

tional Presidents. But even more seriously, it raises questions about how a corrupt and debased electoral process elects only virtuous and majestic Presidents.

Perhaps the most serious indictment that can be leveled against these novels as a group is their almost complete reluctance to posit alternative futures and their almost complete acceptance of the state of the present society and polity. Where science fiction ranges far and wide in suggesting vastly different social arrangements, political novels have tended to be very conservative. H.G. Wells once advanced the novel as the ideal medium for innovative social thought. Perhaps the only sustained use of the novel as a device for speculative thought on the future of American politics came early in the 1960's with Eugene Burdick's *480*—which accurately suggested the widespread use of aggregate data and computer analysis to identify potential voters and their allegiances.

More typically, contemporary trends were projected into the future, and in a series of novels the intense black militancy and student activism of the sixties occur as important forces in future political settings. In Lawrence Louis Goldman's *Takeover*, a hippie President is elected by dint of the eighteen-year-old vote. This is at least an intriguing notion, even if belied by the result of the 1972 election. More quaintly, in other novels we find SDS and black militant groups playing kingmaker in future Presidential elections.

As a group, then, these self-consciously political novels of recent years are largely unsatisfying either as compelling narratives or sources of political insight and speculation. Dominated for the most part by the desire of the authors to be savvy about the interstices of Washington life, handicapped by slipshod characterization, impoverished by lack of imagination and dearth of speculative spirit, many of these novels do not rise above the status of subliterary pot-

boilers. The best of them make a valiant effort to be both interesting and insightful, but devotees of the political novel may have to look elsewhere for sources of political wisdom.

It is one of the more intriguing ironies of the genre that the two very best works of political fiction, Edwin O'Connor's *The Last Hurrah* and Robert Penn Warren's *All the King's Men*, are novels of local and state politics respectively. Perhaps it is easier to grasp the essence of a machine boss from Boston or a tyrannical Southern politician than it is to extract from the media-burnished, charisma-laden Presidency the true nature of the man who occupies it.

Driven by the inexhaustible public fascination with the occupant of the White House, novelists, however, have turned their backs on the ward, the precinct and the state house and have fixated on the President—a figure less explicable in human terms than the Dalai Lama or the Emperor of China. If any one man can be said to have spawned this paroxysm of fictional hagiography it was John F. Kennedy. Lyndon Johnson's Presidency, if anything, intensified the trend. One minor consequence of Richard Nixon's present plight may be a greater inclination on the part of novelists to divest the Presidency of some of its divinity.

Philip Green and Michael Walzer suggest that truly great literature is usually replete with political insight. It does seem possible, however, that apart from the hallowed realm of timeless literature, novelists without aspirations of immortality for themselves and their works might at least be able to hold our attention with a compelling tale of American politics that modestly assays the task of being both entertaining and perceptive. Perhaps one of the cultural aftershocks of Watergate will be the birth of a new orientation toward political fiction—less conventional, less adoring, less dazzled by power than the current genre.

## West African Wager: Houphouet versus Nkrumah by Jon Woronoff

(Scarecrow Press; 371 pp.; \$10.00)

### Naomi Chazan

The independence of Ghana in 1957 and the subsequent emergence from colonial rule of tens of other African states marked the beginning of a

new era in the black continent. Independence was expected to end Africa's many ills, and decolonization was hailed with optimism ap-

proaching euphoria. But with political autonomy came innumerable common problems and challenges demanding immediate attention. The quest for total answers marked the first decade of African independence. No two countries better symbolized the similarity of problems and diversity of solutions than the neighboring West African states of Ghana and the Ivory Coast.

Jon Woronoff's *West African Wager* is one of the first studies which attempts not only to examine these contrasting experiments in

operation but also to evaluate their relative strengths and weaknesses and to assess their ability to respond to the needs of an increasingly demanding population. Woronoff weaves his analysis around a wager made in April, 1957, between Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Félix Houphouët-Boigny of the Ivory Coast:

"You are witnessing the start of two experiments. A wager has been made between two territories, one having chosen independence, the other preferring the difficult road to the construction, with the metropole, of a community of men equal in rights and duties. . . . Let each of us undertake his experiment, in absolute respect of the experiment of his neighbor, and in ten years we shall compare the results."

By focusing on this bet Woronoff attempts to contrast two apparently opposite African remedies to similar problems. Nkrumah is portrayed as the prime exponent of a radical revolutionary, ideological solution; Houphouët-Boigny personifies a moderate, pragmatic, economically oriented approach. Personality differences and rivalries between the two leaders only served to underline these distinctions and to stress variations in the selection and implementation of public policy.

Nkrumah's "radical tendencies" (a term used all too freely in this work) are well documented in the discussion of the Nkrumaist phase of Ghanaian politics. Nkrumah gained power by attacking the colonial and traditional establishment; he consolidated his rule by resorting to an ideology derived from non-Western sources. His political energies were channeled into the construction of an ideology and practice for a new Ghana and a vibrant Africa. The forcefulness and innovation which Woronoff sees as such an integral part of the Nkrumah regime were expressed most cogently, in the author's opinion, in the sphere of foreign policy. Nkrumah's strivings and failures in reaching for the dream of unity and a nonaligned African international presence are discussed at length.

If Nkrumah's revolutionary aura was mysteriously enhanced by his futile activities in the realm of foreign affairs, his policy record at home reveals the pitfalls inherent in using passion rather than reason to implement mundane but vital reforms. Ghana's once buoyant economy was directed by the theory that Nkrumaism could provide a substitute for food: advances could not be achieved "by spreading fertilizer or planting coffee in neat rows." Socialism was seen as the key to revitalizing the economy, and "socialistic" structures such as state farms were introduced at the expense of systematic and substantive economic measures. As a result, Ghana's economy during the Nkrumah era was, Woronoff states, "more and more fragile, and collapse was not far off."

