

12. THE STATE AND THE DEFENCE COMMITTEES IN THE GHANAIAN REVOLUTION,
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After the 31st December 1981 coup the new regime in Ghana, the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), promised to bring about a 'real' revolution in Ghana and to mobilize the 'people' towards participation in the revolution. The rapid establishment of 'Defence Committees' among the 'people' was the institutional expression of the new regime's determination to mobilize the masses for the revolution.

Mobilization politics, according to Petras (1969: 5), can take two alternative approaches to reorganizing society and these appear to me to be of relevance to mass mobilization within the Ghanaian 'revolution' during the years 1981-1984:

- the corporatist approach, 'whereby the government controls and directs lower-class associations and links them with existing economic elites in an attempt to encourage collaboration for national development'; and

- the collectivist approach, 'whereby class-conscious political actors communicate a radical political culture among lower-class individuals in order to mobilize their support and to undermine existing elites as the first phase toward the creation of a collectivist society'.

It will be demonstrated in this study that these two alternative approaches towards reorganizing society became a source of tense conflict within the leadership of what soon came to be called the 'national democratic' revolution. From the very beginning of the revolution the ruling 'petty-bourgeoisie' became divided on the basis of the fundamental issues of ideology and strategy reflected in the type of class alliances to be established in the 'first phase' of the 'national democratic' revolution. Although the 'revolutionary' leadership seemed to be able to accommodate a number of fractions with different ideological positions, two fractions were, according to me, initially dominant:

(i) One fraction - loyal to the chairman of the PNDC, Flt-Lt. J.J. Rawlings, the charismatic leader and apparently almost the 'dictator' of the revolution - adhering to a (moderate or radical) kind of 'national populism' (Sandbrook 1982: 99-102; Erickson 1975, and 1977). This ideology emphasizes evidently two main objectives:

- nationalism: it is in essence anti-imperialist and seeks to mobilize all class forces in society so as to achieve 'national development' and, ultimately, a basically self-reliant, independent economy free from foreign domination.

- populism: although it champions a broad 'national front' in its struggle for national recovery and development, it actually seeks to portray a particular attachment to the 'working masses'. In contrast to socialism, however, it does not advocate fundamental changes in the relations of production, but certain reforms within the status quo which are of benefit to the 'working masses', in particular a more equitable distribution of income.

This ideology seems to contain a number of ambiguities. For instance, how is one to reconcile the 'national interest' of a broad 'national front' with the 'particular interests' of the 'working masses'? The 'tactics' of an alliance with all classes in society in the national struggle for economic independence is indeed likely to stifle any championship of the workers' interests. A retreat to a merely nationalist position and a demobilization (rather than a mobilization) of the 'working masses' may readily present themselves as final 'solutions' to the ambiguities posed by 'national populism'.

(ii) Another - opposing - fraction of the ('petty-bourgeois') leadership wanted to 'commit suicide' identifying downwards with the working class and aimed at the establishment of working class power in Ghanaian society. It adhered to a kind of socialist ideology and sought to mobilize and educate the working class towards a continuous class struggle in Ghanaian 'neo-colonial' society in order to ultimately establish working class hegemony in Ghanaian society. To this end, the 'first phase' of the 'national democratic' revolution, according to this fraction, should attempt to effect some structural changes in Ghanaian society, including the liquidation of the exploitative relations of production, the establishment of a political

power bloc representing a broad social spectrum but under the leadership of the working class and its organizations, and the creation of an ideological and legal framework corresponding to the proposed structural changes (1).

A conflict arose between these two fractions in the course of the 'revolutionary' process about the way of mobilizing the 'revolutionary' mass organizations established by the PNDC, the Defence Committees: the 'nationalist populist' fraction was increasingly inclined to adopt a corporatist approach while the socialist fraction stuck to a collectivist one.

Erickson (1975 and 1977) has attempted to demonstrate a close link between populism and a corporatist approach to mass organizations in Latin America; and his arguments seem to apply to Ghana as well. Populism emphasizing charismatic leadership, class reconciliation and reformism within a capitalist framework, is, according to him, likely to become an ideology and movement of the status quo and to provide only negligible benefits to the working class. Incapable of 'delivering the goods' to the working class it is tempted to check and channel the potentially dangerous power of the embryonic working class and to impede the development of autonomous working class organizations. Undoubtedly, Erickson is right in pointing out that the various ambiguities inherent to populism may induce populist leaders to adopt a corporatist approach to mass organizations; however, he tends to overlook that these leaders' actual attempts of controlling mass organizations may not always be (wholly) successful. The mass organizations established by populist regimes themselves may even start (and continue to stimulate) autonomous actions which oppose and challenge these regimes if they stop championing working class interests and producing the expected benefits. Sandbrook (1982: 102) acutely observes in this respect:

'Although populist governments have been unwilling to permit autonomous class organization from below, corporatist organizational efforts can nevertheless gain a momentum of their own. Organization, even if controlled, brings workers together; it creates the potential for the demands of workers to transcend the limits set by the authorities'.

