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BACKGROUND AND INTERPRETATION

Author(s): D. E. K. Amenumey

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THE GENERAL ELECTIONS IN THE 'AUTONOMOUS
REPUBLIC OF TOGO', APRIL 1958: BACKGROUND
AND INTERPRETATION

by D. E. K. AMENUMEY

In April 1958 the United Nations Organisation supervised general elections to the Legislative Assembly of Togo under French Administration.¹ By that time the territory had been designated the 'Autonomous Republic of Togo'. It was, however, still under the administration of the French government to a large extent and the ultimate supervision of the United Nations. The results of the elections contrasted sharply with what had been proffered as the general trend in that territory since 1952. They also made nonsense of the official prognostications made by representatives of the French and Togo governments and the forecasts made by commentators who had made only a cursory or shallow study of the Togo situation. To fully understand what happened in April 1958, and also why, one needs some background information on the way politics unfolded in post-war Togo.

Various 'reasons' have been adduced by some political commentators to explain this apparent 'change' in the leanings of the electorate. Some of these 'explanations' appear superficially appealing—as for example the demonstration effect of Ghana's independence and the impact of the conference of Independent African States that took place in Ghana in April 1958. But the fundamental reason for the apparent 'change' in the persuasion of the Togo electorate was that the 1958 elections were held under conditions that differed radically from those that had characterised earlier electoral consultations. The 1958 elections were supervised by the United Nations while previous elections had been mostly stage-managed by the French officials. U.N. supervision was the new dimension that was introduced in 1958. It was this facility more than anything that enabled the true picture of political alignments in Togo to emerge for the first time in 1958 after a period of deliberate suppression.

French officials had generally organised elections in French Togo in such a way as to ensure an outcome favourable to the *presence française*. The need to ensure this particular outcome arose out of the threat to the French position which was posed by certain developments that took place both in French Togo itself and the adjacent territories of British Togoland and the Gold Coast. When the German Protectorate of Togo was split between France and Britain at the end of the First World War, it resulted in the division of one people — the Ewe into three distinct territories. These were French Togo, British Togoland and the Gold Coast.² During the inter and post-Second World War years a movement developed among the Ewe people

which was dedicated to their unification under one administration. The main support of this movement came from the Gold Coast and French Togo. The reasons that inspired the movement were political, social, cultural, economic and ethnic. There was also an antecedent background of resentment of and opposition to the harsh type of regime imposed by Germany and latterly France over one section of the Ewe people—i.e. those in French Togo. Accordingly an implicit subsidiary aim of the Ewe movement was to secure the release of the Ewe from French administration. In the years after 1945 the Ewe intelligentsia built up a number of political parties and organisations that were dedicated to working towards Ewe unification.

These were the Comité de l'Unité Togolaise (C.U.T.), the Mouvement de la Jeunesse Togolaise (Juvento), both in French Togo, and the All Ewe Conference (A.E.C.) embracing all three sections of the Ewe territory.³ These parties and their leadership employed all the organisational techniques and political media which were to help mobilise independence movements elsewhere in colonial Africa.

The advocates of unification refused to be satisfied with a mere easing of the frontier restrictions between French Togo and the rest of the Ewe territory. They objected fundamentally to the development of the Ewe of the British and French spheres along differing lines as was inspired by the difference in British and French colonial philosophy and practice. But an acceptance of the demand for unification by the Administering Authorities would have involved some modification of the map of the area between Dahomey and the eastern Gold Coast with concomitant political, social and economic effects on the people who might be affected. The attitudes of these people, therefore, became significant. Their reaction took two forms. One group was for retaining the status quo. The other group while also favouring a modification of the status of the Ewe did so in a manner that either differed from or conflicted with that desired by the unificationists. To the second group belonged some Ewe from British Togoland who favoured a unification of the two territories of Togo and Togoland but without the inclusion of the Ewe section of the Gold Coast.⁴

To ensure that the Ewe unificationists did not have it all their own way, the protagonists of these other viewpoints also organised politically to press their case. Parties of the first persuasion were the Parti Togolais du Progrès (Progrès, P.T.P.) and the Union des Chefs et des Populations du Nord (U.C.P.N.) both in French Togo. Variations of the second viewpoint were canvassed by Togoland Union, the Togoland Congress, both in British Togoland, the Convention People's Party (C.P.P.) and the Northern Peoples' Party (N.P.P.) both in the Gold Coast and British Togoland.⁵

The two Administering Authorities—Britain and France—did not react kindly to the Ewe demand either. The British Government made it clear that it had no intention of placing any part of the Gold Coast Colony under the trusteeship system, nor of giving up its government of the Ewe of the Gold Coast so that Ewe unification might be achieved. It was also

opposed to political fragmentation which the creation of a separate all-Ewe territory would involve.⁶ As far as France was concerned, the whole business of Ewe unification was a ruse to snatch her trust territory for Britain. She accordingly opposed the movement and did everything to frustrate it.

The hostility of the French administration was not diminished when after 1951 the advocates of Ewe unification changed or rather modified their demand to one for the unification and independence of the territories of Togo and Togoland as a means to ultimate Ewe unification. A number of reasons explain the hostility of the French to the Ewe unification movement. The most fundamental was the open preference of the Ewe for British administrative methods. In this regard the fact that it was the pro-unification parties like the C.U.T. that were denouncing the regime in force in Togo and demanding its liberalisation and democratisation added more fuel to the fire. They also opposed and condemned the tendency to assimilate Togo to France. Besides, the implications of the Ewe demand actually went against the grain of French colonial policy and aims. In this connection one has to remember that it was not until the late 1950s that French colonial policy came rather reluctantly to envisage the eventual independence of her colonies. Even though France had placed her mandated territories under the trusteeship system in 1946 and signed trusteeship agreements by which she undertook to promote the progressive development of her trust territories to self-government or independence, she still intended quite clearly to keep the territories of Togo and Cameroun firmly within the French Union.⁷ The frequent changes of government in France did not affect this cardinal policy for in spite of the deep divisions among the major political parties and schools of thought in post-war France, all of them firmly rejected African self-government or independence as legitimate objectives.⁸ But because of Togo's trusteeship status, independence could be pursued as a legitimate and realistic goal at a time when no major political leader in French West Africa advocated independence. However, demand for this legitimate goal only served to rouse the hostility of the French administration. The point was that apart from Togo's own intrinsic value, its loss would create a precedent which might undermine the whole concept of the French Union and precipitate the falling away of the rest of *Afrique Noire*. It may be conceded that the French were also convinced that the long-term political, economic and social interests of the people would be best served by their continued association with France.

