigov** was equivalent to the Father, the professionals and students the Son and the urban working class and the rural peasants together denoted the Holy Ghost (**Pioneer** 30 January 1978). The import of Clare Prophet's message was explicit: if **Unigov** was a revelation from God, and if it was endorsed by the prophets of God, then Ghanaians had a divine obligation to accept **Unigov**.

The government-owned **Daily Graphic** summed up this exhortation thus:

> ardent Christians know the Spritual predictions in favour of Union Government are bound to come to pass... Mrs. Prophet speaks from a plane of God-knowledge where she cannot go wrong in her proclamation that Union Government is good and will succeed... The evangelist of world repute, Dr. Morris Cerullo, has come to emphasise it - Union Government will succeed... The voice of the people is the voice of God, and we shall hear it on Referendum day (**Daily Graphic** (Editorial) 6 February 1978: 2).

Demonstrations in favour of **Unigov** became daily routine during the lead up to the referendum. Many people participated in these demonstrations only for material benefits. Among the several demonstrations in furtherance of **Unigov** was one by group which described itself as the 'Association of Been-Tos' ('Been-To' in Ghanaian usage refers to a person who has been abroad). Members of this association drove in cars and carried placards some of which read: 'God Bless Acheampong'; 'We are So Pleased SMC'; 'Forward on the Right Path'; 'The Masses Are aware of the Traitors'; 'Who Next After Kwame?' (Acheampong 1978: 161-2). A spokesman for the association later stated that 'having travelled widely and having lived in worse situations, we owe it as our patriotic duty to the nation to explain to fellow Ghanaians that our present circumstances are not peculiar to us' (quoted in Acheampong 1978: 162).

(7.4.6) Intimidation

A more sinister strategy the Acheampong regime employed during the **Unigov** conflict was the intimidation of opponents, either through violence or the threatened use of violence. The government officially and unofficially condoned impetuosity by military and police personnel or members of sponsored associations against opponents of **Unigov**. The

joint pastoral letter of the Catholic hierarchy of Ghana described that violence:

> it includes absolutely inexcusable and damnable thuggery, including the shameful stripping of a lady tutor of the Advanced Teacher Training College of all her clothes and subjecting her to treatment that is too shameful, criminal and inhuman to mention in this pastoral letter. It includes the unwarranted, vicious, vile and bloody beating up of students, headmasters and teachers of Opoku Ware Secondary School and of other peace-loving citizens of the country... It includes unnecessary excessive use of violence and force by some officers of the Peace and the neglect of their duty to prevent assault on peaceful citizens by violent thugs disturbing public order and peace (quoted in the **Standard** 19 March 1978).

On 12 October, 1977, the Association of Recognised Professional Bodies (ARPB) organised a symposium at the Accra Community Centre to discuss the **Unigov** proposal. The symposium was disrupted by thugs wearing 'T-shirts' bearing the photographs of Acheampong. The thugs beat up the organizers of the symposium and members of the public. Ironically, although there were many police and military officers around at the time of the incident, no attempt was made to stop the thugs, nor were any arrests made. The ARPB accused the government of masterminding the attack on its members, but Acheampong denied this and stated: 'We do not support violence and we have therefore condemned it. Anyone who is molesting you for not accepting **Unigov**, let me know and I will deal with him' (quoted in **West Africa** 30 January 1978: 218). The Ghana Bar Association filed writs against the Peace and Solidarity Council, the Ga Adangbme Youth Association and four people, including S.O. Lamptey ('special aide' to Acheampong) in connection with the events of 12 October. The government responded to the Bar Association's legal undertaking by issuing the **Union Government (Civil) Proceedings Decree 1977** (SMC

Decree No.139) which gave legal protection to the respondents. The decree provided, among other things, that no court could 'entertain any civil proceedings against any person out of, or in connection with the Symposium, lectures or rally held on 12th October 1977 at the Accra Community Centre in relation to the proposal for Union Government for Ghana or any matter connected therewith'. The decree also stipulated that any such action pending in the courts was to stop. This indicated a **post hoc** involvement by the government in the October 12 incident.

A second aspect of the use of intimidation consisted of the threat of the use of force. Acheampong personally threatened several times that his government would have recourse to force to prevent dissent and opposition. For example, during the professionals' strike in June 1977, the government published the following admonitory statement: 'the government, therefore issues a stern and final warning to all concerned, especially the professionals that if they do not go back to their posts within the next 24 hours from now, it will not shirk its responsibility not only to maintain law and order but also to ensure that the services to our people are provided' (quoted from Acheampong 1978: 164-5). On 27 March, 1978, Acheampong alleged that the government had uncovered a plot by the opposition to disrupt the referendum. Acheampong warned: 'We have got a compiled list of all their names and if they like, they should attempt it to see whether there is military power in the country or not' (quoted in **Ghanaian Times** 28 March 1978: 1).

During the **Unigov** period, many members of the opposition such as W.A.N. Adumua-Bossman (President of the Ghana Bar Association) and Harry Sawyerr (a surveyor, ex-MP and prominent member of the ARPB) received

anonymous letters threatening their lives (**Africa Confidential** 16 December 1977: 3). One such letter, entitled 'Let Sanity Prevail' (purportedly written by the 'Revolutionary Brigade' based in Burma Camp, (one of the Military Barracks in Accra) and addressed to the professionals opposed to Acheampong stated:

> Following pressure on the Government of the SMC to resign, the Head of State, General I.K. Acheampong has fixed a date for return to Constitutional rule. We are told by some of the so-called professional bodies that the reasons for this pressure - which we think is uncalled for - is that the SMC and for that matter soldiers and policemen have been found to be corrupt and inefficient as far as managing the economy of Ghana is concerned.
>
> As far as we soldiers are concerned, the SMC has done its best and should, therefore, not be forced out of office overnight...
>
> No government has ever been ousted in the manner in which the 'professionals' want it done. The SMC should not be the first. We do not intend to sit idly by and see our leaders being harrassed by corrupt and incompetent lawyers, doctors etc
>
> We want to sound a word of warning here. We shall not allow anybody to take over from the SMC prior to 1st July 1979. Remember that we are also an organized professional body which can dispose of any civilian government on the day it is formed. This time, we will fire to kill. We will not attempt to form any government. All we want to demonstrate is that any government, whether military or civilian, needs both the Armed Forces and the Police to stay in power. This support can only be guaranteed if we all stick to the programme announced by the SMC. We know that no government can disband the Armed Forces and the Police Force. That will be suicidal.
>
> We will not allow ourselves to be pushed around by a bunch of idiots who think they know everything.

It is immaterial whether the government directly or indirectly, overtly or covertly, initiated these actions. To the extent that the acts were performed under the auspices of the government's propaganda machinery, they may, in a broader sense, be said to form part of the

SMC's over-all campaign strategy.

(7.4.7) Suppression

The last, but by no means the least, of the strategies the Acheampong regime used during the **Unigov** conflict was the suppresson of dissent and opposition. It is necessary to distinguish Acheampong's strategy of suppression from that of intimidation, since suppression in this context implies the use of legal and administrative authority to control dissent and opposition, while intimidation is unlicensed.

Under the **Prohibition of Rumours Decree 1977** (SMCD 92), any person who by print, writing, painting or word of mouth 'publishes or reproduces any statement, rumour or report which is false and likely to cause fear or alarm or despondency to the public or to disturb the public peace and to cause dissatisfacton against the Sumpreme Military Council or the National Redemption Council among the public or among members of the Armed Forces or the Police Force' was guilty of an offence. Furthermore, 'any person who with intent to bring the Head of State and the Chairman of the SMC or a member of the NRC into hatred, ridicule or contempt publishes any defamatory or insulting matter, either by writing, word of mouth, painting e.t.c., committed an offence'. In either case, the penalty was imprisonment for five to ten years.

There are no records of any prosecutions under the Rumours Decree. But its mere presence on the statute books was a threat to the opponents of the government, although the decree did not prevent rumours being spread about Acheampong and his government. There were rumours about

corruption within the government and about the social activities of members of the government. Most of these rumours were spread through pamphlets. Some of the rumours were viciously calculated to provoke the government.

To a large extent, the government's own campaign strategies promoted the spread of rumours. By suppressing free public debate of the **Unigov** proposal, the government encouraged its opponents to resort to pamphleteering and rumour-mongering. As the Peoples Movement For Freedom and Justice (PMFJ) noted: 'we have had to resort to this method of communication with the people of this country and the outside world too because we have been denied the only other effective mode of propagating our ideas, that is, at open public rallies and symposia' (PMFJ 1977: 1).

Another example of Acheampong's use of decree to suppress his opponents was the enactment of the **Professional Bodies Registration (Repeal) Decree** (SMCD 103) directed at the Association of Recognised Professional Bodies (ARPB). The legal existence of the ARPB was based on the **Professional Bodies Registration Decree** (NRCD 143) of 1973, enacted by the NRC. This decree accorded legal and statutory recognition to many professional groups in the country. During the **Unigov** period, these professional associations came together to form the ARPB. In the middle of the professionals' strike the government issued the **Professional Bodies Registration (Repeal) Decree**. The decree proscribed all existing professional associations, abolished the formation of new associations on professional basis and froze the assets and bank accounts of all existing professional associations. According to a government statement

the repeal of NRCD 143 was necessary to 'put a stop to blatant and unwarranted abuse and to end the unnecessary hardship being inflicted on the general public' by the activities of the ARPB (quoted in **West Africa** 18 July 1977: 1497).

Suppression was also exemplified by control of the press, contrary to Acheampong's assurance that 'the people are free to say their minds on the Union Government concept, for or against' (quoted in **West Arfica** 20 February 1978: 375). Dissenting views on **Unigov** were never published by the government-owned press. An editorial of the **Pioneer** lamented this:

> those who anticipate a confused system of administration devoid of any political philosophy and cohesion in the so-called Union Government have no means of conveying their views to their fellow countrymen without constraints because the SMC Government, which is supposed to be neutral in matters of this nature, is in itself an arch advocate of the Union Government idea and therefore its news media do not publish any view that run counter to its own (**Pioneer** 18 November 1977).

The private press was harrassed by the government. The editors of private newspapers complained of government pressures on them not to publish views contrary to **Unigov.** The government also warned private newspapers that it would revoke the licenses of those papers critical of **Unigov** in accordance with the **Newspaper Licensing Decree** issued in 1974, which had made it an offence to publish and/or circulate any newspaper without a license from the government . The editor of the **Believer,** Gab Akron (alias Apostle Barnabas), was arrested and detained for publishing views critical of **Unigov.** The supporters of **Unigov** also urged Acheampong on several occasions to ban the **Standard** and the **Pioneer** for

their negative views on **Unigov** (Ghanaian Times **15 March 1978).**

Finally, the government used administrative procedures to suppress the activities of its opponents. Many of the opponents of **Unigov** complained that the police refused to give them permits to organise rallies and demonstrations. In February 1977, the PMFJ lamented that 'so far we have put in three applications for permits to hold rallies at Accra, Cape Coast and Sekondi/Takoradi and all of them have been summarily rejected by the Police' (PMFJ 1977: 1).

(7.5) Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the decision by Acheampong in July 1977 to hold a referendum on the **Unigov** proposals was a significant legitimation tactic. The wide range of strategies Acheampong utilised to win support for a union government displayed the importance the SMC attached to the **Unigov** proposal and the referendum. We saw that both the champions and the opponents of **Unigov** came from the hegemonical social classes in Ghana. We also saw that the opposition had a considerable Busiaist component. Given this composition of the opposition - mainly people who were pro-Western/capitalist, committed to liberal democracy, and in whom 'a permanent wish for identification with the bourgeois representatives of the mother country is to be found' (Fanon 1963: 143), Acheampong's use of a referendum as a legitimation strategy appeared a prudent political device though, as we shall see in the next chapter, it ultimately proved futile.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE UNION GOVERNMENT REFERENDUM

> It is interesting that absolutist regimes should think it worthwhile to turn to the ballot box and, by intimidation of voters or fraudulent counting, produce the implausible unanimity that has characterised so large a proportion of referendums. But dictators seem reluctant to accept the prima facie implausibility of any society recording a consensus of 999 to 1 ... The few cases where military regimes have held referendums which yield less than 90 per cent support are much the most challenging to the analyst of nondemocratic governments. Perhaps the most remarkable result was in Ghana in April 1978, where despite tight military control of the country the vote to establish a "no party state" was reported as only 50 per cent Yes (Butler and Ranney 1978: 9).

(8.1) Introduction

We saw in the previous chapter that Acheampong decided to hold a referendum on the **Unigov** proposal in the wake of mounting opposition to the SMC and **Unigov**. It was argued that the **raison d'etre** for the referendum resolution was to enhance the legitimacy of the SMC and to endow a future **Unigov** with some legitimacy. This chapter concentrates on the **Unigov** referendum and is divided into four sections. The first highlights the ambiguities inherent in the referendum question and argues that these were integral to the government's campaign tactics. The second section demonstrates how political and economic conditions in the country at the time of the referendum confused the issues for determination at the polls. The third section analyses the results of the referendum, showing that the referendum failed to reinforce the legitimacy of the SMC. The last section analyses the factors that explain the fall of Acheampong shortly after the referendum.

(8.2) The Issues at the Referendum

The way in which issues to be decided at a referendum are defined is important in interpreting the outcome of the polls and in influencing how people vote (Butler and Ranney 1978: 16-17). For example, when the issues are well publicized, people's participation in the referendum may increase because they know exactly what is at stake; but when the question is confused potential voters may be drawn away from the polls. According to Butler and Ranney; 'a loaded question may cause resentment and actually be counter-productive' (Butler and Ranney 1978: 17).

A government which is not sure of its popularity may deliberately choose the format of the referendum question to suit its purpose. The trend in many developing countries where referenda have been used is for governments to leave the wording of the question which is put to the voters vague. This strategy allows the government to interpret the outcome of the referendum in any way it likes (Marques and Smith 1982:25). The **Unigov** referendum proved no exception. On the face of it, the issues to be determined by the **Unigov** referendum were simple and non-controversial. The ballot papers for the referendum contained the inscriptions: **UNION GOVERNMENT YES** and **UNION GOVERNMENT NO.** Taking the ballot papers at their face value, it appears that Ghanaian voters were required to endorse or reject the **Unigov** proposal. In reality, however, the meanings of 'Yes' and 'No' votes at the referendum were not easily discernible.

