

white people still in the country. It almost seems as though Mr. Worsthorne cannot quite reconcile his emotional reactions to the sight of white officials working for black Ministers.

Surely it can now be recognised that the new Commonwealth, which includes many more coloured than white people, is making an historic experiment in developing a voluntary international community based on one single foundation—*i.e.*, the inheritance of parliamentary democracy. The form of that democratic structure will be adapted, interpreted, and developed according to the needs of each different Commonwealth state. Parliamentary democracy exists even in South Africa and the Central African Federation, though as yet it is confined to the aristocratic minority. Nevertheless, the parliamentary spirit is a common bond between all members of the Commonwealth and provides them with that synthesis which transcends racial consciousness. Mr. Worsthorne denies it. He apparently does not recognise that the “basic antithesis” which he discerns is far more present between British and Russians than between British and Ghanaians. There is indeed a greater sense of synthesis between democratic British and Ghanaians than between democratic British and South African or Rhodesian whites. The central issue on which the future development and strength of the Commonwealth depends is whether that democratic spirit can be extended to member states which traditionally have denied it, particularly in Southern Africa. Not only Ghana and Nigeria, but India, Ceylon, Malaya, and possibly Canada are likely to test their adherence to the Commonwealth by this touchstone.

John Hatch

In Defence of Ghana

THERE are ten independent nations in Africa. Nine of them have representative government, while South Africa awaits the least satisfactory way of obtaining this—revolution. Of the nine representatively-governed nations, opposition parties and presses function fairly freely in only two: Morocco and Ghana. Given the caste and gender situation in Morocco, Ghana is probably Africa's most flourishing democracy.

This, of course, is not to say that Ghana is without undemocratic curbs on individual liberties, some of them patently unnecessary, or to deny that Worsthorne is right to imply that we in Accra endure the discomforts (as well as the comforts) of strong-arm rule. The country's leading paper, as he indicates, still awaits emancipation, and resembles papers published in colonial countries. But just as undue importance was attached to Ghana's independence, so it is manifestly unbalanced to pick on, and exaggerate, Ghana's teething pains, whilst insisting that only strong-arm régimes work in

under-developed countries. And if London were thinking (as seems extremely unlikely) of drumming anyone out of the Commonwealth (not something London could do alone, in any case), there is surely a better, more embarrassing candidate for this unique honour south of the Limpopo.

Pakistan, after twelve years of independence, has never seen a general election yet. In Ghana, for all its faults and frequent maladroitness, the ballot-box is the nation's inviolable fetish—even if electorates in Africa are as unaware as electorates anywhere else of what they are voting for. India, the next most important Commonwealth nation after Britain, is reft by caste, but Ghana is nearly caste-free and classless. Women hold the strings of commerce and over fifty per cent of the vote. Compulsory education will be complete in five years' time. No régime could ever last in Ghana merely because it had an army, a strong police, and an American-style party machine.

No one, it seems, ever feels his democratic sense of what is proper has been ravished by the strong-arm bosses who are tools of metropolitan powers. The Houphouets and the Senghors, with their single-party assemblies, pass for “friends of the West.” But are they more than opportunists, and is the autocratic nationalist, with his genuine following, not a surer friend for the West to have? Do we not share his irrational patriotism, his belief in resistance movements against efficient foreign occupations?

There are two standards for judging these things, but not the ones Worsthorne sees. When a race-crazy engine-driver goes off the rails in Salisbury, he gets a knighthood. Dictatorship in Khartoum, like the former one in Havana, suits our short-term “Western” interests, so we close our eyes to its virulent undemocracy. But when Nkrumah crushes violent opposition movements among the Asante and the Ewe with old-colonial thoroughness, the same papers that covered concentration camps in Kenya with bland talk of “expediency” (Worsthorne's was one) sound a view-halloo. Ethics, parliamentary democracy, loyal opposition—all the glib phrases are trotted out. Is it not false, from the outset, to talk in terms of “British democracy” in African nations, when this is only practised in Britain, and was and is not practised in British colonies? Are Kenya or Nyasaland democracies? Are the rights of the subject not more real in Ghana than in Tanganyika?

Worsthorne desperately wants to approve Ghana's motives while disapproving of what those motives motivate. It is Britain's fault, he says, for forcing on Ghana the wrong sort of democracy, but Ghana's fault for finding ways of getting round Britain's mistakes. But “any African leader would have done the same,” he says of Nkrumah, adding later that he “would have been forced to build himself up into a demi-God.” Does this imply that the government's stability is wedded to Nkrumah's name, and that if he died, and Komla Gbedemah took over, the CPP might lose some votes? (In fact, they would win more, because they would have the Ewe and middle-class support as well.) And Worsthorne is certainly wrong in attributing his conclusion to a belief that identification with language-groups

(usually described as "tribes"), was so strong that the Ghanaian nation would have fallen apart of its own momentum, if people, after independence, had followed their hearts. In truth, they can only follow their leaders. Language sectarianism in Ghana, like the "enmity" between Yoruba and Ibo in Nigeria, is almost exclusively invented by politicians. What Ghana faced, at independence, was not a desire among Asante to pull Ashanti out of the nation, but a demagogic campaign by Opposition leaders to sell the idea of regionalism to every region possible. Being in agreement with the Government on the essentials—*independence, development, and so on*—and being afflicted with the label of treason because they had opposed the governing party while this was still engaged in the fight for emancipation, they could only be a "devil's advocate" opposition, systematically taking an opposite view on everything, and canvassing support by reviving or inventing archaic "tribal" quarrels.