Because of the foregoing reasons, the local French authorities in Togo encouraged and actively cooperated with the political parties that opposed unification. Naturally, these were the parties that also approved of and supported the *presence française*. The authorities deliberately circumscribed the effectiveness of the C.U.T. and Juven'ò while maximising the impact of Progrès and U.C.P.N. French officials incited the non-Ewe chiefs and people of northern Togo against the unificationists by claiming that Ewe unification would cut the north from the coast and also that the C.U.T. sought to

annex Togo to the Gold Coast. It was thanks to a deliberate policy initiated by Commissioners Digo and Pechoux that the C.U.T. and Juvento were prevented from retaining control of the representative institutions of French Togo.

When representative institutions were introduced for the first time after the Second World War, they were dominated by the C.U.T. It won almost all the African seats in the territory's new Representative Assembly in 1946⁹ and also provided the Deputy to the French National Assembly and the Counsellor to the French Senate. It did not please the authorities that the opponents of the French presence should be the spokesmen for the territory and use that position to pursue policies that were inimical to French interests and policies. Accordingly, from 1950 a deliberate policy was begun to cripple the unification movement by eliminating the C.U.T. and later also its youth wing, the Juvento, from the political scene.

This policy started with Commissioners M. Digo (March 1950 - May 1952) and M. Pechoux (May 1952 - 1954) who had already distinguished himself in Ivory Coast as a *specialiste de la repression*.¹⁰ Writing under the pseudonym 'Praetor Africanus', Pierre Alexandre, a member of the administrative service of Togo, confirmed that under the direction of Digo the administration went into open war against the C.U.T. with the result that the latter lost some of its less fervent supporters.¹¹ This campaign involved threats, intimidation, harassment of supporters of unification, their summary arrest on trumped up charges, imprisonment leading to electoral disqualification, rough handling by the *gendarmarie*, destoolment of pro-unification chiefs and loss of jobs or summary transfer. Scholarships of some students were terminated either because they themselves or their parents identified with the unification movement.¹² The French authorities pressured the United Africa Company into transferring S. E. Olympio, the dynamic leader of the unification movement in Togo, who was the company's General Manager, from Togo to Paris in 1950, and from Paris to London in 1951. This tactic boomeranged when Olympio resigned his job and returned to Togo in January 1952 to devote himself full-time to the unification and independence cause. In pursuance of the policy of harassment Olympio was fined five million francs in 1954 for failing to declare that he had an amount of £5,000 representing his gratuity from the U.A.C. in a bank at Accra. He was also disenfranchised for five years.¹³

Large numbers of people were arrested and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment and heavy fines only to have the Appeal Court at Abidjan reverse the decisions after the victims had already served the sentences.¹⁴ In addition, by bending the existing regulations the administration generally made it difficult for the unification parties to hold regular meetings and conventions — a necessary aspect of the existence of any active political organisation. Under the French law of 30 June 1881, as amended by later legislation and extended to the French overseas territories, there existed freedom of assembly subject to the condition that the police authorities had the right to

prohibit demonstrations or meetings likely to disturb peace or order. The Togo authorities exploited this proviso systematically. It was always in the name of public order that the authorities banned meetings planned by the C.U.T. and Juvento. On many occasions the administrative and police officers colluded with Progrès to ban meetings planned by the unificationists. The tactic employed was that after the C.U.T. or Juvento had applied to the relevant authority for permission to hold a meeting and had thereby indicated the time and place for the said meeting, Progrès would schedule a meeting at or near the same place and time. Both meetings were accordingly banned 'to avoid a possible clash between the rival parties and a threat to public order'.¹⁵

At other times public meetings were not proscribed openly, but measures were taken to make them ineffectual by forbidding the use of loudspeakers which could be heard in the streets.¹⁶ At other times it was made difficult for members to travel. For example, trains to transport people from distant areas would be unable to run because the necessary authorisation was withheld. Another tactic, as a correspondent of *West Africa* noted in August 1952, was that 'the police thought it worthwhile to organise a check on firearms on Olympio's election route'.¹⁷ Another favourite method was the meticulous checking of bicycle licences along the route to C.U.T. and Juvento meeting grounds and the confiscation of bicycles in cases where their owners did not carry their licence. Similarly, passenger lorries conveying people to such meetings were exhaustively examined, including the contents of their first aid boxes to see that all existing regulations were complied with. Where a single regulation was infringed the passengers were forcibly disembarked and the vehicle turned back.¹⁸ Even when the vehicle succeeded in passing the check, the delay involved caused havoc to the meetings. Again, on other occasions on the day and time appointed for a meeting, the place chosen by the organisers was fenced off by a cordon of police who pushed and beat back people wishing to attend. It was not unusual for the police to make arrests and for proceedings to be instituted later. It was easy for the police to claim that a person whom they themselves had manhandled, had used violence against them. The fact that the police were recruited almost exclusively from the north, which according to the government propaganda would lose out in the event of Ewe unification increased the enthusiasm with which they carried out the orders of their officers.

Several hundred unificationists or nationalists were struck off the electoral register because of civil offences or because they had been sentenced by the courts on trumped-up charges such as 'resisting a police officer' or spreading false news. The celebrated case of course was that of Olympio. Up to the end of 1952 about 500 persons had been sentenced to penalties involving electoral disqualification. Between 1953 and 1957, however, 4,432 people were disenfranchised.¹⁹

The official drive against the C.U.T. and Juvento and their supporters was complemented by support for their political opponents—that is advocates

of the status quo, including the maintenance of the *presence française*. It was the particular grievance of the leaders of the C.U.T. and Juvento that the French administration had incited the opposition of the northern section of Togo to the idea of unification by claiming that the Ewe intended to subjugate the north. They accused the administration of helping to create the northern based U.C.P.N. and helping it to mobilise its support against the C.U.T. Despite denials by the authorities, it would appear that it was after the apparent inability of the Progrès to displace the C.U.T. that the administration approached the northern chiefs and helped create the U.C.P.N. in 1951.²⁰

The administration favoured Progrès and the U.C.P.N. It saw in these 'moderate nationalists' a way of ensuring the attachment to France of 'loyal Togolese' and therefore gave them substantial help. These two parties and their youth wings which developed later enjoyed facilities that were denied the C.U.T. and Juvento—including the use of state transport facilities to convey their supporters to party meetings. Their meetings were publicised in the official local press and every opportunity was granted to them to propagate their parties' aims.