The uncertainties surrounding the interpretations of 'Yes' and 'No' votes related to the fact that two versions of **Unigov** existed at the

time Ghanaians went to the polls. These were the Ad Hoc Committee's version and the SMC's version. The two differed considerably. The main difference concerned the nature of army and police participation in **Unigov**. The report of the Ad Hoc Committee distinguished two types of army and police participation in the **Unigov**: active and non-active participation. Active participation implied automatic membership of the army and the police in the government and therefore direct involvement in decision making and the business of government, while non-active participation implied only membership of various advisory bodies on the fringe of government.

The Ad Hoc Committee report favoured non-active participation of the army and police in the **Unigov**. Accordingly, the Committee recommended ex-officio representation of army and police officers on a number of bodies such as the Council of State, the Forces Advisory Council and the National Security and Defence Council (Ad Hoc Committee Report 1977: 90-95). The Committee also recommended that the 'participation of individual Army and Police Officers should be conceded having in mind the right of all Ghanaians to stand for elections, and that, while in the past resignation from the Forces and other sections of the public service would be necessary under the laws, these laws should be reviewed and persons standing for elections given Leave of Absence' (Ad Hoc Committee Report 1977: 100).

The government for its part favoured the active participation of the army and police in the **Unigov**. From the inception of the **Unigov** debate several members of the government consistently presented this view. Thus according to Acheampong, 'talking about civilian rule, I do

not really mean full civilian rule, there must be military-police participation if you really want to see any peace and harmony in this country' (quoted in Ad Hoc Committee Report 1977: 144). Even after the Ad Hoc Committee presented its report, the government continued to campaign in favour of the active participation of the army and police in the **Unigov**, and thereby blurred the distinction between active and non-active military-police participation. A day before the referendum, the government-owned **Ghanaian Times** gave seventeen reasons why Ghanaians ought to vote in support of **Unigov**. One was that 'UG [**Unigov**] sees and will see reason in encouraging the participation of the mili - tary and police in political administration and management of the affairs of state besides their conventional role of defence and maintenance of law and order in the entire polity' (**Ghanaian Times** 29 March 1978: 4). After the referendum, the government made its position known more clearly and forcefully. In an interview with **West Africa**, Acheampong said: 'personally I would advise participation (active participation of the military and police) as I think it would make for further stability. If the military were not part of the government it is possible that the opposition would approach them in times of difficulty and this would create an atmosphere of uncertainty' (cited in **West Africa** 5 June 1978: 1058). Earlier, Acheampong asserted that soldiers by themselves had no political ambitions, but that it was always the opposition parties which sought military assistance for a change of government (**West Africa** 23 May 1978: 165). The active participation of the military and police in the **Unigov** was basic to the SMC's **Unigov** proposal.

Despite the divergence of views between the Ad Hoc Committee's report and the SMC in respect of army and police participation in the

Unigov, the government accepted the recommendations of the Committee without exception. However, the government failed to follow customary practice in not issuing a **White Paper** on the report. This failure seems a deliberate tactic. The findings of the Committee were presented at a time when the government was under severe criticism from its opponents. Significantly, the issue of army and police participation in the **Unigov** was one base of the opposition attack. The opposition groups argued that the SMC was attempting to perpetuate military rule in Ghana by advocating active participation of the army and police in government. By leaving the issue of army and police participation undecided, the government sought to disarm its opponents. This seems the reason why the SMC allowed the Ad Hoc Committee to reach and publicise a view contrary to the government's position. The SMC was able to use the Ad Hoc Committee's findings to put off any criticisms by the opposition in respect of the representation of the Forces in the **Unigov** by arguing that the Ad Hoc Committee report provided the sole framework for the referendum. The SMC accused its opponents on several occasions of debating **Unigov** out of context by neglecting the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee (cf. e.g. **West Africa** 6 March 1978: 497). At the same time, however, the government was canvassing its own contrary option.

The divergence between the findings of the Ad Hoc Committee and the ambiguous position of the government in respect of army and police participation in the **Unigov** created some uncertainties at the time of the referendum. These were at two levels: Did a 'Yes' majority mean a vote for **Unigov** according to the SMC?; Did a 'No' majority mean a rejection of **Unigov** according to either version, or an approval of party politics, or the continuation of Acheampong's rule? The Constitutional

Commission set up by Acheampong and later reconstituted by Akuffo accurately summed up the position:

> the issues in debate were clouded over with irrelevancies and obfuscated to a point where those who supported the idea of 'Union Government' did not really know for sure what it was they were supporting, and those who opposed it were not at all sure what they were opposed to. Neither could the deliberations and the Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Union Government; the Government's reaction to it or the manner in which the debate on the report was conducted help to clarify matters in any way. A combination of negative factors made it utterly impossible for most of the ordinary people of Ghana to identify the issues and to take a position on the issues purely on merit and argument. These included the absence of a definite and integrated set of conclusions and recommendations from the Ad Hoc Committee, the lack of clear statement from the Government as to which of the several possibilities canvassed by the Ad Hoc Committee were in line with the Government's thinking or acceptable to it, the deliberate and sometimes violent campaign to prevent a really meaningful examination of the issues, some of which remained bewilderingly nebulous, the attitude of total and uncompromising rejection by the professional classes and the attitude of take-it-or-lump-it on the part of the Government. (Ghana 1978:6)

Different and equally persuasive views may be expressed on each of the issues posed at the referendum. On the one hand, a 'Yes' majority could be interpreted to mean endorsement of the **Unigov** design of the Ad Hoc Committee. This view was strengthened by the fact that the government accepted the recommendations contained in the report and made constant references to it before the referendum and reminded its opponents many times that the findings of the committee provided the only framework for the referendum (see, e.g. **West Africa** 6 March 1978: 497). It was equally probable that the government's version of **Unigov** was more authentic. By omitting to issue a **White Paper** on the report, the government rendered it a set of non-binding recommendations which could be either rejected or accepted at any time. By conducting much of its campaign in uniform and by the constant reminders that **Unigov** inclu-

ded active military and police participation, the SMC implicitly and explicitly made it clear that a 'Yes' majority signified **Unigov** with active participation of the army and police.

Similar confusion was likely if the referendum were lost. On the one hand, a 'No' majority could imply the endorsement of party politics. This interpretation gained support from the government's campaign, emphasising the vices of party politics. The government, by implication, made party politics the alternative to **Unigov**. However, it was also possible that a 'No' majority did not imply endorsement of party politics. A careful reading of the Ad Hoc Committee report and the various statements on **Unigov** made by government members suggests that the possibility of party politics was foreclosed by the very terms of reference of the Committee and the **Unigov** concept. Even before the referendum the government had decided that party politics was undesirable for Ghana and that it should be abolished. The Ad Hoc Committee was simply required 'to collate veiws on **Unigov** and to find the forms which that system of government should take (cf Ad Hoc Committee Report 1977: 1). According to the Committee, 'in the performance of this task we are given only one factor, and this factor is that what we are aiming at should be a union form of Government' (Ad Hoc Committee Report 1977: 2). The Ad Hoc Committee contradicted itself when it stated elsewhere that it saw its assignment partly in terms of whether Ghana should adopt **Unigov** or retain the party form of politics (Ad Hoc Committee Report 1977: 2).

It can be seen that there was no clear indication of the implications of any particular result in the referendum. It is possible that the SMC deliberately left the issues obscure in order that it could

translate the outcome of the referendum to its advantage, especially if 'Yes' failed to gain majority support. A 'Yes' majority would allow the government to introduce any version of **Unigov** and a 'No' majority would justify the continuation of SMC rule.

(8.3.0) Political and Economic Conditions as Referendum Issues

Problems of interpretation, formal constitutional issues and the contents of the Ad Hoc Committee report had become irrelevant by the close of the campaign. Two issues became relevant by the time the referendum took place on 30 March , 1978. The first related to the political and economic conditions in Ghana. The second and less important was the manner in which the government conducted its referendum campaign.

To the opponents of the government, the referendum provided the opportunity to discuss the efficacy of the Acheampong regime and to express their dissatisfaction with the government. The political and economic condition of Ghana completely overshadowed the constitutional debate. As we shall see below, instead of **Unigov**, people debated the shortages of **essential commodities** , food, corruption within the government and the government's disregard of the'rule of law'. These became the major issues of the referendum.

In the end, the referendum was regarded by both sides in the **Unigov** conflict as a vote of confidence in the SMC. The PMFJ for example explicitly stated that 'we consider the referendum as a matter of confidence or no confidence in the administration of the SMC... If therefore the referendum is held...and the 'No' wins, we would expect the SMC

Government to resign forthwith and hand over power to an interim administration to return the country to democratic civilian rule' (PMFJ 24 February 1978: 7). An anonymous open letter addressed to Acheampong a few days before the referendum echoed this view: 'you are to note that if you are defeated in this referendum, you will have to resign and go back to the Barracks where you properly belong'.

The government on its side used the referendum campaign to draw attention to the 'numerous' development projects it had instituted since 1972 and urged voters to endorse the **Unigov** proposal if they wanted such projects to continue. For example, speaking at the launching of the Friends (one of the associations the government sponsored to support **Unigov**) at Senya Berekum, Colonel Jackson, after recounting all the 'modern facilities' the SMC government had provided for the area, concluded: 'if you want the government to continue with the good things provided for you, then vote for Union Government' (quoted in **Ghanaian Times** 13 March 1978: 11). This approach on the part of the government was in part responsible for making the referendum appear a vote of confidence in it, because,'by using a 'Yes' vote on Union Government and continually linking that demand to self-congratulatory statements about the progress it had brought to Ghana since 1972, the SMC lost no opportunity to convey the message that rejecting Union Government would also mean rejecting the SMC's beneficial rule' (Chazan and Le Vine 1979: 180).

The **Unigov** referendum came to assume far more importance than might have been originally intended by the government. The dissatisfaction of various social groups with the government, resulting from economic con-

ditions in the country, coupled with the government's handling of the campaign leading to the referendum (discussed in the last chapter), significantly obscured the real issues of the referendum. **Rather than enhancing the legitimacy of the government, the referendum opened the entire record of the Acheampong government to public scrutiny.**

> By allowing a referendum even on a carefully defined topic, the military regime opened its overall record to public review. In a very real sense, therefore, the referendum provided voters with an opportunity to make a statement on the achievements and/or failure of the Acheampong government and to discuss and evaluate current conditions in Ghana (Chazan and Le Vine 1979: 180).

In effect, the **Unigov** referendum released forces pent up since Acheampong assumed power in 1972. Throughout the conflict, there were hardly any constitutional arguments advanced against **Unigov,** the opposition's strategy was to demand the resignation of Acheampong on other grounds to be outlined below . The distinction between **Unigov** and the SMC became blurred during the conflict. **Unigov,** Acheampong and the SMC became one and the same issue. This view was reflected in the attitudes of both the supporters and opponents of **Unigov.** It became difficult to distinguish between opposition to **Unigov** on the one hand and opposition to the SMC on the other.

The Busiaist **camp's** opposition to **Unigov** and the SMC reflected its resentment at overthrow by Acheampong in January 1972. Many Busiaists had never regarded the Acheampong government as legitimate; the PMFJ even described the Acheampong coup as 'absolutely unjustifiable and highly unnecessary' (PMFJ 2978: 5). As we saw in chapter four, as early as in July 1972, barely five months after Acheampong came into power, his government claimed that it had discovered a plot by some Busia sup-

porters to subvert the NRC. The **Unigov** crisis provided a unique opportunity for the Busia supporters to revive their 'subversive activities' against Acheampong and his government. The apprehension the SMC developed over the opposition may be partly understood by reference to the hostility between the government and the Busiaist **camp**. It was in this sense that Chazan and Le Vine argued that 'the NRC and Busia connection [of the opponents of Acheampong] served as a sharp reminder that it was, after all, the elected, civilian Busia regime to which the NLC had voluntarily ceded power which Acheampong and his colleagues had overthrown' (Chazan and Le Vine 1979: 185). Acheampong was unsuccessful in placating the Busiaist **camp**. He had tried to do this by authorising loans to some members of this **camp** and by advocating reconciliation (cf 5.6.2).

A careful reading of the resolutions passed and statements issued by the opposition groups particularly the professionals and academics reveal at least five principal reasons for their objection to **Unigov** and SMC. None of these touched on the constitutional debate. They included: the loss of their privileged status; the contempt in which Acheampong held the professionals and the academics; shortages of, and high prices for **essential commodities**; corruption in the government; and the SMC's disregard for the 'rule of law' and 'human rights'. These factors, which support the case that the factors outlined in chapter five eroded the legitimacy of the Acheampong regime, are discussed below.

(8.3.1) Loss of Status

The first reason for the government's opponents' rejection of **Unigov** and their challenge to the legitimacy of the SMC, concerned their envy at the luxury and enhanced social status which the relatively less

educated body of the military and police officials enjoyed in contrast to the continued deterioration in the standards of living of the professionals and academics (Botchwey 1981: 124). A related source of rivalry and animosity was the emergence of new breeds of business people; referred to in Ghana as **kalabule** people. These people mostly comprised 'big turbaned, pretty women' (Oquaye 1980: 17), secondary and middle school graduates and wives and girlfriends of military officers.

