

**“Passive Revolution” and the Transfer of Power
in India and the Gold Coast**

by

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ABSTRACT

The Gramscian concept of “passive revolution” describes a situation in which the masses are politically mobilized to further the interests of social elites. Particularly during the process of transferring power in India (1945-1947) and the Gold Coast (1951-1957) this type of passive revolution was apparent. Both the Indian National Congress and the Gold Coast Convention People’s Party were mass nationalist movements that mobilized the populace and claimed to represent a coalition of class interests. However, in practice both parties primarily operated in the interests of their middle-class leaders, who sought to keep the radicalism of popular uprisings in check and ensure an orderly transfer of power. British officials and the institutions of the colonial state itself also tended to encourage moderation from the nationalist leaders and greatly limited the possibilities for radical social and economic change. Taken together, these factors produced “passive revolutions” in India and the Gold Coast.

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PREFACE:

A REVOLUTIONARY MOMENT

During the middle decades of the 20th century, power was handed over by the old European colonial regimes to newly independent states in Asia and Africa. To many observers the promises and possibilities emerging out of these events – whether through the initiative of the Non-Aligned Movement, attempts at African Unity, or the new leaders' pledges to end poverty and modernize societies and economies – seemed to indicate a revolutionary change and hope for the future. At the Bandung Conference in 1955 President Ahmed Sukarno of Indonesia announced:

Yes, there has indeed been a “Sturm über Asien” – and over Africa too. The last few years have seen enormous changes. Nations, States, have awoken from a sleep of centuries. The passive peoples have gone, the outward tranquillity has made place for struggle and activity. Irresistible forces have swept the two continents. The mental, spiritual and political fate of the whole world has been changed, and the process is still not complete... Hurricanes of national awakening and reawakening have swept over the land, shaking it, changing it, changing it for the better.¹

The attainment of independence in India and Ghana (formerly the Gold Coast) was no exception.² In both these countries popular forces had been mobilized, at least for a

¹ President Sukarno's Opening Speech at the Bandung Conference, April 28, 1955. See George McTurnam Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference: Bandung, Indonesia, April 1955*, (Port Washington, N.Y., 1956), 42.

² Numerous commentators have praised the “revolutions” in these countries. See particularly C.L.R. James' enthusiastic account of Nkrumah and his party: *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution*, (Westport, Conn.: Lawrence Hill and Company, 1977). The prominent black American leader and communist W.E.B. DuBois also praised Nkrumah's "Ghana revolution": see W.E.B. DuBois, *The Autobiography of W.E.B. DuBois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century* (New York, NY: International Publishers Co. Inc., 1968), 400. Other authors have similarly described anti-colonial movements as revolutions: Ebenezer Babatope, *The Ghana Revolution: From Nkrumah to Jerry Rawlings*, (Michigan State University Press, 1982); K. Madhu Panikkar, *Revolution in Africa*, (London: Asia Publishing House, 1961).

time, to agitate against the colonial regime. The climax of these struggles came with the actual transfer of power, in August 1947 for India and March 1957 for Ghana.

The changes associated with independence in India and the Gold Coast were hailed as revolutionary alterations that would mark an important break from the colonial system of economy, politics, society and culture.³ In his speech read on the eve of independence, Jawarharlal Nehru declared that the future for India “is not one of resting but of incessant striving so that we may fulfill the pledges we have so often taken and the one we shall take today. The service of India means the service of millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity.” Nehru’s speech ended with a call “to build the noble mansion of free India where all her children may dwell.”⁴ Kwame Nkrumah, leader of the Gold Coast nationalist movement, declared in the days before the transfer of power that “Independence is, however, only a milestone on our march to progress. Independence by itself would be useless if it did not lead to great material and cultural advances by our people. In pressing on with these advances we shall be doing more than merely benefiting Ghana. If we in Ghana can work out the solutions to the problems which beset the tropics, we shall be making a contribution to Africa and to the world as a whole.”⁵

Five decades later it is clear that many of the promises of these nationalists were not fulfilled.⁶ India’s and Ghana’s histories since independence have featured a continuation of poverty and inequality, difficulties in establishing or controlling modernized national economies, intermittent military rule in Ghana and the

³ Certainly the leaders were willing to speak of their movements and achievements in terms of “revolutions.” In 1965 Nkrumah published the volume *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization and Development with Particular Reference to the African Revolution*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1956). The All India Congress Committee on behalf of the Congress Centenary Celebrations Committee published Jawarharlal Nehru, *India’s Independence and Social Revolution: Selected Speeches, 1929-1954*, (New Delhi: Vicas, 1984), and Nehru himself published *Towards a New Revolution*, (New Delhi: Indian National Congress, 1956).