The administration also employed the modalities of the electoral process to reduce the impact of the unification movement. It manipulated the compilation of the electoral roll and the distribution of voters' cards to reduce the electoral strength of the unification parties. This was made possible by the fact that universal adult suffrage was not introduced till 1956. Instead, certain specific conditions — which were periodically modified—were introduced to determine persons to be inscribed on the electoral roll. The decision whether or not a person was entitled to be registered was always left to the District Commissioner or a local representative of the administration who was assisted by a commission comprising one representative each of the political parties in the territory. However, if the administration objected to any application, it was sure to be supported by the representatives of the anti-unification parties, thereby putting the unification parties in a perpetual minority. But this was not the end of the matter. When an applicant was deemed to have satisfied the current electoral conditions his name was written down and he was deemed to have registered. But it was only on the eve of the elections that the completed voting cards were sent out to the chiefs for distribution. It was at this stage that the system was again subjected to abuse; when pressure could be brought to bear on the chiefs to ensure that voting cards did not reach members of the 'wrong parties' i.e.—the unificationists. An appeal procedure which took place before magistrates was not successful in helping people whose applications had been rejected. This was because people whose application had not been granted were not in a position to prove the fact since no written replies to their applications were ever given.

It was by such methods that the registration of voters and the distribution of voters' cards which preceded elections to the Representative Assembly in

1951 distorted the electoral strength of the contesting political parties. As was said of the Ivory Coast around the same time 'it would have been necessary to sack virtually every administrator and destool every chief in order to secure a genuinely free election'.²¹ Of the 24 members elected by the second college of voters only one belonged to the C.U.T. All the six seats elected by the first college of voters were won by a single list of candidates pledged to defend 'local interests'.

This C.U.T. electoral discomfiture was complemented by others. In the June 1951 elections of Togo's representative to the French National Assembly the C.U.T. candidate was defeated by the Progrès candidate. Two months later there followed elections to the newly created *Conseils de Circonscription*, i.e. District Councils. Out of six Councils in the south the C.U.T. won control of two and shared control of the third while all six northern councils were exclusively manned by the U.C.P.N. Again, on 30 March 1952 fresh elections were held to elect members to a newly created Territorial Assembly to replace the Representative Assembly. The C.U.T. and its sympathisers won nine out of the 15 seat in the south and none in the north.²²

By the middle of 1952 the C.U.T. had become convinced that the electoral process was being manipulated as part of the administrative policy to neutralise it. To judge from independent eye-witness accounts from Togo and the example of what was happening in the French West African colonies there is little doubt that systematic rigging was being practised.²³ Unlike Houphouët-Boigny in Ivory Coast who decided to give up his 'systematic opposition' to the French administration so as to avoid systematic repression, the C.U.T. and Juvento decided not to partake in any future electoral contest until proper, impartial democratic elections were conducted. As these parties pursued this policy, the way became clear for the supporters of the *presence française* to fill all the representative institutions of the territory. Both the Progrès and U.C.P.N. and the French administration affected to believe that their control of these institutions actually signified popular support for their platform.

In October 1956 a referendum was held under the same conditions that had characterised the electoral process in the territory from the early 1950s. It was stage-managed to achieve a certain specific outcome. This was because the French authorities with the active support of the U.C.P.N. and Progrès had tried to isolate French Togo from British Togoland and the Gold Coast, retaining it within the French Union while granting it a semblance of autonomy. But after the British government's grant of a considerably more advanced measure of self-government to the Gold Coast in 1954, and in the face of increasing nationalist agitation and in response to demands by the Trusteeship Council and the Fourth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, it was considered necessary to do something to redeem the political credibility of the U.C.P.N. and Progrès. These parties had been claiming that their programme of active collaboration with the French authorities could also lead to political and constitutional advancement for

the territory. There was also the need to staunch the virus of radical nationalism which threatened to sweep the territory because of the example of the Gold Coast.

Accordingly in April 1955 a Government Council — a quasi-cabinet was introduced and the powers of the Territorial Assembly were enlarged.²⁴ But it soon became necessary to go beyond this stage because by the time these measures had been implemented they had been far outdistanced by developments in the Gold Coast. By 1956 the Gold Coast was already poised for full independence and in Togo itself there was increasing popularity for the nationalist demand for independence. There was also the question of the sharp criticism France was facing from the anti-colonialist nations at the U.N. and their repeated urging that the obligations of the trusteeship system should be fulfilled in Togo. It was partly in response to all these pressures that the 'Autonomous Republic of Togo' was created in 1956. By this measure the French government sought at once to grant the territory what purported to be autonomy while at the same time keeping it firmly within the French Union, ending U.N. supervision over the territory and killing off any lingering chances of unification.

On 23 June, 1956 — soon after a plebiscite had been conducted by the U.N. in British Togoland to ascertain the views of the people regarding their attitude to integration with the Gold Coast, the French Parlement passed an Act (the *loi-cadre*) authorising the Government to promulgate a new statute for Togo by decree. The new statute was however to come into effect provisionally. A referendum was to be organised for the people of Togo to choose between the statute and the continuance of trusteeship. If they chose the statute, it would then become final when the U.N. agreed to terminate the Trusteeship Agreement concerning Togo.²⁵

The new statute which was promulgated on 24 August 1956 provided for 'territorial, administrative and financial autonomy' of the territory and gave its people 'access to the full management of their own affairs'.²⁶ Significantly, the right to legislate in a number of fields was retained by the central organs of the French Republic. The latter was also responsible for Defence, Foreign Affairs, Justice, Security, Finance, External Trade and Customs, Secondary and Higher Education and Public Freedom. Besides, for the management of common affairs and in accordance with the wishes of the Territorial Assembly the people of Togo would continue to be represented in the French Parlement and the Assembly of the French Union'.²⁷

The new statute went into force on 30 August when the 'Autonomous Republic' was inaugurated. At the same time the French Government scheduled the referendum for 28 October 1956. This date was deliberately well in advance of the normal meeting time of the U.N. General Assembly so that it would be in no position to lay down any pre-conditions it might consider essential.²⁸ It then invited the Trusteeship Council to send a mission of observers to witness the referendum. The Council refused to lend a cloak of respectability to this referendum by sending any observers. The French

Government went ahead with its plans for the referendum.