The **kalabule** people were a creation of Acheampong through patronage as a means of gaining support. The Ghana University Teachers Association (GAUT) described this as 'bureaucratic clientage' (GAUT Statement, 1977: 7). We saw in chapter five that Acheampong excluded most professionals and former civilian politicians from his administration between 1972 and 1977, partly as a result of the 'colonization' of civilian jobs by the military. So it was imperative for Acheampong to create new bases of support. This he did through the use of state-regulatory resources - foreign exchange allocations, import licensing, award of state contracts, and allocation of **essential commodities**. During the Acheampong period, younger and less academically qualified people became rich through their privileged contacts with government officials. These **kalabule** elements drove 'the choicest cars and attended parties on end with Commissioners, top military men and their associates' (Oquaye 1980: 17), in contrast to the highly educated professionals and academics who found it increasingly difficult to support their families, let alone maintain their cars or afford new ones. The **Unigov** conflict paralleled the social conflict between the CPP and the UGCC, and later between the CPP and the UP, during earlier periods of Ghana's history - what is

often described as the conflict between the 'commoners' or the 'Verandah boys' in the CPP and the chiefs and intelligentsia in the UGCC and UP (Austin 1964: 1-102).

Acheampong's policies threatened the advantageous social status hitherto enjoyed by the professionals and academics. They were not only left out of Acheampong's reward system (**kalabule**), but also felt threatened in that their interests did not appear to be sufficiently safeguarded by the **Unigov** proposal. To the professionals and academics, their interests were being sacrificed by Acheampong for those of 'uneducated' elements in the Ghanaian society. Acheampong acknowledged this when he stated that the professionals and academics opposed **Unigov** because the proposal had 'upset their plans to promote their selfish interests' (Acheampong 1978: 139).

Resolutions passed by the opposition groups during the **Unigov** conflict revealed the level of their envy and resentment at the privileged status of the **kalabule** people. The GAUT, after complaining that the activities of the **kalabule** people 'have driven up the production costs of legitimate businessmen', lamented: 'evidence of opulent wealth in the form of new Mercedes and Audi cars and palatial mansions exists everywhere side by side with malnutrition and mass deprivation. Businessmen of all shades, regime officials and favourites are earning windfall profits' (GAUT 1977: 7). The clearest statement of this came from the University students.

> In the midst of scarcity and uncertainty of what you will eat tomorrow, the economic system has been manipulated to favour only a few who know the powerful senior Army men...Thus, a woman owns a fleet of over nine 60-seater Neoplan buses costing not less than ¢13,000 each. And illiterate women [and men?] have become the most important and inefficient

contractors riding teasingly in luxurious cars (quoted in **Focus** June 1977: 2).

(8.3.2) Acheampong's Contempt for Professionals/Academics

The professionals and academics also rejected **Unigov** because of their resentment of the SMC's 'colonization' of civilian jobs, coupled with the contempt with which the government viewed them. We saw in chapter five that between 1972 and 1976, Acheampong often made remarks about the superiority of the military over the civilians in matters of administering Ghana. We also saw in the same chapter that Acheampong 'militarised' all public institutions. The professionals and the academic establishment felt insulted by Acheampong's statements and this contributed to their antagonism.

This feeling was revealed during the referendum period. A statement by the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS), for example, complained that the government had forced soldiers 'on all parastatal and state organizations'. The statement noted with 'utter dismay and deep apprehension', the government's 'contempt for education', and went on: 'in fact, we have every reason...to believe that you [Acheampong] and your clique have no regard for the position of functional Universities like ours in nation-building' (NUGS 1977).

An anonymous pamphlet entitled: 'Has (**sic**) Acheampong and His Government any Respect for Ghanaians?' also brought out this statement:

> The arrogance of Kutu Acheampong and his henchmen has now exceeded all bounds of decency, and it is high time Ghanaians called off their bluff.

> Everyone knows that when ... Acheampong shot his way to power in 1972 - even the three year old child knew that he had not gone there through the ballot box. For him to impudently keep reminding Ghanaians of this fact not only clearly shows his lust for power and his vain belief in his own invincibility but it indicates his disrespect for Ghanaians.
>
> There is no doubt at all that Acheampong's disgraceful statements imply that he thinks all Ghanaians are stupid. But since all Ghanaians cannot be stupid, it only means that the Head of State is stupid. And if that is so, then he cannot lead us, because we can no longer tolerate the constant embarrassments going out of stupid statements of the "Head of State" .

To the professionals and the academics, the contempt with which the SMC government regarded them was also evidenced in the dismissals of some of their colleagues from their posts. In the early months of 1977 for example, the government dismissed Emmanuel Annor, Deputy Governor of the Bank of Ghana; E.N. Afful, Managing Director of the Agricultural Development Bank; and two professors of the Ghana Medical School. A resolution of the Association of Recognised Professional Bodies (ARPB) of July 1977 noted that 'it has become the pattern of the Government to find scapegoats for its failures by dismissing professional men of high calibre from their posts'. The resolution specifically mentioned the dismissals of the Chief Justice, the Deputy Governor of the Bank of Ghana and the two professors of the Ghana Medical School. According to the ARPB, these dismissals 'have shaken the confidence of both public officers at all levels and the people of this country' (ARPB Press Release July 1979).

(8.3.3) Shortages of Essential Commodities

The breakdown of the **essential commodities** distribution system under Acheampong's reign reinforced opposition to his government and the **Unigov** proposal. This was commonly described as Acheampong's 'misman-

agement' of the economy. By 1976, the economy was in serious trouble and one implication of this was the collapse of the **essential commodities** distribution system. Shortages led to disaffection with the government among the professionals and the academics, threatening their westernised lifestyle. Also their ancilliary activities were threatened, enhancing their resentment towards the **kalabule** people.

Resolutions and statements by various groups during the **Unigov** referendum displayed this concern. The GAUT statement of 1 July 1977 noted that:

> Ghana after five years of military Government has reached an unprecedented national crisis. The national economy has ground to a halt. The shops are lined with rows and rows of empty shelves. There are critical shortages of the most basic and essential imported and local commodities and queueing for long periods for the barest essentials such as soap, milk, sugar... has become the daily routine...

Another (anonymous) pamphlet entitled 'Five Years Under the SMC'stated:

> It is now a cliché to say any commodity is absent from the Ghanaian markets - from such basic commodities such as soap through toilet rolls to cars. Every thing is in short supply. Hours are spent looking for these things... Toothpaste has become a luxurious item in Ghana... The once happy go-lucky people of Ghana have now been subjected to institutionalised queueing for the most basic necessities'.

The items listed in the pamphlet revealed the class interest behind the statements contained in the pamphlet: 'for example, at the time of the 1972 coup a double-size inner spring (vono) mattress cost ¢30 but this same item now costs ¢240. Furniture sells over ¢2,000 a set, a bedstead from ¢100 to ¢300 in woodproducing Ghana. A table fan costs ¢300 and a dining table not less than ¢150. One can't walk into a shop and buy a car'.

(8.3.4) Corruption in Government (Kalabule)

Government corruption was another important issue in the referendum campaign. We saw in chapter five that rumours about the involvement of the Acheampong government in **kalabule** emerged around 1974. These rumours were used by the opponents of Acheampong in the referendum campaign to discredit the SMC, which became popularly known as the 'Supreme Money Choppers'.

A pamphlet entitled: 'Why Acheampong Must Go' listed evidence of his personal corruption: 'twenty million cedis interest in Kowus Motors. Six mansions in Nigeria. One palace at Danyame, Kumasi. Two million cedis import license for his girlfriend. £86,000 in foreign exchange for his wife, and many others...' The GAUT statement of July 1977 condemned the 'widespread corruption in the government and in the civil and military bureaucracies', and noted further:

> In Ghana today, virtually all contracts and supplies issued by the state bureaucracy - whether import licenses, essential commodities, or industrial equipment - demand their 'commission'. Commissioners, civil servants, military officers, GNTC and Logistics Committee Officers, all extract their commission. For a commission also, 'ghost' importers, bakers, **kenkey** sellers, and supermarkets operators - whose existence the SMC professes not to understand - are registered by State officials .

The students likewise condemned 'the rampant and apparently legalised corruption and misappropriation of public funds by members of the SMC government and by other highly-placed military men and civilians in Ghana', which, according to the students, 'invariably go unchecked simply because those in government who have direct responsibility to check these activities are themselves guilty of the same offences' (**Focus** July 1977: 2).

The ARPB also accused the government of placing in 'positions of trust in Ministries of State, State Organisations, certain persons most of whom are corrupt and/or incompetent' (ARPB Resolution 23 July 1977).

Most of the allegations of corruption against Acheampong and other members of his government were speculation. However, the pamphlet attacks represented widespread opinions about the government and were important in undermining the SMC and discrediting the **Unigov** proposal.

(8.3.5) The 'Rule of Law' and 'Human Rights'

Charges that the SMC disregarded the 'rule of law' and abused 'human rights' featured prominently in attacks on the legitimacy of the SMC and the rejection of the **Unigov** concept.

A NUGS's letter to Acheampong on the students' demonstrations against the government in May 1977 referred to the 'wanton and unwarranted brutality of soldiers and policemen against defenceless civilians' (Letter from NUGS to Acheampong nd). In another release, the NUGS' condemned 'the flagrant suppression of the most basic human rights of Ghanaian citizens and the naked brutal tortures and eventual murders of innocent citizens by the SMC government (**Focus** July 1977: 2).

The ARPB resolution of July 1977 outlined three examples of the SMC's disregard of 'human rights' and 'the rule of law'. These included contempt for the 'orderly process laid down in our laws and regulations', 'gross disregard for human life by causing to be sold to the general public for human consumption, unwholesome yellow maize sent from

Canada intended for poultry feed only' and the suppression of the press.

Similarly, the GAUT statement of July 1977 condemned the government's 'attempt to prevent free expression of opinion and criticism of the regime first by killing all independent newspapers', 'the routine brutality used by the police against striking workers and students', and 'the use of systematic torture on political prisoners, and the disturbing trend to Latin America type of military fascism' (GAUT 1977).

It was true that the government used violence and intimidation against its opponents. This was expecially so after 1974, when the government began to lose its popularity. The SMC's use of repressive measures increased during the **Unigov** conflict.

(8.4) Analysis of the Referendum Results

The situation as the referendum approached was uncertain because of the obscure nature of the official issues presented to the voters and the diversionary tactics pursued by the government's opponents who concentrated on Acheampong's record rather than the constitutional debate. That the referendum results were so ambivalent was a fatal blow to the SMC's legitimacy and ultimately brought the military regime down. The results of the referendum highlighted the contempt with which the initiators of the **Unigov** concept were viewed by its opponents. The conduct of the government in dealing with the results provided additional grounds for its opponents to challenge its legitimacy. Both of these features are analysed in the present section.

The results of the **Unigov** referendum were complicated and inconclusive; and the actual results may never be known. Two versions of the results were published by the government at different times, one on 3 April and the other on 21 April, 1978. The government-controlled press also published another set of the results. At the same time the opponents of the government claimed they were in possession of the 'correct' results, which they never disclosed. The controversy generated by the results, and the discrepancies that existed between the various results circulated produced differing analyses of the results. The problems outlined above are reflected in Chazan and Le Vine (1979), whose figures are different from those being used in this section. The discussion in this section is based on the results released by the Acting Electoral Commissioner, A.M. Quaye, on 3 April 1978, and the results gazetted on 21 April 1978, as compiled by Addae-Mensah and printed in the **Legon Observer** of 1 September 1978: 2. The following tables provide summaries of some of the aspects of the results relevant to the argument. Table 1(a) shows the discrepancies in the aggregate national results. Table 1(b) displays the results in Table 1(a) in percentage terms. Table 2 illustrates the discrepancies in the results of some selected constituencies.

Table 1(a)

Type of Vote	3 April Results	21 April Results	Increase/Decrease	Increase/ Decrease as % of 3 April result
Total Registered	4,614,767	4,497,803	- 116,964	- 2.8
Total Valid	4,983,678	2,282,813	+ 299,135	+ 19.8
Yes	1,103,423	1,372,427	+ 269,004	+ 24.4
No	880,255	910,386	+ 30,131	+ 3.4

Table 1(b)

Type of %	3 April Results	21 April Results
Total valid votes as % of total registered	43	51
Yes votes as % of total registered	24	31
No votes as % of total registered	19	20
Yes votes as % of total valid	56	60
No votes as % of total valid	44	40

Table 2 (Discrepancies in some selected constituencies)

CONSTITUENCY	April 3 Results		April 21 Results		Differences	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Kwame Danso	6,567	7,574	6,985	3,858	+418	- 3,716
Twifu-Heman-Denkyira	7,811	4,506	19,811	4,506	+12,000	No Change
Effutu-Awutu-Senya	9,892	3,334	19,892	3,334	+10,000	"
Abura	3,509	2,971	5,509	2,971	+2,000	"
Suhum	6,945	4,617	8,945	4,617	+2,000	"
Walewale	6,882	1,797	16,882	1,797	+10,000	"
Nanumba	15,683	3,588	25,683	3,509	+10,000	- 79
Bawku East	16,297	3,262	20,297	3,262	+4,000	No Change
South Tongu	1,893	4,086	1,893	4,036	No Change	- 50
Aowin-Asankragwa	16,401	4,522	26,401	4,522	+10,000	No Change
Sekyere	7,655	10,722	6,655	10,924	-1,000	-202
Shama	3,574	2,155	8,574	2,155	+5,000	No Change
Sefwi Wiawso	14,619	8,589	24,619	8,589	+10,000	"
Amansie Central	5,952	1,621	3,818	9,494	-1,134	+ 7,873
Yendi	8,302	5,963	18,302	5,963	+10,000	No Change

Three observations may be made from the tables presented above. The first is that there was a low voting turnout, which indicated some passive resistance to the referendum as a legitimacy generating exercise. According to the 3 April results, only 43 per cent of the total registered voters went to the polls. The 21 April results on the other hand showed that 51 per cent of the registered voters participated in the referendum.

The second observation relates to the 'No' votes. There was a substantial number of 'No' votes (table 1 and 2), contrary to the government's assertions before the referendum that the people of Ghana 'massively' supported the **Unigov** proposal (see e.g. **Ghanaian times** 29 March 1978: 1). The 3 April results showed that about 44 per cent of the total valid votes cast were 'No' votes, and the 21 April results indicated that 40 per cent of the total valid votes were 'No' votes. This large number of 'No' votes shows that the government's claims for the universal popularity of **Unigov** were propaganda.