⁴ “Tryst with Destiny” in Jawarharlal Nehru, *India’s Freedom*, (London: Unwin Books, 1962), 94-95.

⁵ Kwame Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom: A Statement of African Ideology*, (London: Heinemann, 1961), 109.

⁶ Michael Crowder captured the academic disillusion over the performance of independent nations in his article: “Whose Dream was It Anyway? Twenty-Five Years of African Independence,” *African Affairs* 86 (January 1987): 7-24.

Emergency rule 1975-1977 and the recent chauvinist Hindutva regime in India. Although one will not find the causes of these problems solely within the transfer of power, it is useful to return to this moment and understand it in its multiple possibilities, contradictions, and disappointments.

To guide my discussion, I will be drawing on a collection of concepts developed by the Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci. In particular, I believe there is much to be gained by borrowing from his concept of “passive revolution” – a “‘revolution’ without a ‘revolution’”⁷ – in order to understand the events in India and the Gold Coast. Gramsci speculated that the concept of passive revolution could be used to interpret “every epoch characterized by complex historical upheavals.”⁸ His framework is useful to this discussion because, perhaps more than any other theorist, he provided a method for understanding political maneuvers and strategies during times of transition. Moreover, he provided criteria for comprehending why apparently revolutionary situations turn out to be far less radical than might be expected. In short, he helps us understand how, as with India and the Gold Coast, there can be revolutionary situations that do not result in revolutions, and situations in which the masses are mobilized, but are refused an active role in the process of social-political change.

The anti-colonial movements in India and Ghana represent passive revolutions in the Gramscian sense. Both were elite-driven and carefully guided by British administrators and nationalist politicians. Certainly, the masses were crucial to these events: only widespread and popular agitations succeeded in placing sufficient pressure on the colonial administrations to devolve power and authority. Moreover, in order to include the masses, the nationalist parties had to adopt many popular demands. However, the main nationalist parties in India and the Gold Coast also worked hard to contain the aspirations and actions of the masses, ensuring that

⁷ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, eds. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 59.

⁸ Gramsci, *SPN*, 114. Here Gramsci is careful to guard against “historical defeatism” or believing that there is no alternative to a “passive revolution.” Rather, he argues that “the conception remains a dialectical one – in other words, presupposes, indeed postulates as necessary, a vigorous antithesis which can present intransigently all its potentialities for development.” One cannot describe a passive revolution without acknowledging the potential of its alternative – a non-passive or active revolution.

they were kept in check to guarantee an “orderly” transfer. In many cases, the desire to contain outbursts and achieve power quickly led the nationalist leaders to accept policies more in the interests of the colonial authorities than of most of their constituents.

Examining the interface between the aims and understandings of the colonial administration on one side, and the structures, activities and ideologies of the nationalist parties on the other, provides a crucial image of what was at stake, and what was possible during this time. Not only does it provide a comparison of the processes within these countries, but it hints at some of the differences between the anti-colonial movements in Asia and Africa as a whole. Although I will be drawing on the general colonial history for each country, my focus for India will be on the post-war negotiations between 1945 and 1947. In the case of the Gold Coast, I will concentrate on the years between 1951, when the nationalist party took office under the colonial administration, and 1957, when the country gained independence. For each colony, these years marked a transition, during which all parties began shaping the character of the independent state and working towards the inevitable declaration of independence. My analysis of the historical events in India and the Gold Coast will focus on the relations of power and interactions among the elites (the nationalist leadership, their indigenous opponents and the British administrators) and the non-elite colonial populations that did not have corresponding access to social, political and economic power. It is important to understand to what extent the main nationalist parties were constituted simply in terms of elite interests and to consider whether they gave their popular followers an active and self-actualizing role, or whether popular forces were subordinated in the party hierarchy. It is also necessary to investigate the use of mass agitational campaigns and whether they were used to achieve widespread social and economic change, or whether they were primarily a weapon to be employed against the colonial state, to be withdrawn again before popular aspirations became too insistent or mass voices too shrill.