M. Guy Périer de Feral, a member of the French Council of State was appointed to supervise the referendum. The electoral list that was released on 12 October 1956 contained 437,479 electors. The number of potential electors, i.e. persons over 21 years old was put at 575,000 out of a population of 1,084,031.²⁹ The registered voters thus constituted about 75.8 per cent of the potential electorate. The C.U.T. and Juvento which considered that the statute was just a step on the road to independence, but not the final stage, opposed the idea of terminating the territory's trusteeship on the basis of the statute. They submitted that the statute should be operated within the trusteeship system until full autonomy was achieved. They therefore decided to boycott the referendum. This therefore meant that like all the elections since the early 1950s the referendum was a priori not going to disclose the true picture of the sway of political opinion within the territory.

Out of a total of 433,175 voters who were duly registered, 338,811 or some 77.27 per cent voted and 70,755 people abstained.³⁰ 313,532 people or about 71.51 per cent of the registered voters opted for the statute while 22,266 people or 5.7 per cent voted against. Of the 70,755 abstentions, 45,593 came from the south. Again, a regional breakdown showed that 63.47 per cent of the registered electors or 67.94 per cent of those who collected their voting cards in the south voted for the statute. In the north the comparable figures were 79 per cent and 84.5 per cent respectively.

In his analysis of the voting figures the Referendum Administrator warned that the figure of 22,266 that voted for the continuation of trusteeship could not be wholly attributed to the C.U.T. and Juvento supporters; in particular 18,859 votes cast in one district of north Togo — Dapango — were basically an expression of the opposition of three very influential chiefs of the area to their District Representatives in the Territorial Assembly who had urged the electors to vote for the statute. 'That vote has no significance for the Referendum itself'.³¹ He argued further that not all the abstentions could be attributed to the C.U.T. and Juvento supporters. To arrive at a figure which he considered legitimate de Feral engaged in a piece of ingenious calculation. On the basis of abstentions recorded during four previous elections he assumed a figure of 15 per cent regular abstention. This figure was then subtracted from the percentage of abstention in each electoral district in the south, where this exceeded 15 per cent. These percentages were then converted into figures which he presented as those representing the C.U.T. and Juvento abstentions. To this resultant figure of 26,881 was added 3,407 representing the votes cast for the continuation of trusteeship — when the 18,859 Dapango votes were discounted. The total of 30,288 was then presented as the over-all strength of the 'opposition', i.e. the unificationists in the country as opposed to 313,532 adults who favoured the statute.

The French government, that of the 'Autonomous Republic' of Togo, the U.C.P.N. and Progrès all concluded that the referendum had shown an

overwhelming majority of the electorate in favour of the statute and the termination of trusteeship. France accordingly called on the U.N. to terminate the Trusteeship Agreement.³² Rather than do this, the U.N. decided to despatch a Commission to Togo to examine the entire situation in the territory resulting from the practical application of the new statute and the conditions under which the statute was being applied.³³ It also called for the constitution of the territory's Legislative Assembly as soon as possible on the basis of universal adult suffrage.³⁴

The Commission submitted its report on 25 July 1957. It submitted, *inter alia* that the holding of elections to the Legislative Assembly and other representative organs of Togo on the basis of universal adult suffrage would represent the implementation of an important democratic principle embodied in the statute and might contribute towards the creation of a more favourable political atmosphere in which the support of the entire population of Togo would be thrown behind the new political institutions created by the statute. As the drift of discussion at the Trusteeship Council and the Fourth Committee indicated that the majority of the states represented at the U.N. would not agree to the termination of trusteeship on the basis of the statute, the Togo government decided to give in and promised fresh elections to the Legislative Assembly on the basis of universal adult suffrage. More significantly, it agreed to let the U.N. supervise these elections in 1958. This was a concession to the unificationists and their supporters at the U.N. who had all along insisted on the supervision of elections in Togo by a neutral body. It was the fulfilment of this condition that heralded the re-entry of the unificationists into electoral contests in Togo. The U.N. General Assembly elected M. Max Dorsinville of Haiti to the office of U.N. Commissioner for the elections in French Togo.³⁵

The elections were scheduled for 27 April 1958. An Act adopted by the Togo Assembly on 20 February 1958 contained provisions about the composition of the Assembly, the qualifications of candidates and the organisation of the election. It fixed the number of Deputies at 46 and introduced the principle of a uninominal single ballot. It defined those eligible to vote as persons of 21 years and above who had resided in their districts for not less than six months and who were duly registered on the electoral rolls of their districts.

For the first time after 1952 an electoral contest was about to be fought between the C.U.T. and Juvento on one hand and the U.C.P.N. and Progrès on the other. The latter parties and the Togo government had hitherto maintained that the C.U.T. and Juvento which favoured unification and genuine independence had no large following in the territory and that their boycott of elections since 1952 had really been due to their fear of exposing the slimness of their following. Now was the time for the true picture to emerge.

Meanwhile, because of the electoral policy pursued by the Togo officials and the consequent boycott of the electoral process by the unificationists, a large section of the electorate was not enrolled on the voters' list. If the

general elections were to achieve their real objective then something had to be done about this situation. Accordingly, an 'emergency registration' exercise was mounted. In all 79,917 applications for enrolment were received. As many as 76,624 of these came from south Togo, that is mostly from members of the unificationist parties. The total number of applications constituted about 20 per cent of the voters already registered.³⁶ In all 46,102 of the applications were successful. Besides the U.N. Commissioner affirmed that but for lack of time more applicants would have been registered. It was significant that 29,322 or 91 per cent of the total orders refusing registration (32,000) were issued in the final two weeks before the polls. In addition there were instances of administrative hostility and systematic sabotage by subordinate Togo officials, obstruction by some cantonal and village chiefs and the uncooperative attitude of a few magistrates which all frustrated the registration of people who were otherwise qualified.³⁷ When the period of registration closed 490,796 electors had been registered out of a population estimated at 1,111,068. The figure exceeded the voters registered for the 1956 referendum—which was supposed to have been held under the same franchise by 56,621 and constituted 44 per cent of the total population.