Thirdly, there were a number of discrepancies between the two sets of results issued by the government. These discrepancies occurred at different levels. According to table 1(a), the total registered votes on 21 April decreased by 116,964, which is a decline of 2.8 per cent over the 3 April results; the total valid votes on 21 April recorded an increase of 299,135 (i.e. 19.8 per cent) over the 3 April results; the total 'Yes' votes on April 21 increased by 269,004 (i.e. 24.4 per cent) over the 3 April ones; and the total 'No' votes on 21 April increased by 30,131 (i.e. 3.4 per cent) over the 3 April votes. In fact,

as many as 55 out of the 140 constituencies had their results changed (Addae-Mensah 1978). Most of the increases were in the 'Yes' votes and occured in constituencies where the 'Yes' votes already had the majority (as illustrated by table 2). The increases in the 'No' votes were marginal, except Amansie Central. The decreases were minor, occurring **pari passu.**

The interpretation of these discrepancies is made difficult by the fact that neither the Electoral Commissioner nor the government gave any reasons for the differences between the two sets of results. One possibility is to offer an innocent explanation - that the discrepancies resulted from errors in counting, or aggregating totals or the late arrival of tallies. Several factors belie such explanations. The first is the consistency with which the figures were corrected in favour of the 'Yes' tally; the second is the statistical neatness of the figures. For example, table 2 shows that a majority of the increases were in round figures (often 10,000 votes). Thirdly, the two sets of results were compiled and signed by the same Acting Electoral Commissioner on 3 April 1978 (Addae-Menash 1978: 40).

The most compelling piece of evidence which discredits an innocent interpretation of the changes in the **Unigov** referendum results was the Abban episode - an important one for any discussion of the **Unigov** referendum results. Justice Abban, the Electoral Comissioner, and the government were in dispute even before the polling day. Conflict occurred over two matters. There was disagreement over the appointment of presiding officers, and over the manner in which the referendum votes were to be counted.

The stage was then set for the events of the day of the referendum. The Electoral Commissioner and his Secretaries were reported to have 'disappeared' from their offices. In a letter to Acheampong, dated 1 April 1978, Justice Abban explained the circumstances of their 'disappearance'.

> At about 11.30 p.m. I had a report from one of my officers that I was being wanted by four armed soldiers and an Army officer... My officer, seeing the mood in which the soldiers were, told them I was not in... The soldiers told the officer they had been told I was in and threatened that if he did not open the second gate leading to the main building they would force their way in. While the officer was arguing with them we saw an army truck loaded with armed soldiers waiting outside. Suspecting the dangerous situation in which we were, we took cover...
>
> I am making this report to let your Excellency know that I have been driven out of office by soldiers who, I now learn, have besieged the office...
>
> At the time of my escape with my two top officials, the results had started coming in and I had declared two results (Letter from Abban to Acheampong, 1 April 1978, circulated by ARPB).

The government's explanation of the 'disappearance' of the Electoral Commissioner was that it (the government) had a report that a BBC reporter was transmitting false reports concerning the referendum outside the country and that it became necessary for soldiers to go into the premises of the Electoral Commissioner to interview the reporter who was with the Electoral Commissioner (**Ghanaian Times** 3 April 1978). Soon after the Electoral Commissioner 'disappeared', the government announced his dismissal from office, for deserting his post without informing the appropriate authority (**West Africa** 10 April 1978: 699). The government immediately appointed Mr. A.M. Quaye, previously Deputy Electoral Commissioner as Acting Commissioner. Mr. Quaye had gained notoriety for supporting **Unigov** and had campaigned on several **Unigov** platforms before the referendum.

About one week before the referendum, the government was reported to have objected to the names of some of the presiding officers appointed by the Electoral Commissioner. In a letter dated 22 March 1978, and addressed to the Secretary to the SMC, Justice Abban described a meeting between him and Colonel Enninful, the Military Assistant to Acheampong. The relevant portions of the conversation between the two people is reproduced below.

> He [the Military Assistant] disclosed that intelligence reports reaching him indicate that all the returning officers appointed for the pending referendum were persons who were supposed to be opposed to the Union Government concept. He furiously added that he had been advising you [the Secretary to the SMC] to review the appointment of these returning officers appointed by me [the Electoral Commissioner]. He further disclosed that his men, presumably some soldiers since he is an Army Officer, or certain supporters of Union Government were ready to 'strike' and that he had been restraining them from taking action intended. He threatened that if I did not review the appointment of the returning officers, the referendum would be bloody and that many people, including me, the Electoral Commissioner would lose their lives, emphasizing vehemently that it was 'a matter of life and death' (Letter from Abban to Secretary to SMC, 22 March 1978, later circulated by the ARPB).

It is most likely that the SMC was acting on this suspicion when it changed the voting procedures. The Secretary to the SMC issued a directive to the Electoral Commissioner that all votes at various polling stations be sent to regional counting centres under guard (Letter from Abban to Secretary to SMC, 30 March 1978, circulated by the ARPB). This directive was contrary to procedures laid down under the **Referendum Regulations, L.1 1135** (1977). According to Regulation 26 of this instrument, ballot papers were to be counted at the polling stations by the presiding officers 'in the view of the public'. The presiding officers would then record the votes cast on each of the issues and sign a declaration stating the total number of persons entitled to vote at the polling station and the number of votes actually cast in favour of each issue. It was not surprising therefore, when Justice Abban replied that the directive from the Secretary to the SMC could not be implemented. According to him, the directive by the government was 'contrary to the provisions of the law...In fact, it cannot have any legal effect whatsoever. You may therefore respectfully convey to his Excellency the Head of State that the said decision cannot be implemented in view of the legal impediments as explained above' (Letter from Abban to Secretary to SMC, 30 March 1978).

It is not difficult to guess at the possible reasons that motivated the government to behave the way it did.

> The answer must be in a simple fear that the actual vote would give victory to the anti-Government forces. There are a number of indications which point to the fact that by the end of 30 March, the SMC had enough evidence to consider such a threat very real indeed. First, throughout the weeks preceding the referendum, the government was unable, despite very vigorous attempts to do so, to emasculate the opposition. Second, results from the early vote of the army and police, although not published separately, appear to suggest that what should have been the stronghold of the government was much more ambivalent on Union Government than would have been expected. Third, on the evening of Election Day a big board placed in Black Star Square began showing results from separate constituencies. As early returns were posted it became clear that voting was not going the way the government had expected; and so, the board was closed down before all the results were in. When it was re-opened, the rest of the constituency results were posted along with the regional totals (Chazan and Le Vine 1979: 194-5).

The factors outlined above, especially the Abban episode, discredited the referendum results. The discrepancies in the two sets of referendum results under discussion could be attributed to the government's manipulating the results to its advantage. This argument is reinforced by the fact that the SMC banned public discussion of the referendum results soon after they were published (**Ghanaian Times** 5 April 1978). This step was probably taken by the government to prevent any 'closer public scrutiny of the results' (Chazan and Le Vine 1979: 194). Furthermore, the circumstances surrounding the 'disappearance' of Abban and the elevation of Quaye as Acting Electoral Commissioner created concern. Quaye was too clearly supportive of the government not to arouse suspicion. It was possible that the political conflict in the country at large infested the Electoral Office - splitting the office and breaking it down in terms of its bureaucratic structure.

The government manipulated the results to enhance its legitimacy and the legitimacy of the **Unigov** proposal. We saw above that the results of 3 April indicated that only 43 per cent of the total registered voters participated in the referendum. The percentage turnout increased to 51 per cent on 21 April figures. In terms of the legitimacy of the government and the **Unigov** proposal, a 51 per cent participation rate is obviously more impressive than a rate of 43 per cent. Also, the 56 per cent of valid votes in support of **Unigov** on 3 April increased to 60 per cent on 21 April. This increase again was calculated to boost the legitimacy of both the government and the **Unigov** proposal. The government could then argue that 60 per cent of valid votes were cast in favour of **Unigov**. Even the 56 per cent of valid votes endorsement of **Unigov**, according to 3 April results, was interpreted as 'massive' support. Presenting the results to Acheampong, the Acting Electoral Commissioner stated: 'this, Mr. Chairman, is a clear and eloquent testimony of the massive support which the people of Ghana have for the Union Government' (quoted in **Daily Graphic** 4 April 1978). If 56 per cent support was described as 'massive', 60 per cent could not have been less. Thirdly, we saw that the results of 3 April showed that only 24 per cent of registered voters endorsed the **Unigov** proposal. In terms of government legitimacy, this percentage was discouraging. The government could not even claim that it had the support of the majority of registered voters. The 6 per cent increase reflected in the 21 April results did give the government at least a majority of registered voters. Though more impressive than 24 per cent support, the 30 per cent result did not prove the government's capacity to mobilize supporters to enhance its legitimacy. If the government deliberately altered the referendum results to better reflect its legitimacy, then it was weakly

implemented. To put out a second set of figures, obviously dubious, certainly did not improve the legitimacy of the government.

The low turn-out and the substantial negative votes at the referendum require explanation. But in the absence of a nation-wide survey, coupled with the general lack of research in electoral behaviour in Ghana,[1] definite conclusions are difficult to draw.

The government's explanation of the low turnout at the referendum was that many people were prevented from voting as a result of cumbersome polling procedures (**Ghanaian Times** 4 April 1978). There may be some truth in this assertion. In some rural areas, voters were required to walk as far as eight kilometres to the nearest polling station. This fact, coupled with the long queues at some of the polling stations in the rural and urban centres, possibly deterred some potential voters from voting. It was also probable that some of the absentee voters were simply apathetic. The case of the people of Wume in the Volta Region, for example, underscored the apathy of some non-voters. Here, only 2 per cent of the registered voters went to the polls on referendum day. The majority of the inhabitants of the town went oyster fishing. Not even persuasion by a motor boat sent after them induced them to return (**West Africa** 10 April 1978: 699).

The foregoing interpretations have their limitations. Given the fact that the government had put a lot of resources into the referendum and left no doubts about its intentions to win, 'one can reasonably surmise that a person favouring Union Government would have no reason to stay away from the polls' (Chazan and Le Vine 1979: 196), unless he

1. Regional studies have, for previous occasions been attempted. See for example, Austin (1976); and Austin and Luckham (1975).

believed the result a foregone conclusion, which was not the case with the **Unigov** referendum. The high rate of voter absention from the **Unigov** referendum was most likely an indication of dissatisfaction with the government, and not disapproval of **Unigov** as such. As Owusu argues: 'some abstained from voting [and others voted 'No'] to protest the government's proven inability to provide effective solutions to the persistent problems of severe food shortages, high rates of inflation, and general economic stagnation' (Owusu 1979 : 104). This interpretation fits with the tenor of the government's opponents' campaign.

As early as the beginning of 1977, it became evident that the constitutional debate about the **Unigov** proposal was irrelevant to most people. What was important was the economic well-being of Ghanaians. The Ad Hoc Committee on Union Government admitted as much:

> A subject which came up at many public sittings was the shortages of such food items as rice, flour and maize. Attempts by the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee to pin down witnesses to speak directly to the subject of Union Government often drew the response that food was the primary need of many Ghanaians. The recurrence of the food situation as a major theme at the many public sittings compelled the Ad Hoc Committee to deliberate over the problem and to make appropriate recommendations to the government (Ad Hoc Committee Report 1977: 4).

Statements emanating from government circles after the referendum confirm the foregoing argument. According to Acheampong, 'the typical man who voted 'No' was not opposing the concept of Union Government. He voted that way because he did not have his mackerel' (quoted in **West Africa** 5 June 1978: 1058). The editorial of the government-owned **Ghanaian Times** (3 April 1978) presented the same view: 'we are satisfied that a majority of the people who voted 'No' did not do so to reject the ideas of Union Government but in protest of the shortages of certain

consumer goods in the country'. Presumably some of those who voted 'Yes' did so because they had their mackerel.

The result of the referendum also cast serious doubts on the legitimacy of Acheampong's government in another way. The 56 per cent or 60 per cent (depending on the different set of results) valid votes supporting **Unigov** could in fact be interpreted as a defeat for the government. In terms of the total registered voters, the win by the government represented 24 per cent or 31 per cent (again depending on the sets of results used). The results of the referendum were against the general trend in contemporary Africa, where results of over 90 per cent (often 99.999...per cent) in favour of the issue the government supports have been the rule (see Chazan 1979: 156-8).

The slight margin of the government's win reflected the level of discontent in the country and the strength of the government's opponents. Under such circumstances, it was very difficult for the government to manipulate the results in any significant way. This is perhaps the best explanation for the relatively minor (but nevertheless significant) differences between the 3 April and 21 results. It appeared the government realised that the margin of victory in favour of **Unigov** would be close even before the polls opened, when it indicated that the issues at stake in the referendum were to be decided by a simple majority (Addae-Mensah 1978: 2). This implied that even a difference of one vote either way would have been sufficient in the government's eyes to determine the issue.

The government's handling of the referendum proved counter-productive. The discrepancies in the results noted earlier and the circumstances under which the Electoral Commissioner and his two senior staff 'disappeared', coupled with the dismissal of the Electoral Commissioner from office, jeopardised the government's efforts to use the referendum to enhance its legitimacy. The Ghana Bar Association sought a High Court injunction to challenge the validity of the referendum results (**Pioneer** 10 April 1978). The Association of Recognised Professional Bodies also adopted a resolution immediately after the referendum which described the government's claims that **Unigov** had won the referendum as 'bogus and fraudulent' (ARPB Resolution 30 March 1978). The resolution further demanded that 'the Head of State and Chairman of the Supreme Military Council should resign forthwith and hand over power to the Chief Justice of Ghana ... as Acting Head of State'. Among the reasons given by the Professional Bodies in support of their demand was the conduct of the government during the referendum. These included:

> the Supreme Military Government's non-compliance with Regulation 26 of the Referendum Regulations, ... issued by the Electoral Commissioner, by illegally issuing counter directives to Presiding Officers and the Police that votes should not be counted at the polling stations at which the votes were cast;
>
> The threat to the person and the attack on the office of the Electoral Commissioner by armed soldiers resulting in the enforced disappearance from office of the Electoral Commissioner and some senior officers at the most crucial time of the Referendum, when the results of the poll were being compiled for declaration by him;
>
> The summary dismissal from office of the Electoral Commissioner, ... by the Supreme Military Council, after he had been forced to flee as a result of the threat.