In Chapter 1 I will examine several versions of Gramsci’s theories within the Indian and African historiographies in order to frame an extended discussion of

Gramsci's treatment of passive revolution and lay out the theoretical framework that I will use here. Chapters 2-4 will describe the main nationalist parties' relationships with the populations of India and the Gold Coast. Here I will examine both the constraints on the parties and the limits they put on their followers. In these chapters I will attempt to describe a situation in which the Indian National Congress (INC) and Convention People's Party (CPP) were able to mobilize a significant portion of the population, capture their participation, but simultaneously restrain any radical demands and actions emerging from outside the party hierarchy. By keeping their followers "passive," the party leaders were able to gain independence from Britain quickly and efficiently while protecting their own interests. However, these policies meant ignoring many of the interests of the populace and giving in to many of the compromises demanded by the colonial government. Chapters 5 & 6 will deal with another side of colonial relationships – between the main nationalist parties and the British administrations. Here there was another set of contradictions: on the one hand, colonial governments were forced by popular uprisings sponsored by the INC and CPP to give into certain political demands. At the same time, they worked to bring the party leaderships into government in order to moderate their behaviour and encourage them to bring their followers under control. By meeting the colonial government's expectations that they act "reasonably," the nationalist parties were able to gain independence sooner and more efficiently; however, they also accepted certain compromises regarding the character of the new state. Britain was interested in creating states that would retain close ties to their former colonial power, that would be stable and operate according to the norms established by the colonial government. For the nationalist parties, these compromises could mean accepting government institutions that had a fundamentally authoritarian nature. The colonial heritage within the new states also put the parties under a great constraint. The administrative machinery, with all of its colonial norms and traditions, was inherited more or less intact in India and Ghana. These institutions shaped the new states and undermined their ability to function democratically. Finally, the partition of India and Pakistan and the adoption of Ghana's constitution – written by the Colonial Office –

were products of elite negotiations and agreements and further exemplify the passive nature of the change during this era.

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

While in recent years many scholars have been attracted to the ideas set out by Antonio Gramsci, there has been little agreement on the appropriate interpretation of his major work, the *Prison Notebooks*. Indeed, the notebooks themselves are often inconsistent and subject to a certain degree of “slippage.”¹ Gramsci wrote these some two thousand pages while in prison under the constraints of ill-health and censorship; almost inevitably, there are contradictions and alterations of meaning between passages. Despite these problems, Gramsci’s work is an important theoretical aid to describing the nature of political and social change and revolutionary struggle. His theories have enriched the Marxist discussion of politics and culture, and it is no surprise that academics throughout the social sciences and humanities have drawn on his work.

A number of prominent scholars have adapted Gramsci’s concept of the passive revolution to the Indian example.² Here I will examine how three authors, Sudipta Kaviraj, Kristoffel Lieten and Ranajit Guha, have used Gramsci’s framework. Each of these authors used different aspects of Gramsci’s theories to interpret the Indian situation. Although Gramsci has not become an important reference point for most African academics,³ I will examine three accounts by African scholars that address many of the themes within Gramsci’s concept of passive revolution. In their

¹ Perry Anderson thoughtfully probes many of these contradictions in his essay “The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci,” *New Left Review* (London) (November-December 1976): 5-78.

² Sobhanlal Dutta Gupta, “Gramsci’s Presence in India,” *International Gramsci Society Newsletter* 3 (March, 1994): 18-21 gives an account of the growth in Gramsci’s popularity within the Indian academic community.

³ A notable exception is Jean and John Comaroff’s work on South Africa, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

arguments Maxwell Owusu, Basil Davidson and Mahmood Mamdani all point to the continuing colonial heritage within Africa, and the lack of change since independence despite the promises of nationalist leaders. The inevitable contradictions and disagreements among these six authors indicate a need to return to Gramsci's own arguments within the *Prison Notebooks*. His definition of passive revolution is itself complex and multi-faceted. I will attempt to develop a more nuanced understanding of this concept, as well as of Gramsci's arguments about hegemony, national popular consensus and the revolutionary party. On this basis, this introductory chapter will propose a version of the concept of passive revolution that I think is useful for examining the transfer of power in India and the Gold Coast. This theoretical framework will guide and structure the body of my essay, a discussion of the transfer of power in India (1945-1947) and the Gold Coast (1951-1957).

DESCRIBING PASSIVE REVOLUTION IN INDIA

Many prominent scholars studying India's nationalist movement have applied Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and passive revolution to their subject. Perhaps it is significant that Gramsci himself noted that both "Gandhism" and "Tolstoyism" were "naïve theorizations of the 'passive revolution' with religious overtones."⁴ Whether because of this comment, or because of a natural "fit" between Gramsci's theories and the Indian situation, many authors have come to describe Indian independence as a passive revolution. Here I will outline three examples of some prominent and well-developed applications of Gramscian theory to India. Although one could mention many others who have made similar arguments,⁵ a few examples should be enough to sketch the general lines of analysis, as well as the differences within the field.