Although the 'nationalist populist' fraction within the leadership of the Ghanaian 'revolution' was finally able to overcome the opposition from the side of the socialist fraction - the latter having been largely in charge of the organisation and politicisation of the Defence Committees and having consistently advocated a collectivist approach to mass mobilization -, its corporatist approach has proved to be only partly successful. The Defence Committees have continued to undertake autonomous actions to defend workers' interests, to assert popular power in the 'revolution', and to put pressure on the populist regime to 'speed up the pace of the revolution'.

THE REVOLUTION AND POPULAR POWER

After having seized power for the second time in Ghana on the 31st of December 1981, Flt-Lt. J.J. Rawlings, the chairman of the PNDC, insisted that the new regime intended to go beyond the 'moral' revolution and 'house cleaning operation' that had been the earmark of the short Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) administration in 1979 (2). And he promised to accomplish a true socio-economic transformation of the country and to actively involve the 'people' who had been deprived of any political power in the past, in the decision-making process of the revolution (3).

The PNDC published its policy guidelines in May 1982 (4). This document described the initial stage in the revolutionary process as the 'national democratic phase' which was characterized as 'anti-imperialist, anti-neo-colonialist and aiming at instituting popular democracy'. The 'national democratic' revolution, therefore, was oriented at the achievement of two main goals:

- to restructure the country along nationalistic lines to lead it into 'economic self-sufficiency, self-dependency and genuine economic independence';
- to put power in the hands of the people and to ensure their genuine participation in decision-making processes.

'People's power' and 'popular participation' would be institutionalised by the creation of People's Defence Committees

(PDCs) and Workers' Defence Committees (WDCs) within the local communities and places of work respectively. These 'revolutionary organs' would be the vanguard in the national and democratic struggle for the total transformation of Ghanaian society.

The foundation for 'power to the people' - the slogan of the revolution written on a million walls and sung in thousands of political rallies - had been laid already before the 31st December 1981 coup. 'People's power' had been one of the main political demands of the various progressive, left-wing organizations of students and scholars which had emerged in Ghana since the 4th June 1979 uprising leading to the establishment of the AFRC administration. The most important of these organizations were the June Fourth Movement (JFM), the Kwame Nkrumah Revolutionary Guards (KNRG), the People's Revolutionary League of Ghana (PRLG), and the New Democratic Movement (NDM). Although we should not underestimate the intense conflicts existing between these various organizations based on personal rivalries and ideological and strategic differences, they seem to agree on some basic principles: they tend to attribute Ghana's underdevelopment and the working masses' precarious living standards to the continuous exploitation by 'imperialism', multinationals and their local allies and aim at the creation of a kind of socialist society. The initiation of a 'popular revolution' and the establishment of 'people's power' were considered to be necessary prerequisites for the ultimate attack on the external and internal exploiters of the working class. 'People's power' had a definite class content and would involve a fierce class struggle: it was oriented at the establishment of working class hegemony under the leadership of a revolutionary vanguard and the destruction of the neo-colonial class structure. These organizations were committed to working class struggles and some of them had actually started to organise and politicise the working masses before the 31st December 1981 coup.

The June Fourth Movement (JFM), for example, called for the formation of 'revolutionary committees' in local communities and places of work during the celebrations marking the second anniversary of the 4th June 1979 uprising. And a few months later cadres were sent into the regions to realise the installation of revolutionary

committees in the regional capitals from where the formation of such committees should spread to other parts of the regions. It should be noted that several members of the (future) PNDC, like Rawlings, Chris Atim and Kojo Tsikata, had enjoyed leadership positions within the JFM. No wonder that the PNDC call for the formation of PDCs and WDCs was well received by the JFM and most other progressive organizations. The JFM was particularly confident - because of the previously close connections between its organization and several PNDC members - that the installation of the Defence Committees would initially lead to a real contribution of the working masses to the decision-making process within the revolution and finally pave the way for a working class government.

THE COLLECTIVIST APPROACH TO MASS MOBILIZATION

Several members of Ghana's progressive, left-wing organizations were charged by the PNDC with the organization of the Defence Committees. Remarkably, they were not chosen as representatives of their organizations, but rather on the merit of their personal capacities.

It was a great disappointment for the progressive organizations to discover during the very first days of the revolution that the PNDC declined their offer of political guidance in the revolutionary process. Both the PNDC itself and the cabinet appointed by the PNDC seemed to lack any ideological coherence; this constituted a clear obstacle to the drawing-up of a consistent and determined revolutionary programme (Konings 1983). The appointment of a number of well-known liberal and conservative politicians in the first cabinet without any regard for the numerous protests from progressive circles in Ghana showed that the PNDC - faced with a serious economic crisis and hostility from the side of those social forces opposed to any revolutionary changes (Jeffries 1982a; Kraus 1982; and Brittain 1983) - seemed to be inclined to accept 'compromises' and to sacrifice 'ideology' on the altar of realpolitik and pragmatism.

