

## Africa Report by Douglas DeGroot

### The leadership question

*Realizing Ghana's potential and pre-empting the IMF's policies requires moral commitment.*

In my last column, I described the Rawlings Dec. 31 coup in Ghana which was consolidated thanks to support from Muammar Qaddafi. I pointed out how the coup followed a fight within the deposed President Limann's PNP party over how to get Ghana's already collapsed economy moving in the face of austerity demands from the IMF (see *EIR*, Jan. 19).

The IMF has teamed up with Qaddafi in efforts to sabotage the development of African countries, and this is no secret to leaders on the continent who are indeed concerned about this two-pronged threat. Yet the crucial concern in this case is not Libya or the IMF *per se*. What has allowed the operations targeting Ghana to succeed is the absence, since Nkrumah, of a leadership willing to develop the population as responsible citizens with a commitment to build their nation.

In 1957 Ghana was the first European colony in Africa to become independent, and in its early years of independence, its population and economy were more developed than any of the other European colonies in sub-Saharan Africa.

After eight years of Nkrumah's centralized rule, Ghana's population in 1965 was 35 percent urban. (Many African countries today remain 90 percent rural; even Nigeria is still 70 percent rural.) And at that time 90 percent of Ghana's population was literate.

Ghana was then the world's

largest producer of cocoa, produced gold, diamonds, and other raw materials, and Nkrumah was building dams, electrical infrastructure, and related heavy-industry applications.

But in 1966 Nkrumah was the victim of the first of a series of military coups which shoved the country down the road to disaster.

The ensuing history of unrelied corruption and economic deterioration has advanced to such a point that, to the surprise of many of my Ghanaian sources, "there was massive support for Rawlings."

"The people felt relieved," said one source. "The leadership of the country was putting forth no meaningful policy to follow. The population was prepared to tighten their belts if they saw some kind of positive policy." The pervasive corruption of officials, and the practice of urban elites of hustling money by whatever means possible, a practice known as "Kalabule," has completely disillusioned most Ghanaians.

Rawlings has no viable solutions for Ghana, and already a cooler domestic reaction is setting in. He did nothing to solve the problems of production and supply following the previous coup d'état he led; his legacy was a chaotic economic situation Limann was never able to overcome.

In a speech a year ago, Limann warned against the dangers of the

corruption prevalent in Ghana; this could lead to "the slow death of civilian rule," he said. Last October, Limann again warned of the danger of a coup if corrupt practices were not eliminated. That month he carried out a cabinet shakeup, while groping for an economic policy that could get the country moving.

But by 1981, the production and price of cocoa had fallen drastically. Much of the cocoa production could not even be transported to ports, resulting in the smuggling of significant amounts to neighboring countries.

In the face of this economic collapse, Ghana's large urban population (by African standards) reverted more and more to corruption to survive. The production and smuggling out of the country of drugs is also reported on a large scale, with the complicity of the police.

When Limann tried to rejuvenate the economy, the only way he saw to attract capital was by opening the country to raw materials looting by foreign speculators. From there it was impossible to revert to Nkrumah's dirigist approach to building the economy.

At the same time corrupt urban elites were importing consumer goods and selling them at black-market rates that brought 20 times more *cedis* than the official exchange rate. For this reason they opposed IMF pressure for devaluation. They did not prevent the overthrow of Limann, however.

Rawling's Jacobin coup represents a low point in the history of post-independence Ghana, starkly illustrating the consequences of lack of leadership in that bedraggled nation.