

Introduction – Sample Chapter

When I last visited my native Ghana in October, 1994, the country could safely be classified as a third world nation (though I personally detest the idea of classifying countries in this way, based on their respective levels of development). During my recent visit in July 2007, almost thirteen years on, the classification was no longer clear-cut.

As I drove through the city of Accra during the first few days of my stay, it appeared to me as though the first and third worlds had literally crashed together on the streets of the nation's capital; the fallout from the unusual collision was everywhere apparent! On the congested streets of the city the latest brands of highly valued vehicles— Mercedes, BMW, Jaguar—could be seen driving cheek by jowl with ageing ones, some of which might well be described as deathtraps.

The roads they jostled on ranged from newly constructed worldclass three-lane dual-carriage thoroughfares right down to untarred tracks, some of which had turned muddy and were almost impassable after a downpour of rain.

While some of the areas of the city associated with people of the lower income bracket - Nima, James Town, Pig Farm, etc—had not changed significantly over the years, elsewhere in the city and especially the surrounding suburbs of East Legon, East Airport, Adenta, etc., affluence was very apparent, for these areas had become residential estates boasting luxurious stylish mansions, adorned in some cases by palm-lined boulevards and beautiful front gardens that had sprung up in the recent past to add flair to the scenery. Some of the highly valued properties, showcases of architectural excellence, compare favourably with their counterparts in Malibu, Beverly Hills, and West London.

The traditional image of the African woman is that of an illiterate and deprived individual who is expected to submit to the whims and caprices of her domineering husband and who is condemned in the main to a life of child-bearing and child-rearing. One might have expected

many examples of this stereotype in the streets of Accra, but I was confronted with a very different picture in several areas of the city as I observed a not insignificant number of elegantly dressed ladies, some of whose faces radiated a considerable degree of self-confidence; I caught glimpses of such elegant ladies, for instance, behind the wheels of their

cars, marques often of the noble class. Indeed, my native country has made significant strides forward in her development since my last visit in 1994. A period of political stability coupled with a radical economic restructuring , the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), has led to a significant economic turnaround. Three Cheers for Ghana, while narrating the personal

experience of myself and that of my wife Rita and our three children during our visit to our native Ghana in the summer of 2007, will attempt to describe from our own perspective, the phenomenal economic and structural transformation that has taken place in that country in recent times.

While highlighting the positive, the book will not be silent in regard to the negative aspect of the remarkable development. The hope of gaining employment in the capital, for example, has led to a dramatic increase of the population, especially as a result of the massive influx of the youth from the countryside into Accra. That in turn has led to a shortage of accommodation, overcrowding, overburdening of sanitary facilities, increase in crime, etc. Generally, however, Ghana's success story

is worthy of broadcasting, to serve as an example for other developing countries elsewhere in the world.

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