The PNDC did not wish to take into account 'popular' opinion and to be 'dictated' by the progressive organizations regarding its policies - in spite of its constant emphasis on the importance of

'participatory democracy' in the revolution. In actual fact almost all policy decisions within the revolutionary process were taken by Rawlings himself in close co-operation with the Special Adviser to the PNDC, Capt. (ret.) Kojo Tsikata; the PNDC as a body rarely held meetings.

The progressive organizations could be easily by-passed by the PNDC for the following reasons: (i) they were ill-prepared for the revolution; and (ii) they were disunited and unable to co-operate during this vital period in Ghanaian history because of personal animosities and conflicting views on revolutionary strategy.

Having been put aside with regard to charting the ideological orientation of the new regime, individual members of the progressive organizations welcomed the PNDC's invitation to set up the Defence Committees and monitor their activities. They soon recognized that the formation of strong, class-conscious mass organizations could be an alternative or more appropriate way of effecting revolutionary changes in society and of attacking the neo-colonial class structure: the establishment of a revolution 'from below' was more likely to be successful than a revolution organised 'from above' by a leadership that seemed to be either unable or unwilling to draw up a revolutionary programme. In addition, such strong, class-conscious mass organizations might even be able to put pressure on the 'popular' regime in power so that a more revolutionary programme would be adopted.

The PNDC established (interim) co-ordinating committees of the PDCs and WDCs at district, regional and national levels. Chris Atim, secretary-general of the JFM and member of the PNDC, became the first head of the Interim National Co-ordinating Committee which afterwards came to be called the National Defence Committee (NDC).

This National Defence Committee (NDC) followed the collectivist approach to mass mobilization. It wanted to create a 'radical political culture' among the working masses so that they could be mobilized to undermine the neo-colonial class structure and its socio-economic, legal and ideological institutions. It organized cadre schools for the PDCs and WDCs throughout the country. It broadcasted a special radioprogramme on PDC and WDC activities. With its signature

tune of 'we no go sit down make them cheat us everyday ...', it became very popular among the workers. It also founded a newspaper called 'Nsamankow', mainly for educational purposes and propaganda. And finally, it stimulated various actions and demonstrations of workers.

From the very beginning the NDC experienced difficulties with the PNDC and was accused by Rawlings of trying to form a 'parallel government'. The 'NDC boys' could count upon large support from the workers thanks to their efforts of mobilizing and organizing the workers and their help in solving their problems with management and bureaucracy. The NDC began even to be considered as the political transmission line between the PNDC and the people. As the PNDC did not seem to formulate any political direction, workers looked to the NDC for guidance and direction in the revolution. As could be expected, the NDC was left to chart a course for the PDCs and WDCs and to draw up guidelines for their operation.

GUIDELINES FOR THE DEFENCE COMMITTEES

In the exhilarating atmosphere of the early days of the 'revolution' the PNDC's call for the formation of Defence Committees was generally received by the people with great enthusiasm. The 'people' jubilated about their newly-won 'power' and started to establish these 'revolutionary organs' within their local communities and places of work.

It was initially by no means evident to a large proportion of the population which people could become members of the Defence Committees and what exact role these committees were supposed to play (Pellow 1983; Konings 1983 and 1984a). The prevailing confusion about the 'proper' role of the Defence Committees and the reported 'excesses' of some of these committees forced the NDC to issue after some time the 'Guidelines for the Proper Functioning and Effectiveness of the Peoples Defence Committees' (5). In this document the aims and objectives of the Defence Committees were outlined as follows:

1. To guarantee that the working people of this country form the basis of power to carry out the December Revolution, under the PNDC.
2. To mobilise the working people to know and defend their democratic rights, and to organise the affairs of this

- country to ensure the availability of their needs, such as work, food, clothing, and shelter, health and education, etc.
3. To guarantee the democratic participation of the working people in the decision-making process in this country, and [in] the running of the affairs of this nation, their communities, villages, towns and cities; and their workplaces, offices and factories.
 4. To educate the working people so that they are able to expose, fight and conquer their internal enemies, on all fronts ...
 5. To educate and mobilise the working people to be able to expose and successfully combat their external enemies - especially imperialism - and rid this country of foreign domination and control over our human and material resources.
 6. To mobilise and harness the human and material resources of the nation for the rapid all round development of our country and peoples, and to ensure that the efforts at our developments are based primarily on ourselves.
 7. To foster co-operation between our struggling people and the struggling people of Africa, Latin America and Asia in particular and the world in general, in their common struggle against imperialism for genuine National Independence, Social Justice and Progress, and World Peace'.

