

■ Gold Coast Africans give Louis Armstrong a royal welcome

# A Holiday Honored "Satchmo" Armstrong

By George Padmore

**A**FTER a triumphant tour through the British Isles, Louis Armstrong, accompanied by a five piece jazz band, flew from London to the Gold Coast, which celebrated its independence after general elections in July, on a goodwill mission.

The party left London airport on Tuesday afternoon, May 22, and arrived at Accra airport on Wednesday, 23, where a crowd of over 10,000 African jazz fans assembled to give Satchmo and his wife a real royal welcome.

The tour was sponsored by the Columbia Broadcasting System which recently made a film of the Gold Coast for showing on the company's television network. Another CBS film unit also accompanied Satchmo and

his jazz men to make a recording of Louis' first visit to Africa.

Before embarking on the plane, Satchmo told press men that his visit to Africa marked a big event in his checkered career. "The west coast of Africa," he declared "is the spiritual home of many American Negroes and the birthplace of rhythms which became jazz." "He was therefore most delighted to meet the people from whom his ancestors were taken away during the slave trade period."

Satchmo and his melody boys were seen off by Mr. Gerald Plange, public relations director at the Gold Coast Commissioner Office in London and many British jazz fans.

As the B.O.A.C. plane taxied into the Accra airport, over 10,000 Africans fans waved and shouted "No nue, na nue, akwba" meaning "Here is the man, here is the man, welcome."

Describing the scene, the Accra correspondent of the Manchester

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GEORGE PADMORE, *the author of many books on British policy in Africa, has recently published Pan-Africanism or Communism?*

Guardian cabled that "people had been taking up vantage points at the airport since six o'clock, among them chiefs from the North who had traveled hundreds of miles for the occasion. The uniforms of senior officials and police, with the multi-colored umbrellas of the chiefs, added to the brightness of the scene.

"Never before," says the reporter, "have I heard anything to equal the roar of cheering that greeted the appearance of the American jazz king. For, to all music lovers in the Gold Coast, Louis' visit is a great occasion, the memory of which will always remain in their minds."

#### BANDS SERENADE LOUIS

The report goes on to say: "Immediately Satchmo and his party, in dark tuxedo suits, alighted from the plane, instruments in hand, fifteen dance bands drawn from all parts of the country played the specially composed high life tune entitled 'All for you, Louis.' The Gold Coast bandmen were rewarded with a special wave and a brilliant smile.

The party was welcomed on behalf of the Government by Mr. Ako Adjei, 35-year-old minister of the interior who was educated in America at the Colored Lincoln University where the Prime Minister Nkrumah also studied. The Minister of the Interior was accompanied by Mr. D. A. Chapman, secretary of the All-African Cabinet. Mr. Chapman was the first African to be attached to the staff of the United Nations Trusteeship Division, under Dr. Ralph Bunche, before taking up his present position under Dr. Nkrumah's government.

Later, a mile long procession of cars, lorries and cyclists escorted Louis and his wife, who were standing in an open car, to town. Along the five mile route to the town, workers lined the streets and cheered heartily while others waved their hats. Then Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong lunched with the Premier, Dr. Nkrumah.

This was the first time that any of the party had stood on African soil, but all of them looked fit in spite of the scorching heat. As Louis remarked at the airport, "I can stand it. After all, my ancestors came from here and I still have African blood in me."

Louis' three day visit was crowded with events. The biggest event, organized by the Columbia Broadcasting Service in Accra, was a free open air concert in the capital's biggest park, attended by half a million fans.

To afford workers the opportunity of seeing and hearing Satchmo, the Prime Minister declared Empire Day, which Dr. Nkrumah has abolished in the Gold Coast since coming to power in 1951, a half holiday. All government departments and private firms were closed.

After completing his concert tour, Louis and his jazz men flew back to the United States. Despite centuries of separation, the Gold Coast Africans took the Grand Ole Man of Jazz to their hearts as a goodwill ambassador from the 16 million Afro-Americans in the United States who can no longer say: "Peoples of African descent in the Western Hemisphere have no links with their ancestral motherland." Satchmo's visit has renewed these links.