The qualifications required of electoral candidates were slightly different from those demanded of electors. The former had to be 23 years old or more, not disqualified from voting, be literate in French, have been actually resident in the territory for at least two years and be either registered on the electoral list or able to show that they should have been so registered before the day of election. In addition, candidates had to pay a deposit of 50,000 francs c.f.a. which was returnable only if they secured at least a tenth of the votes cast.³⁸ There is little doubt that the U.C.P.N./Progrès-dominated government of Togo had intended to make it difficult, if not impossible, for the unificationists to contest as many seats as possible. They disregarded demonstrations that the amount was too high. All the same each of the 46 seats was contested. Altogether 106 candidates contested the elections. Of these, 43 belonged to the C.U.T., 22 to U.C.P.N., 19 to Progrès, two to the dissident branch of Juvento, two to the Mouvement Populaire Togolaise and one to Rassemblement des Jeunes Togolais (R.J.T.). There were 15 independent candidates also.³⁹

The remarkable thing about the general elections was that they were fought on the very issues on which the 1956 referendum had been held. The parties and personalities involved were also the same, (the C.U.T. and Juvento had demonstrated their position by boycotting the referendum). Progrès, U.C.P.N. and their ancillary parties supported the statute and close association with France and called for an immediate termination of trusteeship on the grounds that its continuance was incompatible with the regime established by the statute. On the other hand, the C.U.T. and Juvento campaigned on the platform of complete independence and maintenance of trusteeship till that position was attained. Unification *per se* did not feature prominently in their campaign. In fact the integration of British Togoland

into Ghana had put a different dimension on the modalities of unification. The position of the Mouvement Populaire Togolaise—the other party to contest the elections was slightly similar to that of the C.U.T. and Juvento.

The presence of the U.N. Commissioner and his staff ensured that the election was conducted in an atmosphere different from that of earlier electoral consultations in Togo. Nevertheless some of the administrative ploys adopted since the days of Commissioners Digo and Pechoux were employed. As noted by Dorsinville, the C.U.T. and Juvento did not always enjoy the same facilities as the campaign workers of the pro-government parties and they sometimes encountered a biased attitude on the part of officials or the avowed hostility of chiefs. They were also subject to administrative harassment.⁴⁰ On the whole, however, during the period that the U.N. Commission was in the territory there was sufficient freedom to enable the C.U.T. and Juvento to conduct an extremely vigorous campaign. There were many public meetings which were organised by the parties or individual candidates and the majority of these meetings were peaceful and orderly. Again, although the Juvento newspaper *Denyigba* was banned in February⁴¹ before the arrival of the U.N. Commissioner, generally there was freedom of the press and journalists of all political persuasions were able to express themselves freely on all electoral matters during the period of the electoral campaign.

Despite the presence of U.N. observers both the C.U.T. and Juvento were critical of the way in which the pre-electoral proceedings had been conducted. On the eve of the polls the C.U.T. issued a statement on its position regarding the manner in which the elections were being organised. It enumerated complaints which it had made concerning the slowness of the electoral registration procedure, obstacles placed in the way of holding public meetings, the interpretation placed by the government on the regulations concerning the appointment of agents at polling stations, the encroachment on civil liberties resulting from the fact that on occasions cantonal and village chiefs claimed the right to keep out of their cantons the representatives of 'opposition' i.e. C.U.T. and Juvento candidates on the committees that distributed the voters' cards, the exorbitant deposit required of candidates and finally the fact that no amnesty had been granted to persons disenfranchised following politically inspired convictions. The statement concluded by making reservations with regard to the results of elections to be held under such circumstances. The National Committee of Juvento also adopted a resolution on 26 April drawing the attention of the U.N. Commissioner to his terms of reference as deriving from the U.N. General Assembly resolution, the debate at the Fourth Committee and statements made by Dorsinville himself and contrasting these with the restrictive interpretation put on them by the Togo government. It protested against the measures taken by the latter in connection with electoral registration, printing and distribution of voters' cards and the retention of disabilities imposed on militant nationalist leaders. It regretted that U.N. supervision had not had the desired effects because of the conditions created and maintained by the Togo government

with the active complicity of the Administering Authority. In conclusion the Juvento motion also made reservations with regard to the election results and the interpretations to be based on them.⁴² *Le Monde* which like all French commentators was sure that the C.U.T. and Juvento would lose the elections considered that by issuing these statements, these two parties were 'preparing an explanation for their expected defeat.'⁴³

On the election day itself voting proceeded satisfactorily. Nevertheless balloting was marred by a few incidents of intimidation to prevent people of certain known sympathies from voting, chiefs putting pressure on people to vote in a particular way and chiefs and their agents (particularly in the north) stationing themselves at polling booths to observe how people voted.⁴⁴ The results of the elections constituted a massive rebuttal of the claims hitherto made by the Administering Authority about the sway of popular feeling within the territory.

As has been indicated earlier, the Administering Authority and its protégés the U.C.P.N. and Progrès had always denied that the unificationists had any large following in the territory. As late as November 1957 the French representative on the Fourth Committee of the U.N. General Assembly, the President of the Togo Legislative Assembly and the Togo Minister of Finance had all claimed confidently before the Fourth Committee that Olympio's party represented only a small minority.⁴⁵ This misrepresentation had been made so often that many people had come to believe it. Prof. Luchaire of the Faculté de Droit de Nancy for example had forecast confidently that Progrès and U.C.P.N. would be returned to office.⁴⁶ *Le Monde's* political correspondent was equally confident.⁴⁷ A correspondent of *West Africa* also reported on the eve of the polls that it was generally accepted that the 'opposition' would obtain 15 seats but that Progrès and U.C.P.N. would still have a majority.⁴⁸ There is little doubt that all these forecasts has been inspired by the claims made by the Administering Authority as well as the unjustified interpretations put on the 1956 referendum.