The most important tasks of the PDC's would be:

- To take over eventually the administration of local governments in their areas. For the time being, they should serve as 'watch-dogs of the revolution' checking corruption, waste, mismanagement, misuse of state property, smuggling, black marketeering, hoarding, and all other kinds of 'sabotage of the revolution';
- To supervise the acquisition and the fair and equitable distribution of goods and services to the people where they can not be achieved by other means;
- To organise self-help projects;
- To explain and discuss national issues, and see to the implementation of PNDC and their own decisions.

The most important tasks of the WDCs would be:

- To ensure maximum efficiency, productivity and discipline in the places of work;
- To protect the genuine interests of the workers and to neutralize arbitrary behaviour and tendencies on the part of management;
- To eradicate malpractices within the places of work;
- To ensure workers' participation in the decision-making process at their workshops, and in the country;

- To supervise the activities of the local union, and any other body that is supposed to work in the interest of the workers and of the nation.

The Guidelines made it clear that the PDCs and WDCs were meant to be class organizations. The class enemies of the working people, such as managers, chiefs, landlords, and absentee farmers, were, generally speaking, excluded from membership (6). Political education was regarded as extremely important: a Political Education Unit was to be set up by the Defence Committees to raise the political consciousness at the grassroots level.

When the Defence Committees started to undertake violent actions against their class enemies and to protest against the slow and inconsistent pace of the revolution, some members of the PNDC, including its chairman, Rawlings, got alarmed. The PNDC engaged more and more in the task of economic recovery and wanted to involve all classes in society in this 'national' effort. Class struggle had to be replaced by class reconciliation. The Defence Committees, apparently becoming a threat to the PNDC policy of national recovery and reconciliation had to be controlled and transformed from 'political' into 'economic' organizations co-operating with their 'previous' class enemies for the sake of national reconstruction.

THE CLAMP DOWN ON THE NATIONAL DEFENCE COMMITTEE (NDC) AND DEFENCE COMMITTEES

The 'excessive' behaviour of the Defence Committees during the first months of the revolution and the growing power-hold of the NDC among the workers gave rise to regular conflicts within the (original membership of) the PNDC. The left wing within the PNDC represented by Chris Atim, head of the NDC, Sgt. Alolga Akata-Pore, in charge of the Army Defence Committees, and J.A. Kwei, workers' representative within the PNDC, were strong supporters of the PDC-concept and of increasing the 'people's power' within the revolutionary process. The right wing represented by Brig. Nunoo-Mensah and Rev. Damuah, was opposed to the 'political' role of the Defence Committees and rather preferred to transform them into exclusively 'productionist' organs; it was very

sensitive to the regular complaints about the Defence Committees' excessive behaviour on the part of the 'enemies of the revolution', in particular management and middle class, and it considered strict state control over the (political) activities of the Defence Committees to be a contribution to class reconciliation and the predominant task of economic recovery. The chairman of the PNDC, Flt-Lt. Rawlings, and his 'follower' W.O.I Adjei-Boadi represented the centre of the ideological spectrum within the PNDC, initially switching regularly between the right and left wings' positions, one day praising the Defence Committees and the NDC and the next day launching vicious attacks on them - thus leaving these 'revolutionary organs' frustrated and disillusioned.

July 1982 was an eventful month which showed that the PNDC attitude towards the Defence Committees was as inconsistent and vacillating as its guidance of the revolutionary process. During this month Rawlings - disturbed by the growing popularity and power base of the NDC among the workers and the NDC's uncompromising revolutionary position - tried to get a hold over the NDC. Its membership was widened to include representatives from the Army and Police Defence Committees who would be more likely to subject themselves to control. Rawlings appointed himself as chairman of the NDC while Chris Atim was to act as its secretary. However, these changes did not have any significant impact on the activities and popularity of the NDC 'boys' among the PDC militants.

On 29 July 1982 Rawlings confronted with mounting pressure by the NDC and Defence Committees to state in clear terms the ideological orientation of the revolution, held one of his most revolutionary speeches entitled "No Turning Back" (7). It took place during a period of serious political crisis. On 30 June 1982 three High Court judges and a retired army officer were murdered. These murders appeared to be politically motivated and PNDC involvement was suspected. The most outspoken and strongest opponents of the PNDC and the revolution - the Association of Recognized Professional Bodies (ARPB), its mouthpieces The Echo and The Believer, and the Christian Council of Churches - demanded the PNDC's resignation. In his speech 'No Turning Back' Rawlings reviewed the first six months of the revolution. He paid on

the whole glowing tribute to the Defence Committees, though he did not neglect to refer to some of their weaknesses and failures. He accepted the existence of 'classes' in Ghanaian society and the need of 'class struggle'; however, he only launched a rather mild and ambiguous attack on the classes that opposed the revolution and its leadership. Significantly, his answer to the question of the ideological orientation of the revolution was very vague or, rather, evasive. It was evident that even in this speech Rawlings was careful not to hurt too strongly the feelings of the opponents of the revolution and in fact wanted to 'pacify' them.

