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INTELLECTUALS AND GOVERNMENT:
A TALE OF UNEASY PARTNERSHIP

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Preface

The Institute of Economic Affairs is pleased to publish *Intellectuals and Government: A Tale of Uneasy Partnership* by Professor Kwesi Yankah of the University of Ghana as the sixth in our series of Occasional Papers, which feature reflections on broad policy issues by noted scholars and policy makers.

Professor Yankah provides a historical overview of the mutual mistrust underlying the relationship between government and intellectuals in Ghana. He notes that intellectuals have perceived governments and politicians as semi-qualified self-seekers who must be closely monitored while governments have tended to regard intellectuals as adversaries whose frequent and partisan attacks on government policy must be curbed in the interest of social stability, and undertakes a thoughtful analysis of the rather checkered relations between post-colonial Ghanaian governments and the nation's intellectuals.

In the final part of the essay, Professor Yankah takes on the daunting challenge of outlining a framework for facilitating cooperation between governments, who perceive intellectual freedom as providing a pretext for political subversion and intellectuals, who see themselves as agents of change in a society that has invested heavily in their education - in order to promote stability, democracy and development in Ghana.

I am delighted to place on record, the gratitude of the Institute of Economic Affairs to the Danish Government, through the Royal Danish Embassy in Accra and DANIDA, whose generous financial support made this publication and the research that went into it possible.

Dr. Charles Mensa
Executive Director
Institute of Economic Affairs

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Intellectuals and Government: A Tale of Uneasy Partnership

● Introduction

Over the years, the relationship between intellectuals and government in Ghana has been laced with suspicion, mistrust and tension. Governments have tended to perceive intellectuals as adversaries and potential subverts, rather than as partners in development; and intellectuals have seen governments and politicians as self-seekers deserving close monitoring and exposure. The irony, of course, is that both intellectuals and governments claim to be supreme advocates of the national interest.

This may not come as a surprise if one departs from the traditional image of the intellectual as a totally disengaged, ivory-towered thinker, and perceives the intellectual not just as public spirited, but as belonging to a culture of critical discourse (Gouldner 1979:28-43); or even more radically, as one who seeks to speak the truth to custodians of power. Such a view depicts the intellectual as a public advocate.

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- Speaking for the chief: Okyeame and the Politics of Akan Royal Oratory
- No Big English
- Beloved let us love

This stance is more persuasively articulated by Edward Said, a contemporary cultural critic, who sees the intellectual as,

an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, and articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public. This role has an edge to it, and cannot be played without a sense of being someone whose place it is publicly to raise embarrassing questions, confront orthodoxy and dogma, to be someone who cannot be easily co-opted by governments or corporations, and whose *raison d'etre* is to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the carpet (Said 1994:11).

This latter mode of representation has often brought the intellectual under the close scrutiny of authoritarian governments, that consider the intellectual as a major obstacle in the attempt to maintain a perpetual hold on power. Remarkably, however, where intellectuals themselves have actively participated in governance, their sense of idealism has frequently been compromised; and their principled role as agents for change within has petered out. The result is that the nation often does not derive optimum benefits from its intellectual endowments.

This problem lies at the heart of the challenges of resource mobilization for the purpose of national development in developing countries. It also overlaps with the politicization of the human resource base, and the discretionary deployment of the intellect in the scramble for power.

Much as the use of the intellect to solve human problems is not one man's monopoly, or that of a group of people, every society, regardless of its degree of underdevelopment, has its own intellectuals, set in the society's peculiar social and historical context.

Intellectuals are often individuals who are primarily concerned with the production and distribution of knowledge. The broad definition given to the term 'intellectual' would include sages and philosophers of traditional society, who may not have undergone formal education (Sutherland-Addy 1994:111, Yankah 1995). It would also include teachers, writers, poets, journalists, as well as commercial entrepreneurs (what Gramsci calls 'organic intellectuals'), regardless of the extent of their formal education (Gramsci 1971:4).

This essay, however, uses the university as the relevant institutional frame of reference in discussing the intellectual, and for practical reasons, restricts the term to practising university academics. One would also agree with Edward Shills here and include students among intellectuals, particularly in developing countries (Shills 1959: 332-336); more so when student action has often helped to shape government-university relations.

● The University

As society becomes more complex and its needs expand, this necessitates a high degree of intellectual activity. The provision of intellectual resources for such roles can hardly do without universities and other institutions of higher learning and research. These constitute the hub of intellectual activity in modern society.

The concept of a university itself, substantially shaped by John Henry Newmann of Oxford in 1852, was originally of a classical character. The university, indeed, was for a man of leisure, who would enjoy it for its own sake. Its main tenet was the 'discipline of the mind'. Intellectual development, as the chief function of the university, was perceived in itself as a contribution towards the advancement of society.

Yet as Chancellor Williams sees it, education should be the process for the development of the whole man, to be fully integrated with the relevant moral and spiritual forces in society (Williams 1961: 203). The immediate as well as the ultimate purpose of education should be the actual improvement of human life on this planet. In the context of the university, teaching and research are known to be the basis for creating and transmitting new knowledge. Here, scholarship would be concerned with the deployment of knowledge to address the pressing needs of society; for the intellectual in every society is bound to reckon with the social and political realities of the times, and seek to improve them. It is no accident, then, that intellectuals were virtually indispensable in the agitation for nationalism and achievement of independence in Ghana and in the other former colonies.