The results of the general elections were very different from these sanguine forecasts. The C.U.T. and Juvento won 29 out of the 46 seats, with 19 of these in the south. The U.C.P.N. won 10 and Progrès a paltry three and independent candidates four. The results were disputed in six constituencies but all six appeals were rejected by the tribunal that investigated them. Out of a total of 490,606 registered voters 317,500 voted; of the votes cast 311,019 were valid. The C.U.T. and Juvento candidates polled 190,098 votes while U.C.P.N. polled 56,281 and Progrès 40,489. This meant that the unificationist parties secured 61.1 per cent of the valid votes cast while the combined U.C.P.N. and Progrès votes amounted to 31.1 per cent and that of independents 7.3 per cent. When these figures are broken down regionally we find that of the 23 seats contested in the south the unificationists won 19 with a total of 122,619 (i.e. 72.47 per cent) out of the 170,190 valid votes cast. Progrès won three seats and 22.6 per cent of the votes. In the north the C.U.T. and Juvento won ten of the 23 seats with 67,479 (i.e. 47.9 per cent)

of the 140,829 valid votes while the U.C.P.N. also won ten seats but with 56,281 (i.e. 39.9 per cent) of the valid votes. The three successful independent candidates polled 12.1 per cent of the votes.⁴⁹

A fairly high proportion of the registered voters did not vote. Out of 490,606 registered voters as many as 173,296 i.e. 35.3 per cent abstained.⁵⁰ This number was almost evenly split between the north and south; with 88,253 in the south and 85,043 in the north. As many as 109,080 voters cards (22 per cent of the total) were not collected by their owners. It is clear, however, that not all these instances of non-collection of voting cards can be attributed to apathy or deliberate abstention. Dorsinville's report indicated that a great many of the people registered under the emergency arrangements had been unable to vote either because they had not been notified about the outcome of their applications or because they had not received their cards or orders for registration. It is significant to point out that 70 per cent i.e. 32,371 of these orders were issued in the final two weeks and 40 per cent i.e. 18,172 in the very last week before the polls. In the southern districts of Lomé, Anecho, Tsevie and Palime a large number of people could not vote because they had not obtained either a voters' card or magistrate's order in lieu thereof in time. In the Lomé municipality for example, only 148 out of 4,000 undistributed cards and 131 orders had been collected by their owners by 4.30 p.m., barely half an hour before the polls ended.⁵¹

The election results were remarkable for a variety of reasons. In the first place the elections had been designed to validate or invalidate the results of the referendum and thereby ascertain the will of the people of Togo on the territory's political future. If as the Administering Authority had claimed 'the overwhelming majority of the people wholly and fully endorsed the scheme for the immediate termination of the territory's status and for inclusion in the French Union they would be expected, barring any new and unsettling developments to endorse it again during the subsequent U.N. supervised elections'.⁵² The election results, on the contrary, contrasted sharply with those of the referendum. They also put an end to the Progrès/U.C.P.N. domination of the political life of the territory which they had achieved with the contrivance and connivance of the Administering Authority. They also called to question what had been represented as the will of the majority of the Togo population during the period starting from 1952 when the unificationists withdrew from elections to the territory's representative institutions. In the words of the Czechoslovak representative at the U.N. General Assembly's Fourth Committee 'the outcome of the elections showed that when the inhabitants of Trust Territories were given the opportunity to express their views the result was something quite different from what the Authorities had represented as public opinion'.⁵³ As we have seen the French Authorities and the Togo government had employed the referendum results to claim that 313,532 electors or 71.57 per cent of valid voters in 1956 supported the platform of the U.C.P.M. and Progrès and that the strength of the C.U.T. and Juvento following was a mere 30,288. The latter's complaint about

collusion between the Administration and Progrès and U.C.P.N. to misrepresent the true nature of political alignments within the territory had been discounted.

But the first time that an independent body supervised elections within the territory the unificationists were vindicated and it became clear that their claim to command a large following had been well founded. If the 1956 referendum figures genuinely reflected the true situation, then it became impossible to explain why out of the 313,532 persons who had voted for the statute and immediate termination of trusteeship as many as 216,752, that is 69.1 per cent should change their minds eighteen months later and vote for the C.U.T. and Juvento which after all wanted maintenance of trusteeship for some time until genuine independence was achieved. Again, a comparison of the size of the registered voters in 1956 and 1958 tends to substantiate the claim that until 1958 thousands of people in the south had been deliberately kept off the voters' list. In 1956 227,157 voters were registered in the north; the 1958 figure was 229,284 which represented a reasonable and understandable increase. It is a different matter altogether when one compares the relevant figures for south Togo. In 1956, 211,018 voters were registered but in 1958, after the last minute registration undertaken during the presence of the U.N. Commissioner the figure jumped to 261,322. The difference of just over 50,000 was nearly made up by the 46,000 voters who were registered under the emergency registration procedure.

Basing his interpretation of the 1958 elections results on Georges Chaffard of *Le Monde* who was really explaining away the failure of his confident forecasts rather than accounting for the C.U.T. and Juvento victory, and also on M. Dei-Anang's rather indifferent history (*Ghana Resurgent* p. 68) E.O. Saffu has painted a misleading picture of Ghana's responsibility for the 1958 Togo election results. He fails to appreciate that an artificial situation had hitherto existed in the country and that it was U.N. supervision that enabled the true picture of the electoral strength of the parties to emerge. He quotes Chaffard's claim that the posture adopted at the Accra Conference of Independent African states on the eve of the elections as well as 'the possibility of a merger [with Ghana] was used to strengthen the C.U.T. and Juvento platform'; that as a riposte to the Progrès and U.C.P.N. argument that Togo was too small to be able to survive without France, 'merger with Ghana was produced to do the trick'.⁵⁴ Such a claim only betrays an unfamiliarity with all the facts of the situation. In the first place the C.U.T. and the main body of Juvento did not talk of merger with Ghana, although it is fair to say that at least the dissident branch of Juvento which was being directed from Accra by Messan Aithson at this time favoured such a merger. Secondly the most superficial awareness of the reaction of the C.U.T. and Juvento in general and S. Olympio in particular to the integration of British Togoland with Ghana and the possible impact of that event on Ewe unification would easily convince any student of the subject that there could be no question of Olympio talking about 'merger' per se with Ghana in 1958.

