RGASPI, fond 543/7/74 (Letters and annual reports from African trade unions, eastern- and western- Africa 1927-32)

Letters from R. Benjamin Wuta-Ofei

Note:

There is little published bibliographical data available about R. Benjamin Wuta-Ofei.¹ He served for a long time as the editor of the Gold Coast Spectator. This newspaper was owned by Alfred J. Ocansey, who founded the paper in 1927. Its first editor was R.W. Dupigny, followed by Wuta-Ofei. At first published on an irregular basis, it emerged as a very powerful organ during the 1930s.² Wuta-Ofei seems to have made his first contacts with George Padmore during the 1930s as the RGASPI-letters indicate. Some years later, in 1936, he is mentioned to be an executive member of the Gold Coast section of the West African Youth League (W.A.Y.L.).³

Holger Weiss, 6.9.2005

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¹ Result of inquiries made in March 2005 at the History department and Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon.
From Benjamin Wuta-Ofei
Le Ehaa, Salem Road
Christiansborg, Accra
7 October 1931

Gentlemen,
As you will find by the attached card, I am Editor of the Gold Coast Spectator. For sometime past, I have been endeavouring to get into personal touch with you, to lay a business proposition before you, but owing to the fact that I was enaging [?] to a conference with certain influential people before writing to you, I could not do this earlier.

I must come straight to the point. A few friends have approached me to write to you to enquire whether you can get them a complete printing press for a fairly large size newspaper, to be published solely in the interest of the Negro Workers. No doubt you are aware of the fact that any propaganda which will be effective in raising the living standard of the workers, in Africa, must be carried out in the country. Information will then be first hand, + local conditions can be tackled on the spot with great conviction. Please consider this carefully.

What arrangements you can effect there for us, to get the complete equipment, including one lino-type, or payment of a deposit, the balance to be paid by monthly instalments. Secondhand machines, I am sure, will suit, + will last provided it is carefully operated.

In reply, kindly ask the firm to send me a catalogue, to the under-given address.

I hope to hear from you soon,
Yours fraternally
(signed)

Note address carefully – Do not send letters to the home address
Box 8(?)17
Accra

NB Important
All letters must be securely sealed, + addresses must not include my title Editor.
From Benjamin Wuta-Ofei to Padmore (Hamburg)

I thank you for your letter of November 27, the important parts of which were published in our issue of December 24. I presume that you always get a copy of the “Spectator”. If not let me know + I shall instruct that your name to be placed on our mailing list. I have not yet received the catalogues but expect they shall shortly arrive.

You suggest that you may place all the affairs of the Committee in my hands. Well, you shall have no cause for complaint or regret. Only, all letters must be securely sealed + addressed to my name, co Box 217, Accra.

I know that sometimes ago you had delegates from this colony. In fact on their return, one of them came to see me in my office, +something (I cannot clearly recollect what) was published for them. But they are persons without “guts” for the simple reason that they are not educated. In this fight, “push” alone is not sufficient, you must know something of the whiteman + his ways so as to beat him at his own game. This is only possible through education. Am I wrong?

The first step must be the press which will (a) get the masses together + (b) make their voices heard by the world. At the start it will be impossible to get capital out here owing to the strictler [?] + often swindles hence my appeal to you. Besides, the press must be independent so that it might be free in its criticism. Local capital, which must be subscribed [?] by several persons, will only be a hinderance. Naturally there will be many weak-kneed among the management, +the result will be constant blue-pencilling of perfe[…] safe although very strong + candid criticism. This is my trouble + worry at this moment.

I remember that sometimes ago, I approached Mr Garvey with this suggestion. He took it up warmly, but suddenly no replies came to my letter.

I am sure you will appreciate the urgent nature of the case + write to me early.

I am yours sincerely

(signed)
Head:
The Gold Coast Spectator, Weekly Newspaper,  
P.O. Box 217,  
11, Pagan Road,  
Accra, Gold Coast

The managing Editor,  
“The Negro Worker,”  
The International Trade Union Committee,  
of Negro Workers,  
8, Rothesoodstr.,  
HAMBURG, Germany.

Dear Sir,  
At page 14 of “The Negro Worker” Nos. 1-2, January – February, 1932, Voluma 2, appears a pathetic picture of what is described as “A sample of American ‘democracy’, “ [sic] depicting one of the worst forms of lynching in the United States, the victim, a young man, being hanged with a rope on a branch of a tree in his shirt and trousers and boots handcuffed.

The picture tells a story of human misery and woe which, we believe, should be brought to the notice of Africans in this country, by reproducing it in our local journal.

We shall be much obliged, therefore, if you will, be good enough to let us have a stereotyped block of the picture, together with a short account of the incident. Perhaps you will also arrange to forward to us from time to blocks [sic] relating to matters of such wide interest.

We trust you receive copies of our paper regularly,

Yours truly,

(signed with initials + stamp: The Gold Coast Spectator)

[comment in handwriting on left bottom: We cannot use matrix. Only printing blocks. Signed with initials]
From Benjamin Wuta-Ofei to Padmore (Hamburg)

Dear Mr. Padmore,

It seems so very very strange that I scarcely hear from you these days. Although your letter of March 23 promised that you would soon write to me. Have you not yet heard from your friends in Russia or England concerning the press?

I am in communication with Messrs F.W. Woodruff et Co of 77-78 Turnmill St., London, concerning printing machinery. They sell second-hand machines. The difficulty is whether they would agree to our terms: (a) take a little deposit + the balance to be paid by monthly instalments, or send us a draft for 240 [?] days; (that is, full payment to the Bank 6 months after delivery. The press, as I have on many occasions explained to you, will be worked solely in the interest of the labouring classes (or class in this country). I hope, therefore, that you will do your best over there to further the arrangement on your side in my behalf. What about asking your friends over in London to take this matter up. Possibly they can fix up something better.

Do you get our paper regularly?

I hope to hear from you soon,
Yours sincerely

(signed)