Although Nkrumah did invest heavily in the socioeconomic infrastructure—expanding the educational network, creating new employment opportunities, laying the foundation for a much needed energy and communications network—he nevertheless failed dismally among precisely those groups who were to be the vanguard of the socialist revolution. The youth, the workers, the farmers, the young intellectuals, all of whom had provided the grass roots support for Nkrumah during decolonization, became increasingly disenchanted with the minimal returns on their loyalty to "Osagyefo." As daily life in Ghana rapidly deteriorated, opposition to the regime within the sophisticated Ghanaian population grew. Nkrumah, the harbinger of the African future, became isolated; his contact with, and influence over, the population diminished. On February 24, 1966, the Nkrumah government was overthrown in a military coup d'état.

The Ivory Coast has exhibited a tendency toward moderation and economic achievement. Félix Houphouët-Boigny's cooperation with French authorities during decolonization, after an initial period of dissent and violence, provides concrete proof, in Woronoff's view, of his pragmatic tactics. Political consolidation was accomplished through

compromise, and ideological confrontation was avoided in favor of balance and synthesis.

Houphouët-Boigny's loose, pluralistic political coalition was reflected in both foreign and domestic policies. On the international front Houphouët rejected nonalignment and Third World solidarity; he opted instead for close cooperation with the former(?) metropole, France. Defense and assistance agreements, liance, and that alliance has often strengthened the Franco-Ivorian been accused of perpetuating Western interests on the continent. Undaunted by criticism of his African peers, Houphouët has assumed an anti-Communist stance in world affairs. He thwarts efforts to create a political union in Africa, and he advocates regional economic federations.

By placing economic considerations at the forefront, the Ivorian leader has underlined his conviction that economic prosperity is the key to political maturity. The Ivory Coast's achievements in the economic sphere are in stark contrast to its eastern neighbor's: The CNP growth rate has averaged a staggering 12 per cent per annum since independence; agricultural crops have been diversified; exports have exceeded imports; industrial growth is promising; and major investments in the infrastructure have been made.

Relying on a policy of loose control of foreign concerns and generous allowances for the repatriation of profits, the Ivory Coast has attracted foreign investment and used the much needed capital for its own development goals. Some observers have skeptically referred to the Ivory Coast as an example of "growth without development." Woronoff neatly refutes this criticism by maintaining that Houphouët's economic prowess lies in his ability to cater to the material aspirations of an increasingly conscious population.

If Houphouët's experiment is best illustrated by his economic policies, his achievements in other domestic fields have not lagged far behind. A measured development of the educational system, coupled with an improvement in the overall standard

of living, has restrained opposition elements. Houphouët's ability to maintain contact with the polity, often through the party organ, the Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), has allowed him an opportunity to accommodate popular demands and to transform criticisms into practical political profit. Only among students and youth has Houphouët's conciliatory approach been largely unsuccessful, and these elements have persistently voiced their impatience with his policy of evolutionary change.

The palpable success of Houphouët's experiment in African development has not, as Woronoff notes, been entirely positive. Material benefits gained through moderation and through dependence on outside sources have brought real change, a rapid transition to "modernity" based on Western models. But the uprooting of the old has been accompanied by a new and strong set of values. The achievements of the Houphouët regime are "... all a bit schematic and cold. What was missing were the traditional values of African society, the human warmth and solidarity."

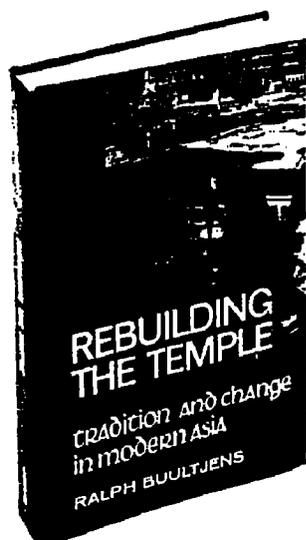
The final result of the 1957 wager is self-evident. Houphouët's approach triumphed before the wager's deadline with the demise of the Nkrumah regime. Woronoff attributes Houphouët's victory to the use of reason rather than passion, to the emphasis on material well-being rather than ideological cohesion. He views Nkrumah's failures as those of a misguided revolutionary.

However, by not dealing directly with the relative strengths and weaknesses of the two countries, and by overemphasizing the influence of personalities upon policies, Woronoff has failed to draw the practical conclusions which his data suggest. In part, this major oversight may result from the impractical choice offered by a zero sum game analysis. The author concedes the problematic nature of the "moderate" versus "radical" alternative in his closing paragraph. "The best solution might be a leader who combined both, or a society that permitted them to al-

ternate." Indeed, there is no reason why the choice should be so exclusive. The ideal would be to select those elements from both approaches which have proven to be of the greatest value, while discarding policies which have failed, striking a balance between tested solutions, and devising new African-inspired remedies.

Jon Woronoff's study is a chronicle of the end of an initial period of change and optimism in Africa.

More recent years have witnessed a shift away from the dichotomous, encompassing, borrowed solutions stressed in this volume to a more measured, sober, long-range and piecemeal approach. This new emphasis has highlighted those issues peculiar to the African environment and underlined the need for specifically African goals and policies to face the complex political, social and economic realities of a continent finally coming into its own.



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