It is necessary to reiterate here that Olympio and all the Ewe unificationists in Togo had opposed the integration of British Togoland with Ghana because they feared that that event would encourage and also provide France with the pretext to integrate Togo with the French Union or the other French West African territories— thereby ending all hopes of Ewe unification. They therefore preferred a unification of the two territories of Togoland and Togo before the unified territory would in turn join Ghana. After the integration of Togoland with Ghana in March 1957 the Ewe unificationists argued that the only possible satisfactory solution to the Ewe problem would be to enable Togo to become fully independent so that the two sovereign states of Ghana and Togo could then decide what relationship could exist between the Ewe people in both territories.⁵⁵ It is therefore a misrepresentation of the facts to imply that the C.U.T. and Juvento campaigned in 1958 on a platform of 'merger with Ghana'.

In any case it is clear from the report of the U.N. Commissioner for the elections and *West Africa* that unification did not feature more prominently in the 1958 elections than in previous ones. There is no doubt that the C.U.T. and Juvento had always favoured some kind of arrangement that would bring all the Ewe together. But the mistake of the Saffu thesis is that it implies that this became significant only in 1958. The support of these parties had been built all along on the platform of unification and independence. Again, whatever demonstration effect the militancy of the Gold Coast (later Ghana) and the C.P.P. must have had on developments in Togo had been there all along and did not become manifest only in April 1958. It should be realised that the referendum of Togo had been held in October 1956 when the Gold Coast was already poised on the threshold of independence; when the British Government had already accepted a motion for independence adopted by the Gold Coast Legislative Assembly on 23 August. One would expect that that situation should have exerted the same kind of impact in late 1956 on developments in Togo as the Saffu thesis would ascribe to it in 1958. And yet the Togo referendum conducted under the old dispensation purported to demonstrate an overwhelming support for the U.C.P.N. and Progrès— the supporters of membership of the French Union and fake independence and the opponents of unification and genuine independence.

It should therefore be clear that one cannot ascribe any real responsibility for the outcome of the 1958 Togo elections to the C.P.P. or Ghana. Nor can one imply a change of attitude on the part of the electorate. The new quotient introduced in 1958 was U.N. supervision of the elections which put an end to the old electoral dispensation and thereby enabled the true electoral strength of the various parties to emerge for the first time. It was this, more than anything else, that enabled the unificationists to win hands down. Thus, the explanation for the outcome of the elections is at once more fundamental and more simple than the 'reason' advanced by apologists of French colonial practice in Togo on the one hand, and the rather far-fetched interpretations advanced by some political scientists.

NOTES

- 1 In the literature on the subject, French and German accounts employ 'Togo' and the English 'Togoland' to designate the same territory or portions of it. In this article 'Togo' refers to the German Protectorate 1884—1914. French 'Togo' and, British 'Togoland' refer to the areas into which the German Protectorate was split.
- 2 The Ewe had earlier been split between German Togo and British Gold Coast occupying the southern half of the former and the south eastern quarter of the latter.
- 3 The C.U.T. actually grew out of an earlier apolitical organisation that had been created by the French Authorities to fight against German claims for the restitution of their former Protectorate of Togo.
- 4 For further details and explanation see D.E.K. Amenumey. 'A Political History of the Ewe Unification Problem' Ph.D. Thesis. Manchester 1972, pp.25—26, 110-119, 141—157.
- 5 Not all of these parties had been specifically founded in reaction to the demand for Ewe unification. Certainly the *raison d'être* of the C.P.P. and N.P.P. was essentially the politics of the Gold Coast, for details see 'Ewe Unification Problem', pp. 160-94
- 6 See for example: United Nations Trusteeship Council Official Records (U.N.T.C.O.R.) Doc T/58; 17 November 1947.
- 7 Togo sent a Deputy to the French National Assembly, two Senators to the Council of the Republic and one Counsellor to the French Senate.
- 8 Thomas Hodgkin and Ruth Schachter, *French Speaking West Africa in Transition*. International Conciliation No. 528. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace May 1960. pp.388—89.
- 9 The Assembly had 30 members of whom six were elected by French citizens and 24 by the *administrés français* who were constituted by virtually all the indigenous population. In the June 1947 elections the C.U.T. won all 15 seats for South Togo. These members were elected by the second category of electors—the *administrés français*. Of the other 15, six were elected by the first category of electors—the citizens and the other nine by the northern section.
- 10 For Pechoux's record against the Rassemblement Democratique Africain, see R.S. Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French Speaking West Africa* (Oxford, 1964) pp. 188—202.
- 11 Praetor Africanus, 'Vers une Federation Franco-africaine. Naissance de la Republique Togolaise' *L'Afrique et l'Asie*. No. 36. Vol. II 1956 pp. 18—19.
- 12 The same kind of repression was organised against the R.D.A. in the Ivory Coast between 1949 and 1951. It abated somewhat only after Houphouët-Boigny 'decided that the cost of the struggle was out of proportion to any practical results it might achieve; that the time had come to modify the political climate; to substitute a policy of "realism" and collaboration with the French administration for the former policy of "systematic opposition".' Hodgkin and Schachter *French Speaking West Africa in Transition* pp. 412—413.
- 13 See *New York Times*. 8 April 1960.
- 14 See United Nations General Assembly Official Records (U.N.G.A.O.R.) Fourth Committee, 9th Session, 453rd Meeting, 2 December 1954; Anani Santos: *New York Times*: 5 September 1952; and U.N.T.C.O.R. 14th Session Doc T/Pet 7/352 Cable from President of Juvento 13 June 1953.
- 15 See *Combat*, 24 September 1955 for a classic example of this strategy; for a rather unconvincing defence of this transparent ploy, see U.N.T.C.O.R., 13th Session 500th Meeting 19 Feb. 1954. Evidence of Apedo-Amah.
- 16 U.N.G.A.O.R. Fourth Committee, 8th session 366th Meeting, 13 Nov. 1953 Evidence of S.E. Olympio.
- 17 *West Africa*. 30 August 1952.
- 18 U.N.T.C.O.R. DOC T/1392 para 356. Report of the U.N. Commission for the supervision of the Elections in Togoland under French Administration. By Max H. Dorsinville, 23 October 1958.
- 19 *Idem*, para. 36.
- 20 U.N.G.A.O.R. Fourth Committee 9th session, 453rd meeting, 2 December 1954, Evidence of S. Aquareburu, founding member.