● Nationalism

African intellectuals, in the words of Basil Davidson, studied the portents and examined the entrails of Europe's nation-liberating struggles; and they found in them sure prophesies for colonial Africa and for the nations that Africa must build if it was to realize its destiny (Davidson 1992:116).

The return from studies abroad, of intellectuals such as Nkrumah, Banda, Azikiwe, Kaunda, then marked a point of departure for several African countries. In the words of Kwame Nkrumah,

The history of human achievement illustrates that when an awakened intelligentsia emerges from a subject people, it becomes the vanguard of the struggle against alien rule (1963:43).

This view of the imperative of intellectual involvement in societal struggles was more or less endorsed in the proposals of the Constitutional Commission of Ghana in 1968 which began with a quote from Plato that, "The punishment which the wise suffer who refuse to take part in government, is to live under the government of fools".

On the other hand, one cannot ignore the alternative view advocating a hands-off politics approach for intellectuals, and espoused by intellectuals like the late Robert Gardiner: the view that in politics there is not much real opportunity to solve economic problems in one's country; that political decisions should be left exclusively to non-intellectuals; and that intellectuals like Senghor, Kenyatta, Nkrumah, Kaunda,

Nyerere, etc, were all wrong in dabbling in politics (See Vorkeh 1973). Gardiner advocates social detachment on the part of the intellectual in his attempt to analyse and seek solutions to societal problems. From this perspective, self involvement breeds prejudice and subjective thinking, and undermines objectivity.

● Nkrumah's Suspicion

Whether intellectuals take part in politics or not, it is a fact of our history that while political leaders in the newly independent states appreciated universities and intellectuals, they soon began to see the universities not as viable partners in development but as rivals or adversaries. Universities, in asserting their autonomy as centres of academic freedom, became objects of suspicion by insecure governments.

In attempting to whittle down the power of universities, governments reduced the universities' priority in funding, and started accusing them of elitism, and provenance within a far removed ivory tower. This posturing became more pronounced when governments, particularly dictatorships, espoused so-called anti-bourgeoisie, populist ideologies. A good representation of such a view is provided by an editorial of the *Evening News*, the organ of Nkrumah's CPP in 1964:

The University in the colonialist epoch catered for the interests of the upper ranks of African society and its fundamental aim was to build an upper class of indigenous elite, faithful to the interests of the foreign power, which in the case of Ghana was British imperialism. This is proved by a detailed study curriculum

in a colonial university. The emphasis is placed on Western European History, British History, the Economics of Medieval Society in Britain, English Literature, Phonetics, the Classics, Bourgeois Philosophy and the development of reactionary capitalist institutions in Western Europe. Of what use these courses were to the people of this country, the colonialist intellectuals never told anyone. In an African country which has low standards of literacy, health, housing and in which colonial rule had left mass poverty in its wake, the colonial university offered courses in bourgeois abstract philosophy and anti-people law. Instead of settling down to real problems of health, education, industrial science and people's economy or encouraging research in the advanced sciences, the colonialists, working through Balme and Busia, established a reactionary tradition of bourgeois intellectualism... There is no excuse whatsoever for students to be loitering about aimlessly after dinner discussing not the latest uses of the atom or the mysteries of the space flight, or even Shakespeare but counter-revolutionary plans, how to organize demonstrations and general subversive talk. This is biting off more than one can chew, in view of the fact that all university education in this country apart from being free is at the expense of the broad masses of the people who support the party and Government. The reactionary groups in the university must move with the times and face the reality of

power now in the hands of the working people, the farmers, youth and the progressive intelligentsia (February 7, 1964).

The stance of the *Evening News* was evidently based on Nkrumah's view of class struggle, which dichotomised society into the bourgeois [including intellectuals] and the exploited (See Ocquaye 1994:34).

● Tension

It is not surprising, then, that there was considerable tension between Nkrumah and the universities, and that every effort was made to place the latter under close control and surveillance. Subsequent to this, there were constant newspaper attacks on intellectuals. Students were paid to spy on their lecturers and their own fellow students. Some university professors were dismissed in 1961, and a few expatriate lecturers were deported in 1964 (Amoah 1979:37). The University itself was closed down in 1964 to prevent protests by the students against a farcical referendum. Professors and students were detained at the time and the masses, led by party thugs, staged a massive demonstration against the University in early 1964.

The clamp-down of the University was preceded by a threat in a February edition of the *Evening News* captioned, 'Shame unto Colonial Lecturers,' part of which read,

(The Universities) think they have been ordained by some metaphysical powers to lord it over to the common people, not knowing that the masses can uproot them from their

academic freedom, that is the freedom to act contrary to the wishes and manifesto of the party and government, and freedom to conspire with Western capitalist agents against the African revolution. The subversive groups among the lecturers, those who conspired with reactionary students one moment, and then pretended to hold them in check, we know them all and shall CRUSH them.

● University under Control

To Nkrumah, then, even though universities were indispensable in national development, the concept of academic freedom in its ideal manifestations, was a threat to political order so long as it could be used as a pretext for 'political subversion'. Bringing the university under control did not only mean dealing with intellectuals; it also meant politicizing the university, and seeing the Government's hand in the appointment of politically loyal vice-chancellors, and chairmen and members of university councils, as well as the reservation of the position of the university chancellor itself, for the president. It is not surprising, then, that included on the University of Ghana Council in the mid-sixties, were CPP members of parliament such as Kofi Baako, F.K.D. Goka, Tawiah Adamafio, and Kofi Asante Ofori-Attah.