On the next day, however, a violent demonstration of the Defence Committees took place in Accra organized by the NDC. This demonstration was the first major attack of the mass organizations on the 'enemies of the revolution' who had demanded the PNDC's resignation in the wake of the murders of the three judges and the retired army officer. Thousands of workers, soldiers and policemen ransacked the lodges of Freemasons and Odd-Fellows - the secret associations of the middle classes with an enormous socio-political power (Pieterse 1982b: 17-19) -, occupied the buildings of The Echo and The Believer, viciously beating The Believer's editor, and expressed their total loss of confidence in the 'neo-colonial' judicial system and called for its rejection: a mock funeral procession was held towards the precincts of the Supreme Court where a coffin 'containing the mortal remains of the old judicial system' was set on fire (8). The Defence Committees appealed to the PNDC to create 'people's tribunals' and a 'people's militia' to deal with the enemies of the revolution. This violent demonstration of 'people's power' frightened the middle classes and was strongly disapproved of by Rawlings and the right wing within the PNDC eager to 'pacify' the middle classes during the economic and political crisis. The PNDC came to realize that the Defence Committees could endanger its own policy of pacification and that 'people's power' had to be tamed rather than enlarged.

It is beyond doubt that the PNDC's policy of 'class reconciliation' became even more pronounced after its decision to start negotiations with international finance capital. After secret

preliminary negotiations with the IMF, the PNDC invited members of the cabinet and the NDC to two meetings, in August and September 1982, to discuss the issues of the IMF negotiations and its implications for the Ghanaian revolution (Konings 1983). The left wing elements within the 'revolutionary' leadership tried to use this 'IMF debate' to resolve once and for all certain basic issues like the ideological direction of the revolution and 'people's power' within the revolutionary state. During the debate it soon became evident that the leadership was divided in two broad camps. The left wing within the PNDC and within the cabinet together with the entire NDC were opposed to any (further) negotiations with the IMF, and stressed both the importance of building up a basically independent, self-reliant economy and the involvement of the people (through the Defence Committees) and international (revolutionary) allies in the Ghanaian revolutionary process. The other members of the PNDC (including Rawlings) and of the cabinet argued that the Ghanaian economy needed a massive capital injection to 'take off'; they seemed to be inclined to accept the usually harsh IMF conditions for allocation of funds, even if this implied a 'temporary' halt to the revolutionary process.

The conditions laid down by the IMF during the preliminary negotiations with the Ghanaian government delegation, would indeed have some serious socio-political implications for the Ghanaian revolutionary process. In addition to the 'normal' austerity measures (such as a considerable devaluation and a drastic withdrawal of state subsidies on social services) the IMF demanded a curtailment of the activities of the Defence Committees (considered to be an obstacle to higher productivity) and the progressive organizations and a ban on the latter's attacks on imperialism.

Though the majority vote during these meetings was against (further) IMF negotiations, Rawlings nevertheless - a clear manifestation of his undemocratic leadership style - ordered the Ghanaian delegation to continue negotiating with the IMF. Rawlings seemed now to be determined to eliminate from leadership positions within the revolutionary process all 'those who stood between us and help from abroad'. A gradual purge of these so-called 'anarchists' started from October 1982 onwards. The final clamp down came after the

23st November 1982 coup. A number of NDC members (in particular JFM cadres) were thrown behind bars on the false allegation that they were part of the coup. Several leaders and militants of the Defence Committees were also arrested (a few even murdered). The NDC Secretariat as well as the Greater Accra and Volta Region Secretariats were dissolved on 25 November 1982.

A nine-member Standing Committee was appointed by the PNDC to draw up new guidelines for the Defence Committees. The new membership of the NDC was announced the following year (1983). The inclusion of chiefs, top bureaucrats, businessmen and representatives of other fractions of the dominant classes in Ghanaian society among the membership of the reconstituted NDC was described as a positive development within the revolutionary process by the 'enemies of the revolution'. The clamp down on the radical left within the leadership and the Defence Committees, together with the installation of a (reconstituted) NDC composed of loyal followers and representatives of all classes within Ghanaian society, constituted a necessary prerequisite for an increasing corporatist approach to mass mobilization.

THE CORPORATIST APPROACH TO MASS MOBILIZATION

After the purge of the left 'extremists' and 'anarchists' the door was open for co-operation with international finance capital and a 'national' effort to overcome the economic crisis. On 30 December 1982 the Secretary for Finance and Economic Planning, Dr. Kwesi Botchwey, presented the PNDC's Programme for Reconstruction and Development - a four-year programme for national recovery (9). The PNDC's negotiations with the IMF to acquire the necessary funds for its recovery programme proved to be successful in the end. In February 1983 it was reported that Ghana had 'come to terms with the IMF', which was the start of the supply of substantial loans of international financial institutions.