The referendum escalated political conflict in the country. The Association of Recognised Professional Bodies embarked on a strike immediately after the referendum and indicated its members would not resume work until Acheampong and his SMC government resigned. The students of the country's universities continued their boycott of academic activities. The intensity of political conflict after the referendum was shown by the arrest and detention of several members of opposition groups after the referendum. According to the government, these people had organized a plot aimed at paralysing the country's economy and overthrowing the government (**West Africa** 24 April 1978: 818). The government also banned the three movements (the People's Movement for Freedom and Justice, the Front for the Prevention of Dictatorship and the Third Force) which had campaigned against the **Unigov** proposal (**Ghanaian Times** 4 April 1978).

(8.5) The Fall of Acheampong

On 5 July 1978, three months after the referendum, an official announcement stated that Acheampong had resigned as Head of State and Chairman of the SMC and from the Ghana Armed Forces 'in the interest of the unity and stability of the nation' (quoted in **Daily Graphic** 6 July 1978). The announcement also named Lieutenant-General Akuffo (the next-in-command after Acheampong) as the new Head of State and Chairman of a reconstituted SMC (popularly referred to in Ghana as SMC2). In a broadcast to the nation one week later, Akuffo admitted that Acheampong was forced by his SMC colleagues to resign (**Daily Graphic** 11 July 1978).

Two explanations may be offered for the removal of Acheampong from office in July 1978. One explanation sees the removal as a response to the general legitimation problems confronting the SMC. In the aftermath of the referendum, political conflict in the country continued to be aggravated by the deteriorating economic conditions. Ghana was now in even greater disarray than it was in the period before the referendum (Chazan and Le Vine 1979: 200) and, in the words of Hettne, 'the country became ungovernable' (Hettne 1980: 184).

Perhaps more important was Acheampong's loss of support among his own supporters. There were rumours that junior officers in the military had threatened a mass revolt if the political and economic problems in the country were not resolved. On 15 May 1978, the TUC, which had previously openly declared its support for Acheampong and **Unigov**, in association with the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) and the Civil Servants Association (CSA) (both of which had refused to join the professionals' strike in mid-1977), submitted a joint memorandum to Acheampong.

> The economic hardships imposed on all categories of workers by the persistent shortages and exorbitant prices of commodities has necessitated the presentation of this joint memorandum to you, bringing into focus the suffering of the workers ...
>
> We wish to stress, however, that the present economic situation which is made worse by the dubious activities of not only traders but persons in positions of authority and responsibility will surely drive the country to the brink of intolerable suffering, frustration and total collapse if the most appropriate and prompt measures are not taken to ameliorate the situation and reverse the present trend.
>
> We have to state Sir, that in our respective organizations, we have done our utmost to maintain a cool posture in the face of the hardships, constantly and persistently called on our members to exercise restraint in the hope that the situation will improve; but contrary to our expectation, the situation

> worsens with the passage of each day. This has adversely affected our credibility with the membership of our respective organizations and may lead to our losing control over the situation.
>
> What has actually motivated the presentation of this memorandum is the common anxiety and concern shared by the three organizations we represent that **if the situation does not improve within a reasonable short period, we shall find ourselves unable to continue to ask the workers to exercise restraint because we shall have lost every moral justification to do so** (emphasis in original).

It was partly against this background that the removal of Acheampong from office must be appraised. There was no doubt that Acheampong and the SMC had lost the support of many critical sections of the Ghanaian community. The other members of the SMC must have reckoned that the removal of Acheampong would avert full-scale revolt both from within the military and the civilian population. In other words, 'the SMC came to recognise that unless Acheampong was sacrificed, growing, open defiance of the regime threatened to destroy legitimacy it had left following the referendum' (Chazan and Le Vine 1979: 201). Acheampong was chosen for sacrifice partly because the **Unigov** conflict became heavily polarised around his personality. Many of the demands by the opponents of the government for its resignation were couched in personal terms. For the opposition, Acheampong had come to symbolize the government.

The removal of Acheampong achieved some minor results, as Akuffo and his colleagues must have anticipated. For example, the Ghana Bar Association welcomed the change and called off its four-month-old strike (cf **West Africa** 31 July 1978: 1513), while the students of the country's three universities ended their boycott of academic activities. General Afrifa (co-leader of the People's Movement for Freedom and Justice) approved the change in leadership of the SMC and praised Akuffo as 'a

good soldier' who 'commands the genuine respect and loyalty of the armed forces' (**Pioneer** 4 August 1978). It may be that the opponents of the government did not recognise the legitimacy of Akuffo and SMC2 as such, but tactically minimised their antagonism to the government in order to obtain some reciprocal concessions such as the release of their colleagues from jail or the cancellation of the **Unigov** proposal. Many poeple remained sceptical about the change in leadership of the SMC, and saw the removal of Acheampong as window-dressing. To some, the 'change signified nothing substantial; it was the same old boat going in the same old direction with only the significant addition of a new captain at the helm' (Adam 1978: 8).

The second (and more important) explanation for Acheampong's removal was his loss of support within the SMC. Acheampong's political manoeuvres during the period leading up to the referendum alienated his SMC colleagues. It became obvious during the referendum campaign period that Acheampong was creating a political base which would ultimately make him independent of the military. The appointment of 'special advisers' and 'special aides' who took precedence over the other members of the SMC were part of this process. At the same time, Acheampong began to rely more on the police. Sophisticated armoured cars and powerful B.M.W. patrol cars and motorcycles were purchased for the police. It was widely believed that Acheampong's intention was to use the police as his security force in place of the army (as did Nkrumah with the President's Own Guard Regiment). These developments threatened the other members of the SMC and the military in general. Significantly, Acheampong's 'resignation' came a few days before he was due to inaugurate a political movement (Hansen and Collins 1980: 12). The other members of

the SMC prevented these developments by forcing Acheampong to resign.

Akuffo's broadcast to the nation one week after the 'resignation', in explaining why Acheampong was removed from power, stated:

> ...for some time before this event [Acheampong's removal], he [Acheampong] had surrounded himself to the exclusion of his colleagues, with advisers of doubtful ability and intentions and had , on a number of important occasions, spurned the advice of members of the Supreme Military Council. Not only were decisions which had been taken collectively at Council Meetings unilaterally varied by him, but also he took several important decisions without consulting or even informing his colleagues. The channel of communication between him and the rest of his colleagues had virtually broken down, and the whole of the governmental activity had become one-man show. We, his colleagues on the Supreme Military Council, therefore, had no alternative in this context, but to demand his exit from the scene' (quoted in **Daily Graphic** 11 July 1978).

Nearly a year later, in May 1979, Acheampong's former colleagues issued a decree which outlined his 'crimes' against the State and the people of Ghana. Among other things, Acheampong was accused of employing aides and advisers of 'dubious character, competence and intentions', bringing the 'Armed Forces to the brink of disintegration' and of showing 'generous favours on certain officers and men known to be closely associated with him to the disadvantage and annoyance of other officers of merit and the rank and file'. (**Armed Forces (Miscellaneous Provisions) Decree)**

From this decree and Akuffo's speech, it appears that the SMC removed Acheampong primarily because he was moving towards one man rule, thereby threatening their position. Perhaps the wider legitimacy crisis did not worry Akuffo and his colleagues as much as Acheampong's moves to ignore or override them.

(8.6) Conclusion

In the final analysis, the SMC's use of the referendum as a legitimation device did not prove to be a prudent political strategy, particularly in view of the strength of its opponents and the level of economic discontent in the country. Chazan and Le Vine are right when they argue that:

> if the referendum was meant to supply the SMC with some legitimacy for its policies [and it certainly was], the results provided very little encouragement, [that] although the government heralded the returns as a clear vote of confidence, the facts do not sustain such claim, [and that there was] little doubt that the population expressed substantial disapproval of the Acheampong regime, and acted particularly unfavourably to the government's economic policies (Chazan and Le Vine 1979: 198-199).

Acheampong himself recognized the lack of circumspection on the part of the SMC in employing the referendum as a legitimation strategy only after the referendum when he remarked that the referendum 'was a risky gamble' (quoted in **West Africa** 5 June 1978: 1059). The forced resignation of Acheampong indicated the failure of the referendum to enhance the legitimacy of the SMC, and this is reflected in the trend political events in Ghana took after the referendum.

CHAPTER NINE

FROM UNIGOV TO TINAGOV

> I can go today and the SMC Government can go, but the problems of the nation will still remain, unless the people as a whole change from their greed, avarice and other social evils that affect us (Acheampong 1978: 156).

(9.1) Introduction

The **Unigov** scheme did not die with Acheampong's political demise. His successor, General Akuffo, proposed a variant, **Transitional Interim National Government** (**Tinagov**), which embodied the same principle of national non-party government, but without the automatic institutional representation of the military and police. However, Akuffo's government (SMC 2) was nearly as discredited as its predecessor and its **Tinagov** proposal was regarded with as much suspicion as Acheampong's **Unigov**.This Chapter, which is essentially a study of the Akuffo period, analyses the attempts made by SMC2 to resolve the legitimacy crisis which led to the fall of the Acheampong regime. It is argued that the **Tinagov** proposal was a tactic employed by the Akuffo government to restore the legitimacy of the SMC. In June 1979 Akuffo's SMC was toppled by a group of junior military officers led by Flight Lieutenant Rawlings because SMC2 had failed to resolve some of the issues that plagued Acheampong.

(9.2) The Tinagov Proposal

In his second broadcast to the nation after the removal of Acheampong on 31 July 1978, Akuffo indicated that the **Unigov** idea had been dropped and that SMC2 had decided to transfer political power to a **Transitional Interim National Government** (**Tinagov**) by July 1979. This decision, according to Akuffo, had been made after he had consulted various opinions in the country (**Daily Graphic** 1 August 1978). What were the characteristics of **Tinagov**, and how did it differ from **Unigov**?

Like Acheampong's **Unigov** proposal, Akuffo's **Tinagov** was to be a non-party form of representative government on the basis of universal adult suffrage. However, **Tinagov** deviated from **Unigov** in three main respects. In the first place, whereas institutional representation of the military and police in the **Unigov** was left ambiguous, Akuffo was explicit that there would not be automatic institutional inclusion of the military and police in the **Tinagov**. Secondly, while **Unigov** was to be a permanent form of government, **Tinagov** was to be transitional. According to Akuffo, 'the transitional government shall operate for a specific period which shall not be less than four years'. At the end of this period, Ghanaians were to choose a permanent form of constitutional regime (**Daily Graphic** 1 August 1978). **Tinagov**, therefore, did not rule out a return to party politics as had **Unigov**. Thirdly, Akuffo's stated reasons for proposing **Tinagov** were also at variance with those of Acheampong in the case of **Unigov**. Acheampong's major justification for mooting the **Unigov** concept had been to eradicate the chronic political instability in Ghana caused by the 'alien' party types of government. Akuffo on the other hand defended **Tinagov** by reference to the specific

political strife in the country at that time. In Akuffo's words: 'we subscribe to the principle that in the present chaotic conditions in which the political and economic fortunes of this country are plunged, only a national form of government can save us' (**Daily Graphic** 1 August 1978). While **Unigov** was, according to Acheampong, aimed at achieving a permanent solution to political instability in Ghana, the aim of **Tinagov** was limited to reconciling supporters and opponents of the Acheampong regime.

Tinagov was a legitimation strategy designed by Akuffo to appease both the supporters and the opponents of the **Unigov** proposal and, thus, to obtain the support of both sides. Adam argues that:

> perhaps what the SMC sought to do was to try and satisfy all sections of the community. The very controversial subject of the Forces' representation in government had been dealt with by their own 'magnanimous' decision to stay out. Then there was to be National and not Union Government so that the opponents of Union Government would be satisfied; and for the advocates of Union Goverment the removal of the party element in the proposed government should be sufficient appeasement (Adam 1978:9).

Akuffo introduced a number of measures aimed at the tenets of **Tinagov** and, by implication, to aggregate political support. These measures were carried out under the banner of 'national reconciliation'. The underlying objective of 'national reconciliation' was to achieve some form of rapprochement with the opponents of the government. In his broadcast to the nation one week after the 'resignation' of Acheampong, Akuffo stated:

> what we need most and urgently, if we are to salvage this country, is for each Ghanaian, wherever he or she may go, to begin to develop a genuine feeling of national reconciliation

> and to take steps, however humble, to help us to unite the nation. Unity and stability will always be the cardinal policies of this government and we propose to continue to strive after these noble objectives....Our primary task now as a government is to heal the wounds of our country (**Daily Graphic** 11 July 1978).

Akuffo's version of 'national reconciliation' differed from that pursued by Acheampong in 1973. While Acheampong attempted to reconcile two antagonistic political **camps** - the Nkrumahist and the Busiaist **camps**, Akuffo was primarily concerned with the more limited objective of reconciling the SMC and its supporters with the opponents of the government and **Unigov**. His strategy took many forms.

The first measure was the dismantling of Acheampong's political machinery. Even before the **Tinagov** proposal was presented, all the 'special aides' and 'special advisors' were dismissed. According to an official statement, these people had been 'appointed mainly in connection with the referendum' and their retention was no longer justified (**Daily Graphic** 7 July 1978). In addition, the satellite organizations which formed the base of Acheampong's support during the **Unigov** period were proscribed. These included the Friends, the Organizers Council, the Patriots and the Ghana Youngsters Club. The assets and bank accounts of these organizations were also frozen (**Daily Graphic** 7 July 1978). Furthermore, all the Committees of the National Charter Secretariat which had been seen as the nucleus of an Acheampong political movement, were dissolved (**West Africa** 14 August 1978: 1912). Then Acheampong's support within the Nkrumahist **camp** was crushed. The assets and bank accounts of some members of the Nkrumahist **camp** were frozen and the decree which had authorised the return of their confiscated property was repealed and the property was reconfiscated. Finally Acheampong's Eastern

European connections were nullified. In September 1978, one East German and four Soviet diplomats serving in Ghana were expelled, allegedly for interfering in Ghana's domestic politics (**West Africa** 18 September 1978; 1854). The significance of this incident lay in the rumours during the **Unigov** referendum campaign period that the Soviet Union provided financial support to Acheampong to propagate **Unigov.**

The destruction of Acheampong's political support base symbolised Akuffo's intention to be neutral in the conflicts which had developed around **Unigov.** However, the quiet manner in which Akuffo dealt with Acheampong's assistants and aids most likely diminished any animosity they might have developed after their fall from grace. None were detained, nor were any exposed to public ridicule for being part of Acheampong's patronage network.