In seeking the University's loyalty, the first Vice Chancellor of the University of Ghana showed the way when, on the installation of Nkrumah as Chancellor in November 1961, the Vice-Chancellor (Nana Kobina Nketsia) was compelled to give a promise he could not eventually deliver. He swore during Nkrumah's installation that so long as he remained his

okyeame, there would be no quislings at Legon, and that everyone would support his party and Government.

● Rift

This promise of collective loyalty to party and government was, however, hard to redeem. The next Vice-Chancellor, Conor Cruise O'Brien, was Kwame Nkrumah's own choice who, however, asserted his independence and brought the rift between Government and university more into the open. In October 1963 Nkrumah ordered the Vice-Chancellor, to start a party ideological training course in the University, at which party functionaries would lecture; and furthermore the party would be represented on the University Council, Academic Board, and Faculty Boards, partly as a way of strengthening party education in the University. The Vice-Chancellor, however, firmly refused to implement these party-oriented educational reforms, setting the stage for the clamp-down on the University. Subsequently, Nkrumah made it clear that only those who would comply with his wish to bend the University to his will, could get the post of vice-chancellor. The above account of the continued impasse between Nkrumah and the CPP, on one hand, and intellectuals on the other, makes evident Nkrumah's dislike of intellectuals as the nucleus of his decision making body, and his general preference for "verandah boys", who had little or no formal education. It also marks an attempt not just to silence, but also to alienate the intellectual, disabling him from any meaningful participation in national affairs. Consider, for instance, this paragraph of an editorial attack on intellectuals in a February 1964 edition of the *Evening News*:

The working people, and the farmers, the

overwhelming majority of the masses of Ghana have given the Party of the people a revolutionary mandate to go forward and establish a people's democratic socialist state. This means that the principle of equal opportunity for all citizens especially the historical allies of the party, shall be applied; or to explain further, the fantastic notion that university bourgeois alone are fit for governmental and administrative or managerial work does not hold water; and in fact it usually turns out that the intellectual laden with chains of academic letters is subversive, a saboteur, a bad worker; whereas the middle of the road worker does his best to produce concrete work on behalf of our people. Some products of the colonialist universities are well known for their laziness, general irresponsibility and complacency, with few exceptions.

● Intellectual Pals

The few exceptions the party had in mind, were possibly in the character of intellectual advisors surrounding Nkrumah. Apart from a few intellectuals in Government, Nkrumah found the best use of intellectuals in advisory roles. In 1963, he had indeed gone on a hunt for talented intellectuals, and discovered in Oxford a young Ghanaian professor of philosophy in his mid-thirties, whom he persuaded to return to Ghana and join his team of advisors. Professor Willie Abraham thus became one of the confidantes of Kwame Nkrumah, even while he lectured in the Philosophy Department of the University of Ghana. Nkrumah set up a special secretariat for him within the Philosophy Department, where he combined academic and political duties. He served on almost all the important national committees, and was part

of the founding delegation of the Organization of African Unity. At the resignation of Cruise O'Brien, Abraham, the Pro-Vice Chancellor was appointed Acting Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana, a position he held until the coup of 1966.

In 1995 Abraham recalled some of the challenges in combining academic and political roles under the prevailing political system. He, for instance, recalled a request by Nkrumah to take over the University's Agriculture Research Station at Nungua, and turn it into a national asset. This request, of course, was firmly but politely turned down by Abraham on the grounds that the station was a research facility used for demonstrations by the Faculty of Agriculture. This negative response supposedly upset the President who came later himself with a delegation to express concern.

Yet Nkrumah used his intellectual pal, Abraham, and other intellectuals in other ways that smacked of intellectual exploitation. The allegation that Abraham was the real author of Nkrumah's *Consciencism* has been long denied by the Professor. Abraham, however, has admitted that he was summoned by Nkrumah and asked to go through a typescript titled *Consciencism*, written by the President. Abraham said Nkrumah gave him a free hand to reorganize the script. As a result, parts were rewritten, changed or reorganized; chapter headings were changed; and several paragraphs were revised. He also effected several stylistic changes which refined the cadence of words and sentences. The ideas, however, were Nkrumah's, according to the Professor. Abraham said the typescript of Nkrumah's *Consciencism* had already gone through the hands of two Cameroonian intellectuals, one a mathematician (which explains the mathematical symbolism in the book), the other a social anthropologist. Abraham said his

next book project with Nkrumah (until his overthrow) was going to be a revision of Nkrumah's Ph.D. thesis which was a critique of Levi Strauss' *The Savage Mind*. Then also was another uncompleted project commissioned by Nkrumah; this was going to be the story of a legendary character of destiny, who would never die.

Yet even for Professor Abraham, who was a known Nkrumah confidante and advisor, an occasional friction with the party stalwarts was inevitable. Willie Abraham's brief review of Nkrumah's book, *Consciencism*, led to a direct collision with the party press; based on a paragraph where the philosopher had accused the Ghanaian press of 'unsober adulation' of Kwame Nkrumah, which had led to his withdrawal from the masses. The party paper launched a visceral attack on the Professor, calling him "a wolf in sheep's clothing."