The PNDC programme for national recovery with assistance of international finance had a number of consequences for the 'revolutionary' process and the role of the Defence Committees was to

be attuned to this programme. The PNDC and the (reconstituted) NDC laid more emphasis on the following tasks of the Defence Committees than ever before:

- To promote class co-operation rather than class struggle. In his Dawn Broadcast of 6 March 1983 which was a complete departure from his speech of 29 July 1982 entitled 'No Turning Back', Rawlings declared:

'We want to make it clear that we are not at war with any person or group of persons. Our revolution is rather against crime and injustice ... The problems that confront the country are legion. They are self-induced ... The professionals, men and women of religion, chiefs, the lodges and everyone should break out of their insulating walls and shells and give the national effort a push ...' (10).

The New Guidelines for the Defence Committees issued in 1983 attempted to control and tame these 'revolutionary mass organizations' by depriving them of their class character (11). Membership of the Defence Committees was no longer restricted to the 'working people': 'membership of the Defence Committees is open to all persons who are prepared to uphold and defend the basic objectives of the ongoing revolutionary process and who have a proven record of patriotism, integrity and democratic practice'. Nothing was said in the New Guidelines about any legal backing for the activities of the Defence Committees.

The PNDC's insistence on class reconciliation and co-operation made it increasingly difficult for the Defence Committees to expose even the corrupt dealings of their 'former' enemies. They were often intimidated, obstructed and physically attacked by chiefs, businessmen, top bureaucrats and managers in co-operation with the police and army, the latter becoming the 'leaders of corruption' within the revolution. It is now continuously stressed that 'people's power' should not be interpreted as 'working class' power and that no class can claim a dominant position within the revolution. The revolution is a 'national democratic' revolution, a revolution in which all classes may participate in the decision-making process and in which 'class alliance' is the watchword.

- To stimulate high productivity. The Defence Committees are constantly advised by NDC members and other government officials to promote high productivity. What the government wants to bring home to

the Defence Committees is that the political activities of the Defence Committees should be no substitute for productive work. As the chairman of the PNDC put it in August 1983: 'Productive work and political involvement must go hand in hand' (12). However, it appears 'that the actual position is that political work which dominated the earlier phase of PNDC rule must now give way to productive work ... From now on it is more production and less politics. The earlier question: "Production for whom?" is no longer heard' (Jonah 1984: 27).

- To ensure industrial peace and discipline. The smooth implementation of the 'Programme for Reconstruction and Development' requires, according to the government, industrial peace and discipline in general in Ghanaian society. The Defence Committees are now regularly warned by government officials for their lack of discipline: 'We cannot sit and watch unconcerned whilst some workers misinterpret (people's power) as a licence for lawlessness, irresponsible acts and complete disregard for law and order' (13). Since August 1983 a number of government officials have repeated time and again that the government intended to overhaul all the revolutionary organs in order to instill more discipline in them.

- To defend the revolution. Political stability is a necessary prerequisite for economic recovery and development. Since the PNDC came to power, it has been faced with opposition both inside and outside the country, culminating in various coup attempts. At various occasions the Defence Committees had appealed to the PNDC to approve the formation of a people's militia. The PNDC has been hesitating particularly on this issue. The formation of a people's militia has always been a very sensitive issue in Ghanaian army circles. It was only after the 19 June 1983 coup attempt - during which some militants of the Defence Committees were either killed or wounded - that the PNDC started to give some military training to selected cadres of the Defence Committees.

THE DEFENCE COMMITTEES AND CORPORATIST TENDENCIES

The reaction of the Defence Committees towards government's drastic actions against 'excesses' and its attempts to erode their 'power' and control their political activities has been varied.

A large number of them withdrew as much as possible from any 'political' activities, but remained quite active in economic and productive activities. An objective record of the Defence Committees' operations over the past years would show an inspiringly long list of productive and constructive interventions at the local, regional and national level, in particular the undertaking of communal works and the promotion of agricultural production.

Quite a number of the militant members of the Defence Committees got demoralized and disillusioned by the leadership's 'treason' of the revolution, the erosion of 'people's power' and their frequent harassment by government officials and the state's repressive agencies (army and police). The Defence Committees lost their attractiveness to workers: more workers seem to leave rather than to join these 'revolutionary organs'. Rawlings confessed during his speech on 6 March 1984 that there was 'evidence of mounting despair, deepening apathy, and growing withdrawal and rejection of national responsibility on the part of ordinary people' (14).