Another tactic Akuffo followed in the furtherance of the **Tinagov** proposal concentrated on pacifying the adversaries of Acheampong. Two days after the 'resignation' of Acheampong, Akuffo released all the opponents of **Unigov** who had been arrested and detained by Acheampong before and after the referendum. A general amnesty was granted to all Ghanaians who had fled the country for political reasons since 1972 when Acheampong came into power, persons jailed since 1972 for plotting to overthrow Acheampong were released unconditionally; and the assets and bank accounts of twenty-four political opponents of Acheamong frozen after the **Unigov** referendum were unfrozen.

Recognizing that Acheampong's suppression of press freedom had been one of the reasons for opposition to the SMC, Akuffo declared the press free once more. Colonel Parker Yarney (Commissoner for Information) assured journalists of the state-controlled press of their absolute freedom to report on and criticise any issue of public interest. 'The press', according to Parker Yarney, 'must henceforth inform Ghanaians truthfully and impartially by investigating and exposing evils plaguing the country, without fear or favour' (**West Africa** 14 August 1978: 1613). The **Legon Observer**, suppressed by Acheampong in 1974, was licensed to resume publication.

When former Prime Minister Kofi Busia died in exile in August 1978, Akuffo, in a 'spirit of reconciliation', brought his body home for a state burial.

The above measures achieved some results for the government. For example, the decisions by the Ghana Bar Association to call off its strike and of the university students to resume lectures, were made in response to some of these steps taken by Akuffo.

Akuffo also used consultation and co-option to win the support of key civilian groups likely to oppose SMC2. In the first few months after coming into office, Akuffo held a series of consultations with the leaders of various organizations in the country, including those opposed to Acheampong. These included the clergy, the TUC, the universities and the professionals.

Civilians were appointed Commissioners and heads of public corporations, while military administrators were returned to their military duties. Five new civilian Commissioners were appointed. These were Dr Evans Anform (Chairman of the National Council for Higher Education) as Commissioner for Education; Kwame Afreh (Director of Legal Education) as Commissioner for Information; Anthony Woode (Managing Director of the State Insurance Corporation and in the early 1950s a trade union radical) as the Greater Accra Regional Commissioner; S.H. Annancy (Legal Practitioner) as the Eastern Regional Commissioner; and Dr. G.K. Erbynn as the Central Regional Commissioner (**West Africa** 9 October 1978: 2017). Other civilian appointments made by Akuffo included Kwame Asare Pianim as Chief Executive of the Cocoa Marketing Board; Frank Hall-Baidu as the Executive Director of the Produce Buying Division of the Cocoa Marketing Board; Dr. G.K. Agama as the Chairman of the State Enterprises Commission; J.E. Kwakye as Managing Director of Loyalty Industries Limited; and J.K. Abaka as the Managing Director of the State Farms Corporation. These posts were formerly occupied by military personnel.

In September 1978, the SMC established a fifteen-member Economic Advisory Committee (which it described as its economic 'think tank') under the Chairmanship of E.N. Omaboe (Government Statistician, and later Commissioner for Economic Affairs under the pro-Busia NLC) to advise on the rehabilitation of Ghana's economy. Members of the Committee included key personalities like Albert Adomako and J.H. Frimpong-Ansah (both former Governors of the Bank of Ghana); Professor Kodwo Ewusi; Dr. Jones Ofori-Atta (Ministerial Secretary for Finance under

Busia); Dr. G.K. Agama (Opposition Leader during the Busia regime); P.K.K. Quaidoo(defector from the Nkrumahist **camp** and staunch opponent of **Unigov**); and Esther Ocloo (Chairperson of the Ghana Manufacturers' Association) (**West Africa** 15 October 1978: 2065).

Akuffo's co-optive strategy was an extension of that earlier pursued by Acheampong, but it differed in one significant respect. Whilst Acheampong concentrated mainly on people with either visible Nkrumahist connections or people openly identified with either political **camps**, Akuffo focused his attention on key professional and economic groups, most of which had been opposed to Acheampong. Although Akuffo's appointments included some Busiaists, such as Jones Ofori-Atta, this was coincidental. On the whole, membership of professional and economic groups rather than political **camps** seemed the overriding consideration.

In attempting to legitimatize the **Tinagov** proposal Akuffo also made new arrangements for constitutional negotiation. Firstly, the membership of Acheampong's Constitutional Commission was increased from 27 to 58 in order to redress the bias the Commission reflected against the opponents of **Unigov**. The Commission's mandate was also altered from drafting a permanent **Unigov** Constitution to that of a four year **Tinagov** one. It is significant that the revised terms of reference of the Constitutional Commission (SMC Decree No.173) omitted the reference to the **Unigov** referendum contained in paragraph 3(b) of the original decree (SMC Decree No.164, 1978). This indicated that Akuffo had abandoned the controversial results of the **Unigov** referendum. Then, Akuffo ordered the holding of District Council Elections as a preliminary move towards nationwide **Tinagov** elections. In theory, the District Council elections

were organised on a non-partisan basis in line with the principles of **Tinagov**. In practice however, the elections turned out to be a contest between the Nkrumahist and the Busiaist **camps**.

Despite the elaborate measures Akuffo adopted to ensure the acceptance of his **Tinagov** proposal, the opponents of **Unigov** were not appeased. For example, in an editorial of 1 September 1978, the **Legon Observer** argued that 'an Interim National Government based on a no-party system is neither possible nor desirable, and political wisdom lies in quietly burying it'. Among the reasons for objection to **Tinagov** was that 'it has never been properly and publicly debated, let alone accepted by the country' (**Legon Observer** 1 September 1978). The Ghana Bar Association also rejected Akuffo's new proposal. In a six-point resolution in August 1978, the association described **Tinagov** as a disguised form of **Unigov** which was unworkable and inimical to the true interests of Ghana. The Bar Association called on Akuffo to dissolve the Constitutional Commission in its original and extended forms (**Daily Graphic** 8 August 1978). At the same time, the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS) issued a statement rejecting the **Tinagov** proposal and demanded that the SMC handover power to an interim government. According to the NUGS:

> We find it difficult to believe that the programme as announced could be the result of any fresh thinking on the part of the SMC. We cannot decipher any meaningful defence, structurally, between the concept of the so-called Union/National Government as contained in the Koranteng-Addow Committee Report, General Acheampong's 'created child' and the National Government announcement by the Head of State [Akuffo] in his broadcast (Quoted in Oquaye 1980: 119).

There were grounds for this scepticism. The Ad Hoc Committee on Union Government used the terms **National/Union Government** interchange-

ably to describe Acheampong's **Unigov** proposal. (Ad Hoc Committee Report 1977: 44). Two authoritative views on **Unigov** had existed, one favouring automatic institutional representation of the military and police in government and the other omitting such representation. Akuffo's **Tinagov** proposal merely fell into the latter category with the difference that it was to be only a four-year transitional government.

In the face of mounting opposition, Akuffo was forced to abandon the **Tinagov** proposal and consequently announced the decision of the SMC2 to lift the six-year ban on the formation of political parties. According to Akuffo:

> We have taken cognizance of public views freely and frankly expressed. We have watched with keen interest the conduct and results of the recent District Council elections, and we have studied the recommendations made by the Constitutional Commission. We have also taken into consideration the challenges and prospects of our economy, which make it mandatory for us to pool and harmonise our national energies and resources. All these matters have galvanized our thinking on the political future of this country (**West Africa** 11 December 1978: 2471).

Akuffo's decision to abandon the **Tinagov** proposal and to lift the ban on party political activities marked the beginning of an improved relationship between the SMC2 and the professionals and civilian politicians. From December 1978, political parties emerged rapidly, and the political and economic crisis in the country seemed forgotten. The relationship between SMC2 and the politicians was further improved when Akuffo allowed some of the politicians he had disqualified from holding public offices, as a result of the adverse findings of the Commission and Committees of Inquiry against them, to contest the 1979 elections.

Two examples illustrate the cordial relationship between SMC2 and the politicians after December 1978. The first related to three recommendations of the Constitutional Commission. Initially , the Commission recommended that any member of the government who chose to retire from the army, upon the proclamation of the Constitution 'shall be paid such gratuity as shall be determined by the President' (Ghana 1978 : 128). Secondly, the Constitutional Commission recommended that the Chairman of the SMC be deemed as 'a person who has held office of President under the Constitution' and therefore become 'eligible to serve as a member of the Council of State and shall be entitled to be paid the salaries and allowances and provided with the facilities, available to an ex-President in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Constitution' (Ghana 1978 : 128), Thirdly, and more importantly, contrary to demands by many people that a clause be inserted into the constitution making it possible for the financial affairs of the members of the NRC/SMC to be investigated, the Constitutional Commission recommended a provision

> making it clear that no person shall be subject to any legal disability solely for any act taken by that person to bring about ... the changes of government in 1966 and 1972 or the establishment and operation of the governments which were established on those two occasions, viz. the National Liberation Council and the National Redemption Council and subsequently the Supreme Military Council (Ghana 1978 : 128)

Many people saw these recommendations as constitutional encouragement for coups. The NUGS described the recommendation to indemnify the SMC/NRC members as a 'vicious compromise by civilian politicians who are wresting power from the military' (**West Africa** 14 May 1979: 863).

The second example was a request the political parties made to Akuffo in March 1979. Thirteen of the sixteen registered political parties at that time including those organised by leaders of the opposition to Acheampong met Akuffo and requested that he should postpone the date of handing over to civilians from July 1979 to January 1980. The reasons given by the political parties were that the constituent Assembly was not likely to complete drafting a constitution by July 1979 and that the tribunal reviewing the appeals of disqualified politicians needed more time to complete its work (**Legon Observer** 6 April 1979: 122). Akuffo refused to grant this request (**West Africa** 16 April 1979: 688). This episode enhanced the legitimacy of Akuffo/SMC2 by showing that they were sincere about handing over to civilians.

(9.3.0) Factors that Eroded Akuffo's Initial Support

Although the professionals, academics and the politicians rejected **Tinagov**, the very removal of Acheampong and some of the steps taken by Akuffo to deal with political conflict in Ghana, such as the release of political detainees, earned Akuffo some minimal degree of political support. However, by the middle of 1979, Akuffo's government was nearly as discredited as its predecessor. The factors in the decline of support includes Akuffo's handling of the Ghanaian economy, the issue of **kalabule** and the failure to prosecute Acheampong. An examination of these factors provides an insight into the emergence of Rawlings on the Ghanaian political scene in June 1979.

(9.3.1) The Economy Under Akuffo

One of the major causes of dissatisfaction and disillusionment with Acheampong concerned the worsening condition of the Ghanaian economy. Because the legitimacy of a government in Ghana is closely linked with the state of the economy, the ability of Akuffo to restore the SMC's legitimacy depended, to a large extent, on how he handled the economy. Recognising this, Akuffo dwelt at length on the economic problems facing the country in his maiden broadcast to the nation as Head of State. 'The greatest challenge facing the nation' Akuffo stated, 'is that posed by the high rate of inflation with its attendant shortages; and he sought to 'step up' the level of production in the economy by raising the required external financial resources to produce the needed foreign inputs and generally to lift the level of efficiency in the economy' (**Daily Graphic** 11 July 1978).

Akuffo's first attempt to revive the economy was to invite a team of IMF experts to Ghana to advise on improving Ghana's economic performance. The IMF team laid out a policy package which later formed the basis of Akuffo's economic and fiscal policies. In acknowledgement of SMC2's willingness to accept the IMF prescriptions, the IMF granted a one-year stand-by arrangement of 53 million Special Drawing Rights and a Trust Fund loan of 25 million Special Drawing Rights to Ghana in January 1979 (I B R D 1979: 30).

Following IMF recommendations for 'stabilization', SMC2 devalued the cedi by 58 per cent in August 1978. The exchange rate of the cedi was fixed at 2.75 cedis to the US dollar, and the cost of the US dollar in

terms of the cedi rose by 139 per cent (I B R D 1979: 29). According to a government statement: 'the Supreme Military Council accepts the view that the exchange rate like all other prices must be subject to periodic review and must be amendable to periodic changes depending on the country's economic situation and the relationship between the cedi and other major currencies' (Quoted in I B R D 1979: 29).

The devaluation of the cedi was accompanied by the suspension of the operation of the Special Unnumbered License (SUL), introduced by Acheampong in 1976 which allowed individual importers to use their own foreign exchange to import goods into the country. The reason given for the suspension of the SUL was that its operation 'eventually led to the illegal transactions in foreign exchange' (**Ghana Preliminary Economic Survey** 1977-79: 29).

Some of Akuffo's 'stabilization' policies were also embodied in a budget statement read in September 1978. The government implemented cuts in government and public expenditures. Akuffo described this as 'discipline in government spending' which called for 'severe restraints', and warned that the government would not 'entertain any pressures for supplementary allocations, since failure to hold the line will lead to the worsening of an already critical situation' (**West Africa** 25 September 1978: 1867). The government also increased taxes on a number of items such as alcoholic drinks and cigarettes.