- 21 Edward Mortimer, *France and the Africans 1944-1960* (London, 1969.) p. 166.
- 22 U.N.T.C.O.R. Doc T/1105: U.N. Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in West Africa, 1952. Special Report on the Ewe and Togoland Unification Problem, 1952 para. 181. In May 1952 the two Togo seats in the French Senate were filled by Progrès. For a discussion of the issue of whether the progressive liberalisation of the franchise had anything to do with the electoral defeat of the nationalists; see Amenumey, 'Ewe Unification Problem' pp. 57, 128.
- 23 See *West Africa* 6 September 1952, p. 821; also K. Robinson. *Political Development in French West Africa*. Oxford University Institute of Colonial studies, 1955 p.p 163-164.
- 24 These reforms, initiated by Prime Minister Mendes-France, were later to be extended to French West Africa. As always Togo blazed the trail that was followed by the rest of black French West Africa.
- 25 Act No. 56 — 619.
- 26 Decree No. 56 — 847, 24 August 1956.
- 27 See Amenumey, 'Ewe Unification Problem', pp. 295-331 for a discussion of the genuineness or otherwise of this claim.
- 28 Originally a plebiscite had been suggested for Togo along the same lines as that of British Togoland: a U.N. Mission that visited the territory in 1955 had suggested that only a freely conducted consultation of the wishes of the people of French Togo would disclose the real strength of the two views represented by the C.U.T. and Juvento on the one hand and the U.C.P.N. and Progrès on the other. It suggested further that this consultation should be conducted under the same conditions as in British Togoland and should decide whether the people wanted self-government within the French Union and on what conditions, or whether they desired the termination of their connection with the French Union and independence. On the urging of the French Government the U.N. approved the idea that the British Togoland plebiscite should proceed first, taking due notice of the French Government's confirmation that in due course it would consult the people of French Togo.
- 29 The Act of 23 June 1956 had introduced universal adult suffrage.
- 30 U.N.T.C.O.R. Doc T/1292; Report of the Referendum Administrator in Togoland on the Popular consultation of 28 October 1956. Lomé 9 November 1956 Cap. VIII.
- 31 *Ibid.* Cap. IX
- 32 U.N.T.C.O.R. Doc T/1290 'The Future of Togoland under French Administration.'
- 33 U.N.G.A.O.R. General Assembly Resolution 1046 (XI).
- 34 With the inauguration of the 'Autonomous Republic' on 30 August 1956, the Territorial Assembly changed its name to Legislative Assembly on 4 September. Though the Act of 23 June had introduced universal adult suffrage throughout the French overseas and trust territories, Article 40 postponed its application to the Togo Assembly. This article provided that the Assembly which had been elected on a restricted suffrage in 1955 was to continue in office until the expiry of its normal term in 1960.
- 35 U.N.G.A.O.R. General Assembly Resolution 1182 (XII) 29 Nov. 1957.
- 36 U.N.T.C.O.R. Doc T/1392. Report of the U.N. Commissioner for the supervision of the Elections in Togoland under French Administration by Max H. Dorsinville 23 October 1958, para. 133—134.
- 37 *Ibid.*, para. 141—142.
- 38 In the Federation of French West Africa and in Togo itself the deposit required hitherto had been 5,000 francs c.f.a. The deposit demanded for elections to the French National Assembly was 20,000 metropolitan francs or 10,000 francs c.f.a the comparable figure for the Ghana Parliament was £50 or the equivalent of 31,000 francs c.f.a. The per capita annual income of Togo at this time was 6,000 francs c.f.a.
- 39 Dorsinville gives the figures—Progrès 20, U.C.P.N. 23. It appears that two independent candidates had actually been put up by these two parties. See Doc T/1392 supra, para. 263. In all 19 candidates forfeited their deposit.
- 40 For details see *Ibid.* para. 355, 356, 368—71.
- 41 Law No. 28/P.M. INT of 7 February 1958.
- 42 Doc T/1392 paras. 460, 464.
- 43 *Le Monde*, 26 April 1958.
- 44 Doc T/1392 paras 510—516, 526—259.

- 45 U.N.G.A.O.R. 12th session, Fourth Committee. 694th Meeting 7 November 1957, 699th Meeting 11 November 1957.
- 46 F. Luchaire. 'Le Togo Francais. De la tutelle a l'autonomie' *Revue juridique et politique de l'Union francais*. xx, 1957, p. 582.
- 47 *Le Monde*, March and April 1958 *passim* particularly 26 April 1958.
- 48 *West Africa*. 3 May 1958 p. 413 N.B. This article was actually written before the polls though because of the peculiar dating procedure employed by the journal, it was published in the week ending on 3 May.
- 49 Doc T/1392 op cit. Table III. Results of the Elections of 27 April 1958, upon completion of the work of the Election Returns Board; 3 May 1958.
- 50 This incidentally further illustrates the absurdity of assuming a regular 15 per cent abstention. See p. 27 above.
- 51 Doc T/1392 para. 504.
- 52 I.E. Aligwekwe 'The Ewe and Togoland Problem: a case study in the Paradoxes and Problems of Political Transition in West Africa' Ph.D. Dissertation, 1960, Ohio State University p.446.
- 53 U.N.G.A.O.R. 13th Session, Fourth Committee 787th Meeting 6 Nov. 1958.
- 54 E.O. Saffu: 'Nkrumah and the Togoland Question' *Economic Bulletin of Ghana* xii, 1968 p. 38, also M. Dei-Anang *Ghana Resurgent* (Accra, 1964) p. 248. *Le Monde*, 30 April 1958, Article by Georges Chaffard.
- 55 See U.N.G.A.O.R. Fourth Committee, 12th session, 696th Meeting 8 Nov. 1957.