Political scientist Sudipta Kaviraj has argued that after independence a passive revolution occurred among the Indian political elites during the Nehru period. In

⁴ Gramsci, *SPN*, 107.

⁵ See Gupta, "Gramsci's Presence," 18-21 and Chatterjee, "Gandhi and the Critique of Civil Society," in *Subaltern Studies*, ed. Ranajit Guha, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 153-95.

particular, he argues that the bourgeoisie was unable to create a successful democratic revolution in India under its direction alone and had to resort to a “coalitional strategy” of rule. Three different Indian classes belonged to this ruling coalition: the bourgeoisie, the rural landed elites and the bureaucratic management elite.⁶ Kaviraj claims that after independence the INC was altered with the gradual departure from the party of many socialists, most of whom formed “relatively ineffective and regionally limited opposition groups.”⁷ Subsequently Nehru and his left-wing followers felt themselves to be an encircled minority among the conservative state and local INC units. This minority eventually accepted what Kaviraj sees as a capitalist “passive revolution” in the Nehru period when further serious land reforms and other radical programs were abandoned.⁸ Kaviraj argues that this passive revolution could have been avoided if the INC had encouraged mass mobilization and had used the mobilization levels already achieved for radical purposes. However, he argues that the INC had decided upon a *bureaucratic* rather than *mobilization* form for its reforms. Upon gaining power in independent India, the INC strategy was to “demobilize its own movement, not to radicalize it further.”⁹ He argues that “in principle,” feudal and conservative resistance could have been overcome if the INC had been willing to encourage popular action by using the levels of mass mobilization already achieved in 1945-1947 for the radical purposes in their stated aims.¹⁰ Their failure to do so produced a capitalist passive revolution and meant the abandonment of the party’s programs for radical change and redistributive justice.¹¹

Kaviraj’s argument is compelling in terms of the “coalitional” strategy of rule that he identifies for the INC. His argument that the bourgeoisie could not direct the movement on its own, but had to resort to a class alliance, is similar to Gramsci’s analysis of the Italian Risorgimento.¹² In both examples, the leading elites created a

⁶ Sudipta Kaviraj, “A Critique of the Passive Revolution,” in *State and Politics in India*, ed. Partha Chatterjee, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 51-52.

⁷ Kaviraj, “Critique of the Passive Revolution,” 58.

⁸ Kaviraj, “Critique of the Passive Revolution,” 59.

⁹ Kaviraj, “Critique of the Passive Revolution,” 60.

¹⁰ Kaviraj, “Critique of the Passive Revolution,” 59.

¹¹ Kaviraj, “Critique of the Passive Revolution,” 59-60.

¹² See the following section and Gramsci, *SPN*, 53, 61, 77 and 79.

passive revolution because of their refusal to mobilize the Indian population for a radical program of reform. However, Kaviraj's account is limited to the extent that it does not address INC tactics and ideology before independence. Arguing that after independence there were quick political changes and internal realignments within the party, Kaviraj asserts that the "Congress which assumed power in 1947 was not in many respects the Congress that won Independence."¹³ While there may be much truth to this claim, Kaviraj overlooks the extent to which INC policy and strategy had worked towards a passive revolution well before independence. In his focus on bureaucratic management and economic structures, Kaviraj neglects the important domain of ideology and forms of social mobilization so important to Gramsci's arguments. Therefore, while Kaviraj's argument is compelling, he has only provided a partial account of the passive revolution in India.

Kristoffel Lieten argues that from its very beginnings the INC was formed with the intention of preventing a radical mass movement. In his view, the passive revolution in India dates from this founding in 1885 and was carried out by "an enlightened bourgeoisie," attempting to organize "long-term consent to the existing order."¹⁴ Lieten describes the increasing involvement of labour within the INC between the Swadeshi movement (1905-1908) and the end of WWI.¹⁵ However, labour's political involvement was cut short by Gandhi who believed that industrial labour should remain aloof from political action. According to Lieten: "[t]he uniqueness of Gandhi lies in the fact that he, unlike many other nationalist leaders, realized that a passive revolution, i.e., a revolution which gradually increases the share of the economic and political power of the contending Indian bourgeoisie within the otherwise unchanging system, necessarily excluded the active involvement of the working class."¹⁶ While the INC realized that labour could make important contributions to the freedom struggle and eventually incorporated it into the INC just

¹³ Kaviraj, "Critique of the Passive Revolution," 56-57.