As Worsthorne rightly observed, the Opposition is impotent in parliament; but opposition, as he notes, functions very effectively within the government party. In what way is this "one-man dictatorship"? Obviously, a single party, imbued with a sense of democracy (as appears to be the case in Guinea) or a very tightly-knit coalition, would be better, in this period, than the uneasy parliamentary comedy to which Worsthorne refers, and which presents a discordant picture of Ghana to the outside world. Such political differences as there are in Ghana rarely extend beyond the "top," with each leader winning a following by manifestly not talking about the major issues of the day with any frankness. Even a deep and genuine popular movement like Ewe-reunification is leader-caused. Politics goes in a vacuum, divorced from the broad field of human endeavour. Leaders do not govern—they rule. Why should they do otherwise? As Worsthorne notes, Ghana has known hundreds of years of semi-communal, semi-feudal monarchy. As he omits to note, it has since known fifty-one years of gubernatorial dictatorship. (While we are about it, why not call all the spades bloody shovels?) To suggest that there is something ludicrous in a temporary Governor-General announcing measures to centralise power is to forget that other representatives of the Sovereign, known as Governors, ruled autocratically by the semi-divine right of the King himself. *This*, surely, is the tradition which influences Nkrumah most in his leanings to autocracy.

Worsthorne is equally right to believe that expatriates in the Army, from Victor Paley down, are there to prevent *coups d'état*. The police, however, is very nearly Africanised, and will be completely so in about two years. It is twice as big and far more important than the Army. The British senior civil servants are there for efficiency reasons only, because of a lack of trained replacements. They do not greatly influence policy, as Worsthorne noted, and can scarcely whitewash "strong-armism"—whitewash it in whose eyes?

Some points in Worsthorne's article fringe the absurd. To suggest that Ghana's single three-battalion regiment, with its 5,000 men (1,500 or so fighting troops) is designed to invade the Ivory Coast (*i.e.*, war with France) or Nigeria (seven

times Ghana's population, three frontiers away) is ridiculous. In what way is the Army "rapidly expanding"? Where are these "new battalions"? Where is the "public meeting stadium" on which funds were wasted in Accra? (Is it the highly lucrative football stadium? Neither before or since independence have public meetings been held in that.) And where is this "second national airport"? And I am prepared to swear that no "African politician" (unless it was Elspeth Huxley) ever used the term "witch-doctor," which is unknown in Ghana.

Relations with Britain, also for the record, are conducted through the Commonwealth and External Service. Surely no one would expect a separate "Commonwealth" ministry! The Ghana-Guinea pact was Guinea's initiative, not Ghana's, and there was absolutely no "outcry" against it in Whitehall—only in two London papers, neither renowned for objective reporting on Africa. The question raised of Britain's "conflicting loyalties" appears to presume that the Central African Federation will be "white-dominated" for years to come, which is hardly probable. If such a "conflict" occurred, we could hardly afford the monstrous extravagance of backing a few hundred thousand white settlers, whose links with Britain are somewhat remote, against the wishes of nearly a hundred million English-speaking Africans.

Who are the "we" who presumed that British rule had "inculcated honesty in the public service"? Surely that is what Britain manifestly failed to do. Under indirect rule, chiefly co-operation could be bought for anything from a keg of gin to an O.B.E., or higher—the price went up in the inflationary war-time years. But corruption in high places is certainly Ghana's greatest problem, and needs radical measures—however true the excuse that a mere £3,000-a-year Minister cannot support a hundred relatives who have the obscure notion that he is some new sort of paramount chief. . . .

Who are the Africans who believe in democratic principles and who have been deported? Of the Africans so far deported, only one, so far as I know, was literate—Bankole Timothy. The others were mostly poor hatchetmen, "strangers" living in the insecurity of the Zongos, who were suborned by chiefs or politicians into thuggery. Who are the democrats who have been "squeezed out of the public service"? The top tier of the civil service is to-day full of the sort of people Worsthorne is thinking of: they vote for the Opposition, and work loyally for the Government.

Expatriates here do not want the British Press to adopt "a double standard of values; one for their own affairs and another for the affairs of Ghana." They want just the opposite—a single scale of values, which uses the same comprehension of a nation's problems as Worsthorne showed in the early part of his article; which does not compare the nationhood struggle in Ghana, or Ghana's immediate and honourable loyalty to all resistance movements in Africa, with the routine jog-along world of Britain's long-established democracy; but rather compares it—favourably, perhaps—with the standards of government shown elsewhere in Africa and Asia, two continents still recovering from

the psychological shock of colonialism, and all the complexes it creates, and the handicap of real or relative poverty. The Commonwealth, after all, is not British: it is predominantly Afro-Asian, and surely therein lies its best chance of survival.