● National Liberation Council

On Nkrumah's overthrow in 1966, the long period of silence on the intellectual front appeared to be over. Even though the National Liberation Council was a military regime, it got token support from intellectuals, some of whom served on a number of committees and joined delegations sent abroad to explain NLC policies (Amoah 1979:65).

Significantly, the University of Ghana, whose freedom had been badly dented by Nkrumaist ideology, openly placed on record the University's immense gratitude to the gallant men of the Army and the Police Force. Ghanaian universities went further: they took the opportunity to purge themselves of Nkrumaist ideologues in their midst; including the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Science and Technology, Dr.

R. P. Baffour, whose removal was engineered by students of UST. In Legon, the Chairman of the University Council called on members of staff whose intellectual faith in Nkrumah had not been shaken by his overthrow, to 'be patriotic and leave the campus for the good of the campus'.

These uncharacteristic moves by a university asserting its newly regained freedom, demonstrate how such an institution could render itself vulnerable to charges of intellectual persecution, which itself flies in the face of academic freedom. But the swift, almost vengeful reaction of the universities to Nkrumah's overthrow was also because the universities had found it impossible during the government-university impasse to fulfill their normal role of providing a forum for the critical appraisal of contemporary issues without let or hindrance. During the first congregation after Nkrumah's overthrow, the Vice-Chancellor in his speech noted, for instance, that between 1964 and 1966, no serious journal was published in Legon, and there were no open lectures on matters of contemporary and topical interest (University of Ghana: *Annual Report 1965-66*:100).

● Legon Observer

On Nkrumah's overthrow, intellectuals resolved never again to sit on the fence, and be silent in the face of repression. That resolve, indeed marked the birth of the Legon Society for National Affairs (LSNA), made up of dons from various academic disciplines. The LSNA, whose organ was the fortnightly *The Legon Observer*, was star-studded, with names like K.A.B. Jones-Quartey, K.B. Dickson, J.A. Dadson, Obed Asamoah, Yaw Twumasi, J. Hyde, G.K. Agama, P.A.V. Ansah, S.O. Gyandoh, Adu Boahen, J.A.

Peasah, Max Assimeng, Ebow Daniel, and the like, most of whom were, and are still, in positions of eminence. It is LSNA that became the academic mouthpiece of the oppressed after Nkrumah's overthrow. Some of its members, however, later compromised principles and worked for dictatorial regimes.

Looking back on the stormy days of the Nkrumah era, when scholars were subdued into silence and fear, *The Legon Observer*, in its debut editorial of July 1966, related an unsavory history of press emasculation and intellectual alienation, and vowed never again to be caught napping in any era of political oppression:

We were held captive to the political tyranny which the Ghana army and political coup of 24th February 1966 has now rendered ridiculous and impertinent in retrospect, but which while it lasted made a pathetic spectacle of this country. We looked so bad at the height of the CPP ritual dance that a foreign news magazine described Ghana as a country inhabited by Kwame Nkrumah and seven million cowards..... Among the people most culpable for these conditions were those of us who, for good reasons or bad, could speak out and damn the consequences, but did not. We only stood and waited, though believing quite sincerely, in most cases, that we were in that way also serving. We have learnt by bitter experience that that was not so, and many of us are resolved never again to be caught trying to save the future by sacrificing the present; never again to remain quiet if our liberties are being invaded and curtailed, hoping that somebody else would eventually perform any risky obligations for us.

The floundering fortunes of the *The Legon Observer*, since the above course was charted, are now well known. It sailed through the National Liberation Council (NLC) and Progress Party governments from 1966 till 1972, and went through various types of censorship until August 1982, nearly a year after Rawlings' second coming, when it finally disappeared from the newsstand after an extensive critical commentary on the mysterious murder of three high court judges and a retired army officer, a scandal the paper implied was government motivated.

The fate of the Legon Observer is itself an index of the tensed interaction between Government and intellectuals over the years. When the NLC appeared to renege on its promise to restore the rights of the individual, and innocent civilians were subjected to drilling and other forms of abuse by military and police personnel, the concern of academics was aroused and they used their informal mouthpiece - *The Legon Observer* - to condemn such abuses of human rights. Apart from that, the NLC period recorded no remarkable conflicts between intellectuals and government.

● Busia

K.A. Busia's short-lived regime from October 1969 to January 1972, appeared to consolidate the spirit of rapprochement between Government and intellectuals, partly because of the democratic principles his Government espoused, but also because there was a preponderance of the elite and academics in Busia's Government - Busia himself being an Oxford scholar of international repute. Even so a major student protest over a proposed payment of fees for boarding and lodging at the universities, coupled with a

confrontation between the National Union of Ghana Students and Parliament over non-declaration of assets, soured the smooth relations. This was soon followed by an open confrontation by a Legon graduate student of Dr Busia over material acquisitions by members of his government, despite prior claims of modesty.

Thus, the Busia government's generally favorable disposition towards academics, and the general ambience of intellectual freedom did not completely stave off tension. Busia's proposal of a fee paying university was considered detrimental to the tenets of intellectual freedom, so long as a majority of promising students from poor homes would thereby be deprived of university education. And even though little or no friction between dons and Government was in evidence, tension started to mount on the student front over Busia's educational policies. However, the relations between the regime and the University as an institution, remained quite cordial during the 27-month administration of Busia.