Antagonism threatened to add to demoralization after the announcement of the April 1983 budget (15). This particularly harsh, IMF-inspired budget appeared to hit the hungry workers - whose real incomes are said to have fallen in 1983 to 17 per cent of their 1972 level - more than the middle class and the national bourgeoisie. The budget measures which removed all government subsidies on essential services and goods, leading to astronomical price rises (the general level of consumer prices rose by at least 750 to 990 per cent), could not be compensated by the proposed rise in the minimum wage from ₵ 12 to ₵ 21. The Defence Committees had not been previously informed of - let alone been asked to take part in the decision-making process about - the budget measures and were caught painfully. Several Defence Committees seized the announcement of the harsh budget to ventilate their dissatisfaction with the 'revolutionary' process (Konings 1983,

1984 a and b). For instance, the Tema Interim Co-ordinating Committee of WDCs commented as follows:

'The budget was announced at a time when the working people were beginning to doubt the PNDC's commitment to destroying the social power of the exploiters and aid the liberation of the oppressed. In recent times the government has been wooing the enemies of the people ... On the other hand, militants organized in the defence committees have not been offered any consistent political support, protection or encouragement by the national leadership. On the contrary, they are severely attacked for the smallest mistake. The people are in a state of political demoralization. For us, the workers of Tema, therefore, the only basis on which we can accept the PNDC's budget ..., if we see immediate measures which aim at dealing with some of the likely consequences of the budget, restore the political confidence of the people and attack the social power of the exploiters who are responsible for the crisis' (16).

The reaction of the Defence Committees toward the April 1983 budget shows that the Defence Committees are not yet fully controlled by the government. And these 'revolutionary organs' which are supposed to mobilize the people for the implementation of government policies, are still capable of undertaking autonomous actions. These actions seem to be oriented at the preservation of the original aims of the 31 December 1981 revolution: the establishment of 'people's power' and the continuation of the class struggle to free Ghanaian society from internal and external exploitation. It happens now that the Defence Committees created on the initiative of the 'revolutionary' leadership, are more 'revolutionary' than the government and try to push the government into a more revolutionary direction. The Defence Committees' autonomous actions are mostly not subject to severe repression and are sometimes successful because the government cannot easily afford to completely lose the support of the working class, the last - though shrinking - power base of the PNDC in Ghanaian society. Various examples of such autonomous actions of the Defence Committees may be cited:

- The WDCs have taken several actions against those multinational companies that intended to lay off a considerable number of workers during the years 1982 and 1983. One historic event was the occupation and takeover of Ghana Textile Printing (GTP) Ltd., partly owned by (but under complete management control of) the United Africa Company

(UAC), in November 1982 (Tarras 1983). Up till now the government has never formally approved the workers' takeover of the GTP; a number of official government statements demonstrate that the PNDC does not favour takeovers and nationalizations so as not to scare off foreign investment. Yet, this GTP takeover became an important symbol of workers' power throughout 1982 and 1983 as other groups of workers also began serious efforts at the reorganization of production and distribution. It sparked off a number of other occupations of transnational-controlled firms, including Juapong Textiles Ltd., another UAC-controlled enterprise, and Allied Foods Ltd., a Cadbury-Schweppes subsidiary.

- The PNDC call for industrial peace and discipline has not received a satisfactory response from the side of the workers. One important reason appears to be that the WDCs - instead of promoting class collaboration within the industrial firms - rather continue to be a source of conflict with management. Mr. Ato Austin, Secretary for Labour and Social Welfare, remarked during his key address delivered at the 24th Annual General Meeting of the Ghana Employers Association in May 1984 that 'on the industrial scene we are confronted with raging conflicts between what is misunderstood as the power of the people and authority, between what is revolutionary discipline and order on the one hand and anarchy on the other'. In 1983, according to him, there had been many conflicts between the WDCs and management. In many instances the WDCs had taken over the responsibility of sales and personnel managers and sought to determine the allocation of products of their respective companies (17). The number of reported strikes increased from 9 in 1982 to 14 in 1984; a significant number of these strikes were directed against certain management officers, sometimes in retaliation of management actions against WDC militants (18).

- The Defence Committees also continued to struggle against the hostile fractions of the middle class and to attack the ideological and legal apparatuses of the 'neo-colonial' state. After the 19 June 1983 coup attempt the Defence Committees in the Accra-Tema region occupied the Supreme Court buildings and two press houses hostile to the Defence Committees. They announced that they had dissolved the old judicial system and abolished the post of Chief Justice, and set up

the nucleus of what they described as a new popularly-elected, indigenously-derived judicial system. This action not only reflected the genuine frustration of the workers with the judiciary that always appeared to favour the 'well-to-do' in society, but also the impatience of the more militant Defence Committees with the slow pace of government efforts to rid the judicial system of its 'conservatism'.

If these autonomous actions of the Defence Committees to bring about a 'real' revolution in Ghana cannot be channelled and directed by the PNDC, and if their legitimate demands are not met, they may lead increasingly to actions at variance with the regime's own economic and political policies.

