



WORKS

Learning from Kwame Nkrumah's Failures in Ghana Tokologo African Anarchist Collective (2015)

Taken from issues #5/6 of their newsletter.

Ghana, West Africa, was a British colony called “Gold Coast” until 1957. It became the first independent country in “black” Africa after reforms and struggles in the 1940s and 1950s. The new president, the brilliant Kwame Nkrumah, and his Convention People’s Party (CPP), had fought for independence. Now they aimed at major changes in the society, even speaking of socialism. And Nkrumah proposed a united African government for the continent: Pan-Africanism.

But by the mid-1960s, hopes were fading. There were good reforms in education and services and self- respect for Africans that helped remove colonialism’s damages. But the CPP has become a dictatorship, with a personality cult around Nkrumah. Unions and struggles were suppressed. The economy was in trouble. A new elite hijacked independence and resources. When the military seized power in 1966, people celebrated in the streets. Today Ghana is one of the poorest African countries.

What went wrong and what can we, anarchists in Africa, learn from this experience? Nkrumah’s is the key model for African nationalists, and the test case showing the strengths and limits of African nationalism as a project – a project based on building multi-class parties, to capture the state, with the enemy seen primarily in terms of imperialism, and colonialism, with the solution seen as an independent state.

So, the lessons of Ghana are essential and remain widely applicable to countries like South Africa, where African nationalism has been and remains a very powerful current. We can learn, most of all, that revolutions and struggles are easily hijacked by elites for their own purposes. These purposes always go against the interests of the masses.

Using the state is the sure way to create a new elite. Nkrumah’s slogan, “Seek ye first the political kingdom and all things shall be added unto you,” is not useful. We say instead: All power to the working and poor people.