● **Acheampong**

General I. K. Acheampong's seven-year dictatorship brought back the historic tension between Government and intellectuals, after an initial flush of co-operation. Acheampong's reversal of Busia's proposals for tertiary education encouraged the student body to initially embrace his dictatorship for strategic reasons, thus temporarily relaxing their vigilance over national interests. Relations, however, turned sour when students and academics noticed signs of deterioration in the economy, corruption and moral degeneration among top public officials, and what looked like Acheampong's agenda to perpetuate his rule through the proposal for a union government.

Anti-government demonstrations by university students erupted countrywide; so did student-police and student-military confrontations which led to fatalities. Academic work in the universities was perennially destabilized between 1974 and 1978. In 1974 the university was closed down from February 11 to March 15 by Government, following student protests against military brutalities. The University went on forced recess again from June 16 to July 2, 1977 following student protests against the premature retirement by Government of two professors. In 1978 when students protested against the arrest by the military of 3 students and a professor, it cost the University seven weeks of classes as it was closed again from May 4 to June 24.

A demonstration by students to express concern about the high cost of living in 1977 provoked a swift response from the Acheampong Government which ordered the closure of all three universities and decided to redeploy all the students on agricultural production - as that was the planting season. The announcement of the closure said, "With their contribution, we shall accelerate the pace of providing enough food for our people". The climax of student-police encounters occurred in January 1978 when students of Legon demonstrated against General Acheampong and mock buried his UNIGOV proposal. The police invasion of the university campus was swift and brutal. Armored cars, truncheons, wicker shields and tear gas were used in an onslaught which knew no precedent. Female cooks, lecturers and workers were all beaten up. The situation worsened when a policeman guarding the bank premises was kidnapped by students, divested of his upper garment and cap, relieved of his rifle, and held hostage.

Police again invaded the campus, incensed by the speculation that their man had been killed. Female students were stripped naked and beaten up, and some women arrived at the police station virtually naked. Several students suffered head and limb wounds. The policeman, now wearing a university jersey, was eventually released by Commonwealth Hall students. But it took the police five more days to recover the rifle and bayonet --- hidden in Akuafo Hall Annex 2. Damage to university property reportedly ran into millions of cedis.

Reminiscent of the Nkrumah era, student intransigence was blamed by Government on instigation by lecturers and class interest groups within Legon. On January 14, 1978, the *Ghanaian Times*, without reporting the incident, came out with an editorial which partly reflected Government's thinking: "Students day of Shame". Part of it:

We must urge the Government to prevent illegality and anarchy from rearing its ugly head in the society. Those who seek violence and would molest the public, must be checked vigorously, the only means by which the common Ghanaian can express his wish effectively. If the student leadership are not prepared to realize that they contradict themselves and seriously compromise their professed revolutionary position by siding with or allowing themselves to be used by a class interest group, can't the individual students learn from history? External forces which push the confrontationists to pressurize the SMC to hand over power to them cannot be working in Ghana's interest. In any case, we must urge the Government to prevent illegality and anarchy from rearing its ugly head in the society.

Significantly, the period also saw considerable politicization of academic unions. University teachers played an active role in the Association of Professional Bodies that protested Acheampong's political agenda through strikes and seminars. A few vocal intellectuals (like Professor Adu Boahen) also spearheaded anti-government political movements like the Movement for Freedom and Justice which opposed Acheampong's UNIGOV. It was also a time when two or so intellectuals were clamped in jail for alleged involvement in subversion. Over a period of four years, academic work on university campuses was interrupted about a dozen times through closures either by Government or university authorities, or through vacation declared by students themselves any time they found the climate on campus not conducive to normal academic work.

● Exodus

That was also an era when deteriorating economic conditions in the country led to a mass exodus of intellectuals and other professionals for greener pastures outside the country. Between November 1977 and November 1978, the University of Ghana lost 45 full-time lecturers through resignations of appointment and vacation of posts. Added to the number that tactically left on sabbatical leave and leave of absence, or resigned as research fellows, the University lost altogether 114 academics. Between 1978 and 1979, the University lost another 88 senior members and recruited only 47.

Not only did the university lose some of its brains; the concept of the academic as a professional started losing its meaning. Lecturers left behind spent less time on the job and sought other sources of income. A few lecturers converted their cars

into taxis and operated them commercially after classes. The situation thus was not just an endemic impasse between the pen and the sword; it was also the onset of a decline in academic standards. University bookshops were depleted; the growth of university libraries came to a halt; and building projects in universities were abandoned for lack of funds. All these factors considerably eroded intellectual freedom, and undermined the quality of intellectual output (see also Ninsin 1994: 80).

What transpired during the Acheampong era was also a function of the educational status of leadership and, more importantly, Acheampong's occasional anti-intellectual posturing and public utterances. During one of the several interruptions in the academic calendar, he is on record as having reacted in proverbial terms thus: "It is the wish of he who has no decent clothes that 'asafo-warrior' drums would forever be played", implying that the university campuses could as well be closed forever, since he himself had not enjoyed tertiary education. Acheampong indeed was part of a line of leaders who spoke dismissively about the classical concept of intellectualism (that which, in his words, does not yield visible results, i.e. *mfa aduane mma fie*).