CONCLUSION

This study has analyzed the relationship between the 'revolutionary' leadership in Ghana and the 'revolutionary' mass organizations, the Defence Committees, established by the new regime. It has attempted to demonstrate the various contradictions that developed between the 'revolutionary' leadership and the Defence Committees in the course of the revolutionary process, giving rise to serious conflicts (i) within the leadership about the approach to mass mobilization, and (ii) between (part of) the leadership and the Defence Committees.

By concentrating on the relationship between the 'revolutionary' leadership and the Defence Committees and the various contradictions that relationship gave rise to, this study seems to have overcome some of the shortcomings of the 'theory of the postcolonial state' I have dealt with elsewhere (Konings, 1986). First, this 'theory of the post-colonial state' has often attempted to study the 'class content' of the post-colonial state in isolation from other classes in society. Classes, however, can only be understood in relationship to other classes. Our study about the relationship between the 'revolutionary' leadership and the Defence Committees in Ghana substantiates to a large extent Murray's conclusions (1967) about the 'political class' or ruling 'petty-bourgeoisie' in Ghana: its 'unformed character' and its 'plasticity'. We have shown how one fraction of the 'ruling petty-

bourgeoisie' attempted to 'commit suicide' and to mobilize the Defence Committees for the ultimate establishment of a workers' hegemony within Ghanaian society. However, its attempts were frustrated and finally obstructed by another fraction of the 'ruling petty-bourgeoisie' that - though ideologically identifying with the working people - actually sought to control the Defence Committees for the sake of 'national development' and to preserve its hold over the state and its own class interests.

And second, by focusing its attention almost wholly on the 'ruling class' and the way it maintains itself in power, the 'theory of the post-colonial state' presents quite a static analysis. The 'masses' figure in this 'theory' as almost inert, apathetic, and essentially incapable of undertaking any action to change the status quo. Our study about the relationship between the 'revolutionary' leadership and the Defence Committees in Ghana demonstrates that the 'working people' have not yet been fully 'captured' (Hyden 1980) by the populist leadership's corporatist tendencies; on the contrary, they have continued to undertake autonomous actions aiming at the preservation of the 'original aims' of the 31 December 1981 revolution. As the populist government cannot easily afford to lose completely its - shrinking - support among the masses, these autonomous actions have proved to be often successful.

NOTES

1. See Report of the Central Committee of the United Front of the JFM and PRLG to the Extraordinary Congress of the United Front on the State of the Front and the Tasks facing the Front in the period ahead, April 1983.
2. For the short AFRC administration, see Hansen and Collins 1980; Pieterse 1982a; Hansen 1982, Jeffries 1982b; and Konings 1983.
3. See the first speeches of Flt-Lt. J.J. Rawlings after the 31 December 1981 coup as reported in West Africa, 11 January 1982, 68-76.
4. Ghana Information Services Department, Policy Guidelines of the Provisional National Defence Council, Accra, May 1982.
5. For these Guidelines, see Legon Observer, vol. XIV, n° 4, 1982.
6. The Guidelines did not, however, exclude senior officers completely from membership of the WDCs. They were allowed to participate in WDC activities if the workers had vetted them in public and had confidence in them. To hold office, however, senior officers should gain not less than 95% of the votes.
7. No Turning Back. A Message to the Nation by Flt-Lt. J.J. Rawlings, Chairman of the PNDC, delivered on Radio and Television on 29th July, 1982, Accra: National Defence Committee Press.
8. Ghanaian Times, July 31, 1982, 1.
9. The PNDC's Programme for Reconstruction and Development. Statement by the PNDC Secretary for Finance and Economic Planning on radio and television on Dec. 30, 1982, Accra: Information Services Department.
10. Ghanaian Times, March 8, 1983, 4.
11. Guidelines for PDCs and WDCs, reported in The Post, vol. I, n° 10, 1983, 7; and The Post, vol. I, n° 11, 1983, 7.
12. Productivity and Efficiency. Nation-wide Broadcast by the Chairman of the PNDC, Flt-Lt. J.J. Rawlings, on Sunday, 27 August 1983. Reported in The Mirror, September 3, 1983, 8-9.
13. Speech of Rawlings held on 16 December 1982, reported in Ghanaian Times, December 17, 1982, 1.
14. West Africa, 19 March 1984, 597.
15. See Republic of Ghana, Summary of PNDC's Budget Statement and Economic Policy for 1983. Presented by Dr. Kwesi Botchwey, PNDC

Secretary for Finance and Economic Planning, on Thursday, April 21, 1983, Accra-Tema: GPC, 1983.

16. Ghanajan Times, April 24, 1983, 1-5.
17. West Africa, 7 May 1984, 999.
18. Labour Department, Labourscope, Quarterly Newsletter, Accra, 1982 and 1983 issues.

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