¹⁴ This argument is according to Kristoffel Lieten's interpretation of Gramsci: "The Indian National Congress and the Control Over Labour: The Need for a Passive Revolution," in *Congress and Classes: Nationalism, Workers and Peasants*, ed. Kapil Kumar, (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1988), 60.

¹⁵ Lieten, "Control Over Labour," 61-64.

¹⁶ Lieten, "Control Over Labour," 65.

before the Non-Cooperation Movement (1919-1922), the party also worked to contain labour activism within the safe sphere of nationalist politics.¹⁷ Lieten's analysis extends up to the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in 1934, arguing that the lasting effect of this agreement was to provide "the INC with a political and economic outlook which would enable it to rally the Indian masses to the ideals of a better future without questioning the existing feudal interest and the emerging monopoly houses."¹⁸

Concluding that the transfer of power was accomplished by "a passive involvement of the masses," Lieten argues that Gandhi worked in the interests of the big bourgeoisie and the feudal elements in Indian society. Eventually even Nehru was converted to this program, leading to the establishment of an independent state in which power was shared among the bourgeoisie, the "feudal elements" and foreign capital.¹⁹

Lieten's argument contradicts many of the basic assumptions found in Kaviraj. Unlike the latter, Lieten situates the origins of India's passive revolution in the very formation of the INC. Although his main narrative leaves off at 1934, Lieten attempts to trace a relatively direct line in INC policy from these beginnings to the character of the independent state created in 1947. Like Kaviraj, Lieten argues that the Indian bourgeoisie resorted to a coalitional strategy of rule; however, in his argument their partners are the country's "feudal elements" and foreign capital, rather than the rural landowning elites and bureaucratic management elite. Lieten is far from specific about the composition of these feudal elements, but it seems reasonable to presume that, at least in part, they were the same interests as the rural landowners in Kaviraj's account. While I would argue that Lieten is correct in his assessment of the INC's demand for passive involvement from the masses, his account too easily simplifies the complex nature of the independence movement. In particular, both he and Kaviraj ignore the important role that the colonial government had in producing a passive revolution in India. Not only did British officials encourage and reward moderation from the nationalist parties, they did much to determine the character of the new state and the administration that would take power at independence. Both

¹⁷ Lieten, "Control Over Labour," 66-67.

¹⁸ Lieten, "Control Over Labour," 79.

¹⁹ Lieten, "Control Over Labour," 80.

authors neglect the extent to which the colonial power placed constraints on Indian nationalists and exerted its own pressures towards a passive revolution.

Although Ranajit Guha does not explicitly use the term “passive revolution,” his argument engages with many of the related concepts within Gramsci’s theories.²⁰ Guha’s account tends to describe the passive nature of the nationalist struggle for independence. He argues that, unlike the metropolitan democratic state, the colonial state in India rested primarily on coercion rather than persuasion, and thus was an instance of “*dominance without hegemony*.”²¹ Moreover, the Indian bourgeoisie was also unable to speak for the nation or to win a hegemonic role for itself. The INC, and Gandhi in particular, used “discipline” rather than “persuasion” in mobilizing the masses: what Guha describes as an “attempt to settle for dominance without hegemony.”²² Guha argues that Gandhi elaborated a set of “secular and spiritual controls” in order to harness and discipline the masses.²³ According to Guha, “crowd control” was the form of secular discipline elaborated by Gandhi. In order to ensure mass movements operated in a “sober and methodical manner,” Gandhi emphasized the training of volunteers to enforce crowd control and act as the “people’s policemen.”²⁴ Even more fundamental to Gandhi was the notion of self-discipline or self-control. Guha argues that Gandhi gave Non-cooperation “the semblance of a religious movement” with the development of a comprehensive morality based on abstinence and purgation.²⁵ According to Guha, discipline was necessary because the subaltern masses that were brought into the INC campaigns operated according to a different political idiom and a different type of discipline than the middle-class activists. Like others in the subaltern studies group, Guha argues that in India two

²⁰ For an extended critique of Guha see Vasant Kaiwar, “Towards Orientalism and Nativism: The Impasse of Subaltern Studies,” *Historical Materialism* (forthcoming). <<http://www.ncsu.edu/tsac/vasant2.doc>> (May 20, 2004),” n.p.

²¹ Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), xii-xiii.

²² Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony*, 135.

²³ Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony*, 151.

²⁴ Gandhi quoted in Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony*, 144.