● Limann

The Limann Government's brief spell on the political scene (1979 to 1981), in a way, brought the two institutions into greater co-operation, which was predictable not only because the country was a constitutional democracy, but also because Dr. Limann, being an academic himself, naturally attracted his like. Several university lecturers joined one wing of Government or the other. Of these, 6 were particularly

visible. Dr. Isaac Chinebuah (Dean of Arts), who became Minister of Foreign Affairs; Dr. J. S. Nabila of the Geography Department, who became Minister of Information, Presidential Affairs and Special Duties; Dr. Ekow Daniels (Dean of the Faculty of Law), who was appointed Minister of the Interior; Dr. K. G. Erbynn, lecturer in the Economics Department, who became a member of a committee managing the affairs of the dissolved Cocoa Marketing Board; Dr. George Benneh of the Geography Department who became Minister of Finance; and Dr. E. K. Andah of the Faculty of Agriculture, who became Minister of Agriculture. Others became parliamentarians, such as Dr. Jones Ofori-Atta who was the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences; and Dr. Appiandah Arthur of the School of Performing Arts.

The Limann era was shortlived and the outlook on government-intellectuals co-operation was generally positive, even though observers lamented the mass pull of academics into politics, worsening the already bad staffing situation in the universities. Significantly, a good number of academics may have decided to seek the political kingdom as a sure way of alleviating their economic plight.

● Jerry Rawlings

Jerry Rawlings' posturing on the issue of intellectuals poses a bigger dilemma, owing to the complexity of his political machinery. Rawlings' empowerment of the grassroots, and his general populist tendencies at the very onset of the revolution in 1979, sent an unambiguous message to the elite and their institutional icons that their days were over: 'power has now devolved into the hands of the grassroots'. This was evident in the composition of the 1991 Consultative Assembly.

where elitist organizations such as the University Teachers Association of Ghana; the Christian Council and the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS), were given a much lower quota than grassroots oriented groups like the Fishermen's Association and the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs).

In public speeches, Rawlings has often expressed concern about intellectualism for its own sake, saying elsewhere, "what is the use of theoretical knowledge if it cannot be applied; the intellectual is someone who puts his knowledge into practice." This posturing against the classical intellectual, who generates knowledge as an end in itself, is not dissimilar to that of Kwame Nkrumah who says, "True academic freedom-- the intellectual freedom of the university -- is everything that is compatible with service to the community, for the university is, and must always remain a living thing and serving part of the community to which it belongs" (University of Ghana: *Annual Report 1965-66:99*).

The truth, of course is that both leaders lumped universities together with opposition constituencies which were scheming to unseat governments. Any climate of liberalism that could be utilized to sow dissension against governments, is a threat; from this perspective. It is perhaps no accident that groups opposed to Rawlings and Nkrumah in real terms, have the universities as one of their biggest support bases.

From 1982 to 1996 (under both the erstwhile PNDC and the present NDC) the University of Ghana was closed at least eight times, and altogether for a period of thirty months two weeks (two and a half years). With the exception of the period from January to April 1982 (four months) when the universities were closed down to release students for cocoa

evacuation; all other closures have been caused by tensions between students/lecturers and Government. The closure of May 8 to 22, 1987 was over student protests against the incarceration of a student leader; June 15 to August 27, 1987, was caused by the Government's dismissal of 8 student leaders and the ensuing student threat to disrupt normal academic work; June 30 to October 13, 1988 was caused by student agitation for a review of maintenance allowance; and April 1995 to January 1996 was caused by demands by academic staff for improved conditions of service. As a result of these disruptions of academic life and the loss of about two and a half years of university teaching, two streams of students are currently waiting to enter university.

The person or agency that should be billed for this grave instability in the educational system is a moot point. The fact rather is that on the whole, the posturing of the head of state/president has not helped the cause of university education.

In June 1994, Rawlings in a speech at UST inaugurating the NDC Tertiary Education Institutions Network (TEIN) denigrated intellectuals and opposition, claiming that their intelligence put together would not amount to half that of P. V. Obeng, one of his colleagues. In another speech at Legon on June 1st 1996, inaugurating a chapter of that same NDC student organization, he took intellectuals to task once again, saying "there is nothing more shameful than intellectual dishonesty", the misuse of the intellect to disguise, distort and manipulate the truth, replacing it with a clever substitute to suit a particular purpose.

His de-prioritization of intellectuals finds further expression in the number of confrontations between PNDC/NDC and the

universities in recent times. In one of his speeches to a rural community during the protracted boycott of lectures by university teachers in 1996, he is alleged to have simply asked his audience to decide on two options available to him: whether to use the nation's scarce resources to get water and electricity for them, or use the money to increase the salaries of university lecturers? After the deployment of such a populist strategy of seeking a consensus, the answer by acclamation was foregone: social amenities are more important. In other words, the university is not a priority.

The Government's reaction to the nine-month-old strike by university lecturers is easy to oversimplify, but one gets a sense that the Government's tough, unyielding stance was partly a function of the perception of university education as not indispensable.

● **Ambiguities**

The problem with characterizing the attitude of PNDC/NDC to universities has to do with inherent ambiguities. The above negative posture notwithstanding, the Government's dealing with non-violent university student demonstrations has not been totally ruthless. It has straddled the brutal deployment of force (leading sometimes to fatalities) and occasional cooperation with the students, even when demonstrations have posed considerable inconvenience to the public.

