Introduction

The independence of Ghana in 1956 was like a watershed in the struggle for independence from colonial hegemony in many African states. Of course there were some countries in Africa that were independent before Ghana. Liberia, with little or no colonial experience became independent in 1847 long before the scramble for Africa even began. Except the short-lived Italian colonial adventure, Ethiopia was never really colonized. Egypt with a special arrangement between its then monarchs and Britain really became completely independent in 1952 with the coming of Gamel Abdul Nasser to power.

Nevertheless when last year Ghana turned fifty as an independent nation, some writings started propping up in review of Africa’s fifty years of independence. Time Magazine carried a headline on Ghana. The German Magazine Der Spiegel, also came out with a special issue of highly informative historical reminiscence of the whole continent. The versatile historian Guy Arnold published a one volume modern history of Africa in more than one thousand pages. But one of the most interesting of such writings is Martin Meredith’s book, The Fate of Africa: From the Hope of Freedom to the Heart of Despair: A History of Fifty Years of Independence. The author, combining a host of expertise as a journalist, biographer and conventional historian is well equipped to assume the monumental task of bringing the whole of the African continent into a single searchlight of a book of well over seven hundred pages. But the previous record of his engagement with Africa, mostly as a journalist, gives him additional advantageous standpoint to perform this task. Meredith has to his credit at least seven books on Africa ranging from The First Dance of Freedom: Black Africa in the Post War Era (1984) and In the Name of Apartheid (1988), to Nelson Mandela (1997); Coming to Terms: South African Search for Truth (1999); Our Votes, Our Guns: Robert Mugabe and the Tragedy of Zimbabwe (2002).

One with a sense of history cannot but observe the coincidence of the titles and dates of publication with major events that appear to prompt the