In March 1979, SMC2 introduced a demonetization exercise. Currency holdings up to 5000 cedis were exchanged for new ones at a ratio of 10:7. Holdings in excess of 5000 cedis were exchanged at a

ratio of 10:5. Bank deposits, government securities, share certificates and coins were exchanged at parity rates. The objectives of the demonetization policy as stated by the **Cedi (New Notes) Decree** (SMCD 226) were to 'nullify or cancel the illegal holdings of cedis outside the country and to reduce the excessive liquidity' in the economy. This policy was expected to reduce the high rate of inflation which was estimated to be over 100 per cent (I B R D 1979: 1).

The immediate result of the policy was to contract the money supply. In February 1979, one month before the demonetization exercise, money supply in Ghana was estimated at 4215.7 million cedis. This was almost 44 per cent more than at the end of June 1978 (immediately before Akuffo became Head of State). At the end of the exercise, cash with the non-bank public was provisionally estimated to have been reduced by 30 per cent and the total money contraction was about 15 per cent (IBRD 1979:30).

The available evidence indicates that the economic and fiscal policies of Akuffo had very little, if any, impact on the economic crisis. By the time Akuffo was ousted from office, **essential commodities** were more scarce and their prices higher than they were before he assumed office. The local food index (March 1963 = 100) rose from 1027.2 in December 1977 to 2,260.5 by the end of 1978 (Ghana Commercial Bank Quarterly Economic Review, April-June 1979). A survey conducted by the **Pioneer** in early 1979, although arbitrary, served as a crude indication of the market situation:

> The simple woman whose husband is in the labourer's category cannot market with ¢10 a day. Two balls of tomato sell at 80 pesewas and five fingers of red pepper sell at 30 pesewas; four fingers of plantain sell at ¢4; three tubers of cassava at ¢1; smoked fish is two for ¢3; this is not to mention the 60 pesewas in and out **trotro** travel. These figures represent that of the lower income group. For the higher scale group living in comfort a leg of mutton sells as ¢40; a tine of tomato ¢1.20; live chicken ¢40; and a host of expensive ingredients brings the total to nearly ¢100 a day (**West Africa** 5 March 1979).

Dissatisfaction with Akuffo's SMC became first widespread within the urban working class. Between July and November 1978, the government listed about 80 different strikes in support of wage and salary increases (**West Africa** 13 November 1978: 2264); these the SMC described as threatening the peace and stability of Ghana (**Legon Observer** 10 November 1978: 140). The minimum wage remained four cedis a day. Although Akuffo awarded cost of living allowances ranging from 5 to 10 per cent of wages to workers in various categories , this did not satisfy them . In the early weeks of November alone, there were strikes by public servants, conservancy workers, petrol refinery workers, journalists, nurses and workers of the Electricity Corporations. Akuffo refused to recognise the demands of the striking workers, and claimed that the strikes were engineered by 'aspiring politicians, foreign agents, aggrieved businessmen who fear exposure by current probes and some disgruntled elements in labour and management leadership ' (**Legon Observer** 10 November 19778: 141). At the same time, the government also warned that 'strikes and other protests....will be regarded as criminal acts against the security of the state and will be dealt with according to the relevant laws of the country' (Quoted in **Daily Graphic** 7 November 1978). A large number of striking civil servants were dismissed.

The initial support for the Akuffo government quickly disappeared. A wave of industrial unrest forced the government to declare a State of Emergency in November 1978. This, as we have argued earlier, was the usual format in Ghana. Governments resort to repressive measures as their legitimacy comes under challenge. The **Emergency Powers Decree** gave the government powers to declare a state of emergency, to restrict the movement of people, to take possession of property, to enter and search premises and to amend or suspend any law in operation. The decree also prohibited the courts from questioning acts done or regulations made in pursuance of the state of emergency. Offences under the decree were to be tried by military tribunals.

Akuffo's devaluation of the cedi also generated negative reactions. Apart from the immediate economic consequences of such a policy, it provided an additional opportunity for some members of the Busiaist **camp** to express resentment at their overthrow by Acheampong and his colleagues in 1972. It will be recalled that the 44 per cent devaluation of the cedi by Busia in December 1971 was one of the main justifications of Acheampong's January 1972 coup against Busia. Jones Ofori-Atta (Ministerial Secretary of Finance under Busia) argued that Akuffo's devaluation was '**kwaseabuo** [double-standard] **par excellence** - to sack a government for devaluing ... and to turn around to devalue by an even larger rate' (Ofori-Atta 1979: 29).

The economic gains of the demonetization exercise were also diminished by the manner in which the government implemented the policy. The policy 'leaked' before it was announced. It was rumoured that the leakage was made by a high-level government official who wanted to

protect his private business interests. Secondly, the policy was abused as it became a means of enrichment for a few bank and government officials. The way in which the policy was executed also imposed hardships on many people, especially in the rural areas where there was no ready access to bank facilities. In the urban areas, there were reports of people collapsing from exhaustion in the long queues that formed at the banks. The military and police were harsh in their treatment of civilians at the banks. On one occasion, military personnel shot and killed a civilian in Accra (**West Africa** 26 March 1979: 554). The business community also became disgruntled as many people lost large sums of money. Hansen and Collins concluded that 'the money changing exercise led to a great feeling of disillusionment on the part of the workers, peasants and lower petty bourgeoisie' (Hansen and Collins 1980: 13). We have argued in chapter two that in Ghana the legitimacy of a government is more dependent on the perceptions of elite groups rather than those of the mass of the urban working class and the peasantry. It follows that the disillusionment of the urban workers and the peasants with the economic and fiscal policies of SMC2 was less damaging to its legitimacy than that on the part of elite groups.

(9.3.2) The Issue of Kalabule

One of the grounds for opposition to Acheampong was corruption (**kalabule**) in the SMC especially and in the country generally. Akuffo lost political support partly because of his failure to solve the problem of **kalabule**. Soon after he became Head of State, Akuffo declared 'war' on **kalabule**. In his maiden broadcast, he stated:

> In recent past, the Ghanaian character has been under heavy pressure and the basic virtues of truthfulness, honesty and discipline have been rapidly disappearing from our society. It is the belief of the Supreme Military Council that all our people have been concerned about this state of affairs. Our attitude to work, to our civic duties and to public property leaves much to be desired. I must state here and now that the Supreme Military Council would demand the strictest discipline in our life as a nation. On this we cannot tolerate any compromise, and I hope we would not be tested. (**Daily Graphic** 11 July 1978)

Later, General Odartey-Wellington (Army Commander and Member of the SMC2) reiterated that 'no-one can run away from this exercise [the campaign against corruption], because we are going to smoke out the hoarders and profiteers from their hideouts, through the markets to the border ....Your days of **kalabuleism** are over' (**West Africa** 11 December 1978: 2510).

Akuffo initiated some programmes to reduce and stamp out **kalabule**. The government ordered a probe into the operations of a number of public corporations, including the Cocoa Marketing Board, the Black Star Line, the State Housing Corporation and the State Fishing Corporation (**West Africa** 18 September 1978: 1854). Many malpractices were made public during these probes. For example, it was revealed before the Archer Committee that probed the Cocoa Marketing Board that several shipments of cocoa were not covered by export documents, with the result that money accruing to the state from these shipments was diverted into private bank accounts overseas (Oquaye 1980: 46). It was also made public before the Twumasi Committee into the State Housing Corporation that it was official government policy during the Acheampong period that 10 per cent of all state houses in each region be allocated to the various Regional Commissioners for 'special allocations ... for special consi-

derations' (Oquaye 1980: 46). Intensive surveillance was mounted along Ghana's borders with the aim of checking smuggling. Only four exit and entry points of the country's boarders were authorised as routes for the movement of vehicles (**West Africa** 12 February 1979: 270). Thirdly, Akuffo also waged 'war' on tax evasion. A large number of companies which had evaded taxes were made to pay them back to the state. Some Lebanese businessmen had their assets frozen and were subsequently deported or denaturalised. The government also increased the producer price of cocoa by 100 per cent (from 40 to 80 cedis) to make the smuggling of cocoa to Togo and the Ivory Coast unattractive (**West Africa** 18 September 1978: 1824). According to a conservative estimate by the government, during 1977 and 1978, about 35,000 tons of Ghana's cocoa were smuggled to Togo and the Ivory Coast where the prices were better. Other observers believed that as much as 60,000 tons of cocoa were smuggled from Ghana during this period (**West Africa** 18 September 1978: 1824).

Akuffo's attempts to lessen or put an end to **kalabule** were largely unsuccessful and were seen as mere window dressing because **kalabule** remained a problem and hoarding and profiteering and smuggling continued. 'The government did nothing as it was unwilling to touch the 'big' people behind the traders, who were the real Shylocks wielding a tight stranglehold on the ordinary Ghanaian' (Oquaye 1980: 126). Furthermore, although the public hearings of the committees of inquiry set up by Akuffo to probe some of the public corporations revealed corruption, the reports were suppressed and no criminal charges were laid. 'The Commissions sat, made their reports, and that was that' (Hansen and Collins 1980: 13). The nearest Akuffo came to punishing people was to remove

some of them most obviously implicated from their positions, and to recall military officers back to barracks (Hansen and Collins 1980:13). The revelations at the committees of inquiry, coupled with Akuffo's handling of the reports of these committees, only proved the opponents of the SMC right about corruption in government and the complicity of the SMC2 in covering up that corruption.

(9.3.3) Failure to Prosecute Acheampong

A further factor which discredited the Akuffo government was the failure to set up a probe into Acheampong's financial affairs and to prefer criminal charges against him.

After the removal of Acheampong, his SMC colleagues simply froze his assets and bank accounts, including those of his wife, and then confined him to a comfortable government house at Amedzofe. Many people had called on Akuffo to set up a probe into the activities of the NRC and the SMC under Achemapong. For example, the NUGS demanded that 'Acheampong, the ex-chairman of the Supreme Military Council, his henchmen and all retired Senior Army personnel who held state offices must be probed outright !'. On this demand, the NUGS stated that 'there is no question of any delay', and that 'if ever any such people are allowed to sneak out of the country it will imply too much and we shall react promptly'(Oquaye 1980: 121).

By May 1979, public criticism of the Akuffo government concerning its silence over the fate of Acheampong began to mount. Oquaye summarises the feeling in the country this way:

> people still saw their rulers and former rulers moving about freely enjoying their ill-gotten gains and they were not amused....the people demanded that the master architect and founding father of **kalabule**....General Acheampong - should be brought to trial. General Akuffo and his new SMC II tragically - for reasons best known to themselves - failed and/or refused to lift the carpet and sweep under it in the public view (Oquaye 1980:123)

In response to such criticisms, SMC2 passed the **Armed Forces (Miscellaneous Provisions) Decree** in May 1979. The decree stripped Acheampong of his military titles and reduced him to civilian status, directed that Acheampong should lose all his retirement benefits, be restricted to his village in the Ashanti region, and be prohibited from entering any military establishment or installations. More significantly, the decree set out a long list of 'crimes' Acheampong was deemed to have committed against the state and people of Ghana. Most of these charges have already been detailed above. But there were others, including 'taking dubious foreign loans to the detriment of the state' and displaying of 'immorality not befitting an officer and a gentleman and much less a Head of State'.

The publication of Acheampong's 'crimes' intensified demands that he should be prosecuted before a military tribunal under his own **Subversion Decree**, which made it an offence punishable to imprisonment for fifteen years to thirty years for any one to deal 'in any foreign currency notes in a manner likely to damage the economy of Ghana', to offer a 'bribe or obtain any import licence, or anyone who takes a bribe to allocate any import license' or to perform 'any act with the intent to sabotage the economy of Ghana'.

However, Akuffo failed to prosecute Acheampong and this was popularly interpreted as being due to the fears of the members of SMC2 that such a prosecution would implicate them. This led to further dissatisfaction with SMC2. A correspondent in the **Legon Observer**, (18 May 1979: 1985) argued that the failure of Akuffo to put Acheampong on trial

> reveals the inability of the SMC to do things legally...If a General is, on their own admission, guilty of criminal offences involving illegal currency deals a military government does not put him before the court. He is punished with the title of 'Mr'...No, SMC. This is disgraceful. Repent. Ghana does not deserve this shabby treatment.

Another correspondent in the **Legon Observer** noted:

> I never knew that the title 'Mister' was a derogatory term until the SMCII decided to demote the father of SMCI from the high rank of general to that of plain Mister as the ultimate punishment for his various acts of misconduct to the detriment of the State. What offence have we civilians committed to have been retained at our mister grade for so long or to be given such an unwelcome companion? (**Legon Observer** 18 May 1979: 185-6).

The failure of SMC2 to deal with this problem and the others outlined above '[created] the obvious suspicion that the SMC could not afford to allow Acheampong to be subject to any enquiry because his testimony would incriminate Akuffo and most of the other senior officers as well' (Okeke 1982: 31). This prevented SMC2 from making a sharp break with the SMC and thus undermined the legitimacy to which it might otherwise have been able to lay claim.

(9.4) Conclusion

Although the reputation of SMC2 ended as tarnished as that of SMC1, Akuffo succeeded in demobilizing the organized opposition against Acheampong. The decision to abandon the **Tinagov** concept and to lift the ban

on party political activities resulted in the break-up of the united front of the opposition groups which became divided into sixteen rival political parties, fighting among themselves for political power. Their pre-occupation with securing political power tended to obscure Akuffo's shortcomings, to the extent that some of the opponents of the government wanted to extend Akuffo's reign by six months. The vast majority of the urban working class and the rural Ghanaians (the common man or the ordinary Ghanaians, as they are referred to in Ghana), including the disadvantaged elements in the military remained disillusioned. To these people, 'the only sign that things were changing for the better would be the availability of goods in the stores at prices which they could afford. Instead, the chronic shortages continued, and the lines outside the stores became longer and longer' (Hansen and Collins 1980: 13). The workers' strikes of October and November 1978 lacked the support of the professionals, academics and the politicians, with the result that Akuffo easily crushed the strikers by declaring a state of emergency and by dismissing a large number of workers. In the end, 'the ordinary citizen has once again emerged as the real loser' in this political struggle (Chazan and Le Vine 1979: 200).