The June 1, 1996 assault on placard bearing students of the University of Ghana when the President attended a seminar organized by the Tertiary Education Institutions Network of the NDC, was a reflex of the Government's nervousness about organized dissension when it emanates from the

universities, particularly in an election year. This is not to mention the ruthless invasion of the Legon and IPS campuses in March 1993, leading to serious injuries and the pumping of 21 pellets into the body of Vida Ofori, a student of IPS. It is instructive to note that this muscle flexing with live ammunition was not condemned by Government.

● Intellectuals in PNDC

The irony of this anti-intellectual posture is that the PNDC/NDC Government has a galaxy of intellectuals in its pool of human resources -- a fact that is not easy to reconcile with its grassroots inclination, and its tensed relation with universities: From another standpoint, it can also be said that the University provided the initial human capital for the 31st December Revolution.

On one hand was a vast array of former student leaders, who virulently stood against the Acheampong dictatorship, but appeared to be quite comfortable with a Rawlings Government that had overthrown a constitutional democracy: Kofi Totobi Quakyi, Mohammed Ibn Chambas, Ato Dadzie; Kwamena Ahwoi, D.S. Boateng, Ato Austin, John Ndebugre, Chris Atim, Alolga Akatapore, Yao Graham etc. -- a majority of whom are still in Government.

The preference for student leaders in the formative stages of the revolution appeared to accord with Rawlings' idealistic agenda, which he considered students as the most favorably disposed to prosecute, partly because they were idealist and uncorrupted; but also because they were as youthful as himself, and marked a clean break from the older breed of politicians. This is besides the anti-bourgeoisie and socialist

stance many had adopted as students. This government-student alliance can, of course, be traced to Rawlings' first coming in 1979, when he received overwhelming student support having initially landed with his helicopter at the University during the takeover, interacting with students and lecturers.

Soon, intellectuals were to leave the classroom and join the revolution, some as technocrats, others as mainstream politicians. They included Tsatsu Tsikata, Kwesi Botchway, Mohammed Abdallah, Esi Sutherland-Addy, Asiedu Yirenkyi, Kwamena Ahwoi, etc. Significantly, some of these had not resigned their positions as lecturers. Others joined in the transition to NDC. They included Patrick Twumasi, Kofi Nti, and Stephen Ayidiya who was appointed Minister four months after taking a lectureship position in the Sociology Department of the University of Ghana. And for the 1996 presidential elections, Jerry Rawlings surprised observers by choosing a Legon law professor, J.E.A. Mills, as his running mate.

● Dual Roles

The point in dwelling on the involvement of academics in past governments and the present one is not necessarily to attempt an analysis of their impact on governments, but to demonstrate inherent ironies and contradictions in government posturing on intellectuals as a whole.

While tension between governments and universities has sometimes been eased through the duality of constituencies these appointees represent, other crises have been exacerbated by this duality. One such example of the latter was the

pronounced crisis between the University and the PNDC Government in 1987 when University of Ghana was closed down for two and a half months after intense student agitation for the release of six of their leaders that had been arrested. Over nearly two months of fruitless negotiations between the Ministry of Education and the University authorities, observers saw part of the problem in the duality of roles being played by the Minister of Education, Mohammed Abdallah, and Esi Sutherland-Addy, who was Under Secretary in charge of Higher Education. The truth was that both ministers were concurrently holding positions in the University of Ghana - Abdallah as lecturer in the School of Performing Arts, and Sutherland-Addy as a research fellow at the Institute of African Studies. Both had not relinquished their academic positions.

Between these two and the Vice Chancellor of Legon, Professor Akilagpa Sawyerr who was the chief negotiator in the crisis, a politics-academia crisis in protocol was evident and occasionally disrupted negotiations. Who deferred to whom in protocol terms? Who had the right to summon whom to a meeting: the Vice Chancellor, who was chief executive over the two young lecturers, or the Minister of Education who was superior in political protocol? The politics-academia nexus itself created an impasse within the mega-crisis. In an interview I did with the Minister of Education during the 1987 student-government crisis (and published in the Mirror of July 18, 1987) I took the opportunity to elicit his comments on the following questions:

Question:

Do you think this crisis has been unduly personalized, and that this poses a problem in itself? Is there a personality crisis

somewhere that is making the campus crisis more difficult to solve?

Answer:

I don't know if it is a personality clash. But I believe my dual capacity... you see, for me it depends on how the University of Ghana sees me and Esi Sutherland-Addy. If you see it as a battle then you tend to look at us with suspicion since we are both here and there, and you tend to look at us as knowing too much, and therefore dangerous. I think it should be the opposite: a positive one. There are people who know the problems and therefore should be used to solve them. Unfortunately, the main people personalizing the problem are on campus. People think this small boy and small girl, who are they to tell the University what to do. That kind of pettiness I believe is going on, and that is unfortunate.

Question:

Have you seriously considered the possibility of asking for a different portfolio, in the light of the present crisis, if it is true that this dual role is posing a problem in itself?

Answer:

"I ... haven't considered a different portfolio for a very simple reason. I have never thought that this dual role will necessarily pose a problem. The problems are there... not caused by my being here or there. But even if that becomes serious, what should be would be for me to relinquish one of the roles, say stop teaching and be a Secretary; or stop being a Secretary and come to work on campus. Either of the two I wouldn't mind. But I think it will be unfortunate for me to stop teaching because it is a very useful thing for me and for the students, and should be equally for the University and for

the Government. But if it becomes very necessary, you can be sure I will consider that..."