My first reaction, on reading "Something in the Air" remains also the last one: that the writer, obsessed by colour (despite the assertions meant to imply the contrary), conscious of the toga (rather than Western dress) as being exotic in Africa (and even as being "half-naked" attire, despite the fact that it covers more of the body than shirt and shorts), vaguely amused that the British in Ghana are not as crude and rude as in East Africa, almost puzzled that they should have "coloured" wives and mistresses (in a country where "whites" number 13,000, Lebanese included, and "blacks" 5,500,000), is unable to see anything Ghanaian in its real proportions. How else does one account for the presumably genuine impression that some Ministers speak pidgin?

Russell Warren Howe

*Christiansborg
Ghana*

Politics and Race

IT TAKES Mr. Worsthorne the best part of twenty-two columns to prove that Ghana has inherited the worst of all possible worlds from Britain. Then in just a few lines in his PS—"... oddly enough, my overall impression of Ghana was very far from depressing"—he undoes a great deal of what he set out to prove with so much relish and skill. The whole article is a superb example of the "double-take."

Mr. Worsthorne appears not to be troubled at all by his own contradictions. He is quite capable of writing: "Ghana... is evolving into dictatorship by way of parliamentary government." And in the next breath: "The surface picture of Dr. Nkrumah destroying all opposition in Ghana is very misleading.... It may well be that he would like to build himself up into a dictator. But the conditions for dictatorship do not exist."

I refrain from quoting other examples. As with his contradictions, so too with his inaccuracies. He is grossly misinformed when he suggests that the judiciary, the civil service and the army, and even public opinion are dominated by whites. He is either very irresponsible or singularly ill-informed when he writes that the handful of Africans who do understand or admire the principles of democratic government have either been deported, or in other ways, squeezed out of the public service.

It would be tedious to follow Mr. Worsthorne through the thickets of contradictions and inaccuracies through which he attempts to lead one. It is not surprising that he ends up by losing his bearings in his own maze. One is forced to leave him when he talks about the possibility of Ghana sending her troops "across the Ivory Coast border in Togoland." But Mr. Worsthorne's ideas are worth looking at. He produces three: two are old—the absence of the nation-state in Africa and the prob-

lem of the best type of democracy for the new African countries—and he appears to be unaware of the vast literature which students of African affairs have produced on these questions over the past ten years; and the third—that Ghana should be ousted from the Commonwealth—is new and mischievous.

Mr. Worsthorne arrives on the African scene blinkered and gaitered by Western theories, heresies, and history. Thus, although he perceives that in the transitional stage changes will come from within the Government rather than through the polls, he fails to understand the real importance of this opposition within the Government. He can't see how—despite jobbery, nepotism, and force—the present Ghana leaders will be swept from office unless they can carry public opinion with them. Space unfortunately does not allow of a detailed discussion of the processes within Ghana's society that enables one to make such a prophecy with certainty.

He doesn't come within a mile of understanding these processes, because he doesn't understand the importance of the chewing-stick. Therefore he makes the common European error of supposing that there is a "total absence of any informed public opinion which can be appealed to on a basis of reason." But how is he to know that public opinion is lively and well-informed, even in the bush, when he confesses it impossible for him to keep conversation going, even with African intellectuals, beyond half an hour?

Nobody pleases Mr. Worsthorne. According to him, Barbara Ward is being used by Dr. Nkrumah as a decoy. Even the Queen is allowing herself to be used as a "willing puppet." If he can be so irresponsible about such people, one need not be too surprised about his no doubt unintentional offensiveness to lesser fry, white and black.

He is delighted to find how incredibly quickly one ceases to be aware that Africans are black. So unaware, in fact, that within two minutes he is carefully making this point again by reporting that all comic characteristics no longer seem worth noticing. Well, hardly. Is it this unconscious ambivalence that leads him to the startling conclusion that "far from closing the gap between Europe and Africa, the evaporation of colour prejudice may well tend to widen it"?

One last point. Like so many frustrated Imperialists, Mr. Worsthorne is completely fainthearted when it comes to the challenge of the modern Commonwealth. His arguments in favour of getting Ghana out of the Commonwealth can be attacked on a dozen different fronts. Let one suffice.

He submits that the Commonwealth does postulate some doctrinal affinity between its members, although he wisely does not try to define what it is. But if there is a doctrinal affinity that would justify Ghana's exclusion from the Commonwealth, what of Pakistan with its military dictatorship and its bitter quarrels with India; or of South Africa with its denial of the basic ethic of Western democracy? These questions are not even touched on.

Colin Legum

*The Observer
London*

[Other comment in "Letters."]