The rule of Akuffo was terminated on 4 June 1979 (one month before he was due to hand over power to a civilian party government) as a result of a **coup d'etat** staged by some junior military officers. The group was led by Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings who set up with his colleagues, an Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), reigning for three months and then transferring power to a civilian administration under the presidency of Hilla Limann. There was an earlier abortive coup attempt by the same group on 14 May 1979. Rawlings and some of the

soldiers involved were arrested and put on trial for treason. Rawlings was in prison before his colleagues staged the 4 June coup. The collapse of SMC2 was basically due to the failure of Akuffo to solve some of the problems that damaged the legitimacy of the Acheampong regime, particularly **kalabule** and the deteriorating economic conditions.

Several statements by Rawlings and his colleagues indicated that the failure of Akuffo to prosecute corruption was a primary motivation for their coup. The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), in his opening address at the military tribunal trying Rawlings and the others after their arrest during the 14 May 1979 abortive coup, outlined the following as Rawlings' reasons for attempting to overthrow SMC2.

> The first accused, Flight Lt. J.J. Rawlings had for a long time felt disillusioned about the injustices in our society, more particularly under the Acheampong regime; and so when in July 1978, the SMC was reconstituted with the removal of Mr. Acheampong as Head of State, Jerry John Rawlings thought things were going to be improved. When he realised that there were no improvements in the general conditions of life, he was struck with dismay and lamented the tarnished image of the Armed Forces'. He regretted that at a time when the military government was due to hand over to a civilian government the military had done practically nothing to improve the image of the Armed Forces...The first accused [Rawlings] then started talking about widespread corruption in high places, and stated that this nasty state of affairs could be remedied only by going the Ethiopian way and that there was need for bloodshed to clean up the country, and that this should start from the Armed Forces... (Quoted from Oquaye 1980: 133-134).

A radio broadcast by an unidentified voice on the day of Rawlings' coup also brought out the resentment of the junior officers at the corruption in government.

> Countrymen, we the junior officers and the other ranks are very much disturbed about the sunken reputation of the Armed Forces. We have felt that the SMC would do a house-cleaning exercise and put the reputation of the Armed Forces on an even keel before handing over. All attempts to help the SMC do this have failed. In these circumstances, we have no alternative but to take over the administration of the country. (**West Africa** 11 June 1979: 1013)

Explaining why Akuffo was overthrown, Rawlings also stated:

> The Army was going back to barracks without steps having been taken to punish those who had tarnished the image of the Armed Forces, a situation which posed a threat to the existence of the Armed Forces. (Quoted in Oquaye 1980: 138)

The resentment of the junior officers at the corruption within the SMC was illustrated by the objectives of the AFRC and the policies it pursued. Rawlings made it clear from the start that his administration had 'limited objective', i.e., to punish those who had 'plundered' Ghana and that the AFRC was committed to a 'house cleaning exercise' (**West Africa** 18 June 1979: 1061). It was in this respect that one understands the commitment of the AFRC to stick to Akuffo's time table for transferring political power. In pursuit of this 'house cleaning exercise', the AFRC proceeded to set up Special Courts to try offences against the State. Several members of the NRC/SMC were sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging from life to ten years. Acheampong and Akuffo, together with five other senior members of the SMC (Utuka, Kotei, Boakye, Amedume and Felli) and Afrifa (former Chairman of the NLC that overthrew Nkrumah), were sentenced to death by the Special Courts and executed by firing squad. The AFRC also forced several organizations and companies to refund large sums of unpaid tax to the State (Oquaye 1980: 151). **Makola** Market, which was generally considered the seat of **kalabule**, was also destroyed.

Another factor behind the overthrow of SMC2 by the AFRC was the failure of Akuffo to solve the economic crisis in the country. This crisis had an adverse effect on the junior officers in the military who resented the luxury in which their senior counterparts lived. During Rawlings' trial in May 1979, the Director of Public Prosecutions quoted Rawlings as saying that 'it sounded rather foolish for one to ask him of his aims when people were dying of starvation in the teeth of a few well fed who even had a chance of growing fatter' (Oquaye 1980: 133).

But the Rawlings' 'revolution' of 4 June 1979 was really a counter-revolutionary action. 'The leaders of the AFRC were junior officers who had not lost contact with the soldiers and still had clean records. They did what they [did] to avoid a total destruction of the military hierarchy. Thus the "revolutionary actions" of the AFRC were on the whole symbolic, and their main purpose seems to have been to defuse a potentially revolutionary situation' (Hettne 1980: 185). Rawlings confirmed this interpretation when he stated that, 'the people of Ghana endured for too long...There is not a single worker who could make ends meet and the miracle is that the people have been able to endure this for so long. You may say that this had been possible because of our excellent tradition of tolerance and patience, but tolerance and patience can be dangerous to such an extent that when the bubble bursts there can hardly be a way of containment' (**West Africa** 9 July 1979); therefore, 'what we had to do was virtually nip in the bud what would have been a very bloody situation' (Hansen and Collins 1980: 20).

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSIONS

In the preceeding chapters, an attempt has been made to examine the legitimacy problems the NRC/SMC regimes faced. Five major themes have emerged in this study. It is useful to bring the thesis to a close by restating them briefly.

The first is that, in Ghana as in many new states, there is a crucial linkage between the legitimacy of a particular constitutional regime and that of the government in power. It was argued in chapter two that the former is dependent on the latter. The Acheampong period provided a good illustration of this situation. By 1976 the Acheampong government had virtually lost its legitimacy, and the support for the constitutional arrangements of the Acheampong government were called into question. Many Ghanaians wanted an end to military rule as such; not just the replacement of an unpopular politician. That was the main reason why substituting Akuffo for Acheampong did not succeed.

The evolution of the **Unigov** concept exemplified another aspect of the relationship between the legitimacy of a government and that of a constitutional regime. Because of the fusion of the two, governments that face crisis in their legitimacy may try to change the constitutional structure of the government in order to seek new forms of legitimacy. Acheampong proposed the formation of **Unigov** only when the legitimacy of his government was challenged. But because the legitimacy of a government creates or distroys the legitimacy of its constitutional regime, the **Unigov** idea failed to achieve legitimacy. We saw in chapter seven how political and economic issues which contributed to the diminution of the legitimacy of the Acheampong government obfus-

cated the **Unigov** debate. **Unigov** was rejected by many Ghanaians, not because of the demerits of the proposal, but because the SMC had lost its legitimacy.

The second main argument in the thesis is that the level of a regime's legitimacy determines its tolerance of dissent and opposition. It was argued in chapter two, with illustrations from the Nkrumah and the Busia periods, that the general tendency of all Ghanaian regimes to shift towards dictatorship relates to the fact that there is a continuing low level of government legitimacy in Ghana - brought about mainly by the interaction between persisting economic crisis and the permanent hostility between the Nkrumahist and Busiaist political **camps**. We saw that governments in Ghana usually begin as fairly tolerant of dissent and opposition and then become more repressive as their political and economic problems increase. This was the case with the Acheampong regime, particularly after 1974. Some of these repressive acts accelerated the downfall of the Acheampong regime. After 1976, Acheampong's abuses of 'human rights' and his disregard of the 'rule of law' became important factors his opponents used to reject the SMC and **Unigov.**

The Third issue in the thesis is the central role elite groups in Ghana play in determining the legitimacy of governments. In Ghana it is the support of certain dominant elite groups such as the military and police, the TUC, the universities, the **market women**, and professionals, which a regime needs in order to remain legitimate; while on the contrary the support of the rural peasantry and the urban working class is less crucial in estabishing and perpetuating a government's legitimacy.

These points were brought out by the nature of the social elements that participated in the **Unigov** debate. The **Unigov** conflict, like other political conflicts in Ghana before it, was an intra-elite conflict, although different factions of the elite tried to manipulate the numerical strength of the mass of the people during the **Unigov** referendum. Efforts by Acheampong to broaden or solidify a mass base for his government rather intensified opposition to his rule by elite groups who saw threats to themselves in such actions.

The fourth theme in the thesis is the primacy of economic factors in determining the legitimacy of governments in Ghana. It was argued in chapter two that an important aspect of the legitimacy of governments in Ghana is the government's ability to provide instrumental benefits, particularly **essential commodities** such as tinned fish, corned beef, sardines, sugar, tinned milk, and toilet rolls to Ghanaians; it is usually when these goods have run out of supply that the non-economic short-comings of the governments are highlighted. But because the Ghanaian economy has been in crisis since the mid-1960s, governments have been unable to satisfy the instrumental demands placed on them. This leads to the erosion in their political legitimacy. The economic crisis also affects the relationship between the regime and the elite groups whose support a government needs to remain legitimate (in the sense that governments have lacked the necessary economic resources to exchange for political support). This argument largely explains the fall of both Nkrumah and Busia, and accounted for the rise of Acheampong. This was also the major factor which ultimately led to the collapse of the Acheampong regime.

Ghana's continuing economic crisis is the single most important threat to sustaining the legitimacy of any government. Since no government in Accra is in control of the national economy, the prospects for political stability in Ghana are bleak. Indeed, 'when one considers the pressures of population on natural resources, or the demand for reward on the scarcity of political prizes, and the very little room open to leaders for maneuver within the economy, the future is not a very welcoming prospect' (Austin 1976: 154).

The fifth and final point is the significance of the two rival political **camps** for legitimacy in Ghana. When Acheampong came to power in January 1972, he won the support of the Nkrumahist **camp**, primarily because he had antagonised the other. Although Acheampong was not fully supported by all the members of the Nkrumahist **camp**, individual members of this **camp** became vital sources of Acheampong's support during the **Unigov** conflict. While the **Unigov** concept was partly intended to break-up the **camp** structure of Ghanaian politics, the alliance between Acheampong and the Nkrumahist **camp**, by oppearing to identify Acheampong with that **camp**, undermined the attempt to use **Unigov** to dismantle the **camp** structure of Ghanaian politics. This alliance also provided additional grounds for the members of the Busiaist **camp** and elements associated with it to oppose the SMC and to reject **Unigov**. The election of Limann as President in 1979 represented a full resumption of the traditional patterns of **camps** in Ghanaian politics.

In December 1981, the Limann administration was overthrown by a group of junior military officers in collaboration with some non-commissioned officers led by Rawlings. This was the second time Rawlings

had appeared on the Ghanaian political scene; the first being June 1979, when he led an uprising by some junior military officers to overthrow the SMC. This 'second coming' of Rawlings has introduced a more overt class element into Ghanaian politics; a development which may alter some of the themes of Ghanaian politics. The two political **camps** may dissolve and the role of elite groups in determining the legitimacy of governments may decline.

One significant way in which Rawlings represents a departure from previous Ghanaian governents is in his attempts to relocate political power in Ghana - from the apex to the base of the Ghanaian social structure; or in Ghanaian usage, to transfer power to the 'people' or the 'common man'. In his second broadcast, Rawlings stated: 'the alternative that now lies open before us is for you, the people, to take over the destiny of this country, your own destiny and shaping the society along the lines that you desire, making possible what has been denied to you all these years' (**Daily Graphic** 6 June 1982). In fact, one of the declared aims of Rawlings' December 'revolution' was to ensure that 'power is exercised by the people organised from the grassroot' (**West Africa** 13 May 1982: 1441). In line with this view, the government renamed several public institutions after the people; for example, the police as the 'people's police' and the army as the 'people's army'.

There is also a noticeable move away from the Ghanaian trend in which coup makers ally with one of the two political **camps** and elite groups for initial support. Rawlings has categorically foreclosed the question of handing over power to civilian elite politicians. Power will only be transferred to the 'people': 'there will be no such thing as a hand-over. The people are going to make the decision as to how to

govern the country themselves' (**West Africa** 1 February 1982: 333).

The main source of Rawlings' initial political and moral support came from the junior ranks in the military, students, the urban working class and the lower orders of Ghanaian society. Although the civilian personnel set-up in the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) is largely petty-bourgeois in character, there is an anti-petty-bourgeois aura surrounding the 'revolution'. In terms of the traditional Ghanaian pattern, it may be said that Rawlings has the support of the 'wrong people'.

The class character of the Rawlings' 'revolution' is not evident only at the level of rhetoric; it is backed by some actions. The most significant development in this respect is the formation of 'People's Defence Committees' (PDCs) and 'Workers Defence Committees' (WDCs). These are organizations formed in all public and private establishments to serve as watchdogs over the interest of the 'people'. These organizations are to develop into 'People's' Assemblies or Congresses, eventually to govern the country (**West Africa** 17 May 1982: 1311). A large group of people, including professionals; academics; businessmen; transport owners and house owners are disqualified from membership of the PDCs and WDCs. Since their formation, the PDCs and WDCs have assumed control of a number of institutions. For example, the rank and file of the workers have taken over the TUC and have suspended its executive (**West Africa** 31 May 1982: 1441).

The class nature of the Rawlings 'revolution' may foster united political reaction among the elite groups and members of the Nkrumahist

and the Busiaist **camps** to defend their class interests (class unity?). **This** may lead to a confrontation between the government and the professionals, academics and the politicians, as was the case in the **Unigov** conflict. Already, there is a familiar drama unfolding. There is a growing alliance among the various elite groups in Ghana. The Ghana Bar Association, the Professional Bodies Association and the National Union of Ghana Students have openly opposed the PNDC and demanded its resignation (cf **West Africa** 16 May 1983: 1209; **West Africa** 6 June 1983:1343).

In the main, the ability of the Rawlings regime to maintain the support of the 'people' depends on whether he is able to satisfy the instrumental expectations, arising from Rawlings' rhetoric. Undoubtedly, these people support Rawlings because his populist rhetoric led them into thinking that he would improve their living conditions - i.e., make available the sufficient food, abundant supply of **essential commodities** at 'reasonable prices', housing and transportation, that previous governments have failed to give them. Considering the permanent economic crisis in Ghana, this will be difficult to achieve. Whether Rawlings can effectively displace the Ghanaian elites from politics, whether he can maintain the support of the 'people' on 'empty stomachs' and whether such support is sufficient to sustain his regime's rule are issues which cannot yet be resolved or predicted. If Rawlings succeeds, this will be a notable development which will significantly alter the political direction of Ghana.

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