● Fate in Politics

Significantly, academics have not necessarily fared well in political positions. Some were invited into politics without consideration of merit, others, on entering, came face-to-face with unanticipated political realities and succumbed, either distorting the truth for political gains or compromising on issues of integrity and corruption. A few intellectuals have condoned the abuse of human rights; others have championed such abuses, and advocated lawlessness without remorse.

In the face of this, a majority chose to remain in politics; but some went into voluntary exile, a few got frustrated with the revolution and left camp before it was in full flight, others have since returned to academia, having been kicked out, or de-selected in the transition from non-constitutional to constitutional rule. Significantly, just a handful of intellectuals in Government resigned on grounds of principle. On resigning as finance minister, Dr Kwesi Botchway, for example, described himself 'more as an intellectual than a politician'.

When I spoke to a few politicians now out of Government, some complained about deliberate conspiracies by superiors to isolate or contain them due to their superior academic status. Others have lamented unnecessary political interference in their implementation of policies.

● Conclusions

The above overview of the various areas of interaction between Governments and intellectuals, demonstrates the complexity of the issues involved, and inevitable difficulties in any attempt to provide an ideal framework for co-operation. A few generalizations are, however, possible.

A. One-party and military dictatorships over the years have looked on intellectual freedom as a pretext for what they consider as political subversion. They have therefore considered universities as opposition parties in disguise, or surrogates of anti-government power blocs. Such governments, out of insecurity, would rather bring universities directly under their control, or subject them to suppression, contempt or denigration. The irony being that several African leaders have tacitly shown admiration for intellectuals by accepting, or lobbying for honorary academic degrees. Dr Kenneth Kaunda, for example, has honorary doctorates in law from the following universities: Fordham, Sussex, Dublin, and York; Julius Nyerere has honorary doctorate from several universities. Samuel Doe of Liberia had an honorary doctorate from University of Seoul, South Korea. Siaka Stevens of Sierra Leone was given an honorary doctorate by University of Sierra Leone. Military dictator Iddi Amin of Uganda accepted an honorary doctorate in Law from the University of Kampala in Uganda. Kwame Nkrumah was given an honorary doctorate by Lincoln University, so was King Moshosho of Lesotho. Jerry Rawlings was similarly honoured by Lincoln University, and also by the Medgar Evers College of New York. Military ruler Yakubu Gowon of Nigeria, on the other hand, went to school after his overthrow and obtained a B.A. and a Ph.D. at the University of Warwick.

B. Tension between universities and governments has been at its worst during one-party, military, or constitutional dictatorships, the situation improving considerably under multi-party democracies, where an enabling atmosphere for co-operation has tended to prevail.

C The universities' academic freedom and unfettered exercise of the intellect are bound to be undermined within a political climate of fear, suppression, and invasion of people's rights. In other words, academic freedom thrives best under conditions of national freedom.

D. Intellectuals have sometimes allowed themselves to be co-opted into government, thereby deviating from ideal principles espoused by their vocation.

E. Intellectuals often misconstrue excellence in academia as potential excellence in governance and have joined the political fray with high hopes, only to realize they are misfits in political leadership and governance; or have been merely used by dictators to bring a semblance of respectability to their regimes.

F. University dons have sometimes gone into politics only as an attempt to reverse their miserable economic plight as intellectuals.

The net result of intellectuals' precipitate entry into politics is often a depletion of the scarce human resource base in the universities, sometimes contributing to the lowering of academic standards.

What then is the way out of this dilemma: sitting on the fence and being governed by mediocrities on one hand, and jumping

into a political arena where principles are easily compromised?

The concept of the private intellectual, that is a hermit completely isolated in an ivory tower and exclusively publishing in learned journals for his promotion is, of course, a luxury a developing nation can ill afford.

The other extreme of actively participating in politics appears, on the other hand, to be fraught with problems; and one would advocate the posture of 'amateur intellectualism' (Said: *op cit*: 65-83), where the intellectual departs from closeted concerns of publishing in esoteric journals, and associates himself with dissemination outlets accessible to the masses of people: the mass media. The intellectual could be a journalist, talk show guest or host, panel discussant on major issues of public concern. Such a strategic angle of participation in public discourse facilitates the intellectual's role as an agent for social change.

Alternatively, one could put one's immense knowledge at the service of the public through counselling and consultancy. This alternative proposes the setting up by government of think-tanks, made up of intellectual consultants who put their expertise at the disposal of Government, even as they remain firmly anchored in their respective universities. This would assume also that conditions of service in academia would be attractive enough to retain intellectuals in the universities.

The fact is, a successful intellectual or academic career does not necessarily signal successful political representation, or leadership. Indeed in traditional governance, the best of intellectuals and philosophers are hardly the kings themselves, but those occupying strategic positions within

the king's counselling body. These may survive one ruler after the other, and often rely on their immense knowledge and experience, not to lead but to generate and consolidate official policy.

Good intellectuals may fail as politicians mainly because in their closeted mode of life, they are not in tune with ground norms and realities; or simply that they are not endowed with the skills of political leadership or representation. Yet there is a lot governments and intellectuals can do to complement each other's efforts in national development, particularly in multi-party democracies where mutual understanding, political tolerance, goodwill and freedom prevail.

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