²⁵ Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony*, 146-50. According to Guha, abstinence meant giving up social ills like foreign imports, alcohol, violence, untouchability etc. Purgation implied retreating from temptation by destroying its object and thereby cleansing the soul (for instance, burning foreign cloth).

“separate and parallel” political domains existed: that of the subaltern and that of the elite.²⁶ Gandhi worked out a series of regulations and controls to contain mass initiative and radicalism – expressed in peasant insurgency, urban strikes and riots, etc. – in order to bring popular agitations under the fold of the party’s bourgeois leadership.²⁷

Although it contains many compelling arguments regarding the INC’s tactic of mobilizing the population for elite interests and under elite control, Guha’s formulation of “dominance without hegemony” is much too simplistic and ignores the complexities within the Indian political situation. In particular, it is highly problematic to argue that the colonial state and the Indian nationalist leaders based their power on dominance alone. The colonial regime – particularly in its final days – relied on the prestige of its administration and the allies it did have in India among many liberals, the landowning elites, the princes, some minorities, etc. Similarly, claiming that the INC did not operate by persuasion to any significant degree is, I feel, a misguided argument. Although Guha describes many instances where the INC did operate through coercion, the party also commanded a great deal of hegemony over a range of social groups. Gandhi himself was particularly adept at capturing the “consent” of a wide range of the Indian population, and in many respects Gandhian “discipline” itself did have a hegemonic and not simply coercive role.

Clearly there are significant differences of interpretation amongst these three authors. Although they all use Gramscian terminology, they differ not only in their periodization, but in the structures, tactics and actors they isolate as key to an Indian passive revolution. Kaviraj situates the passive revolution after 1947, while both Lieten and Guha argue that a passive political strategy was present within the INC independence movement itself. Moreover, while both Kaviraj and Lieten emphasize that the Indian ruling classes resorted to a “coalitional” strategy of rule, Guha maintains that the struggle for independence was a “bourgeois” movement that failed to capture the hegemony of the masses. Significantly, all three authors agree that the

²⁶ Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony*, 141.

²⁷ Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony*, 136.

passive revolution resulted from the INC leaders' failure (at whatever stage) to mobilize the masses on a radical program that answered popular demands for social and particularly economic change. Kaviraj argues that such a mobilization in the 1950s would have prevented the passive revolution, while Lieten and Guha both focus on a mobilizational strategy that subordinated the masses to the INC leadership during the independence struggle, rather than working with them to change Indian social structures and economies.

PASSIVE REVOLUTION IN THE GOLD COAST

In contrast to the Indian case, there are no prominent accounts which describe the achievement of independence in the Gold Coast in terms of a passive revolution. While there are many authors who have been disenchanted with the results of Ghana's independence, their explanations use different terms than those set out by Gramsci. Before proceeding, it is important to outline some of these arguments in order to understand their points of overlap with Gramsci's theory of passive revolution and to make clear the differences between the conditions in India and the Gold Coast.

Maxwell Owusu argues that western-style democracy has proved to be incompatible with the African context. Although he admits that western values, attitudes and institutions have had a profound effect on post-colonial Africa, he argues that these influences have not been strong enough to support democratic political development.²⁸ Owusu situates the causes of Africa's economic and political problems in the colonial legacy; however, he finds another source of difficulty in the political culture of elite leadership in most post-colonial countries.²⁹ This political culture is in his view incompatible with liberal democracy for two reasons. First, the political class in African countries has been very small and composed of an elite with

²⁸ Maxwell Owusu, "Democracy and Africa – A View from the Village," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 30 (September, 1992), 372.

²⁹ Owusu, "Democracy and Africa," 373.

authoritarian tendencies, more concerned with its own status in the independent state than aiding other social groups. He argues that in Ghana fewer than one thousand people belonged to this nationalist leadership.³⁰ Second, liberal democracy is based in, and grew out of, the traditions of Northern Europe. Democracy as it developed in Europe depended on mass literacy, communication, economic development, individualism, a sense of national identification, and a cultural homogeneity – few of which were fully present in sub-Saharan Africa.³¹ Moreover, there are many risks inherent to liberal democracy, including nepotism, corruption, racialism, etc. Thus, Owusu argues that the African context needs its own forms of democracy which take account of existing cultures and traditions. He argues that an indigenous form of democracy would find its source in the ideas of equality and participation found at the village level and in community governance.³² Rather than arguing that democracy is not possible in Africa, Owusu calls for a space to develop a popular, participatory democracy, based on African concepts of community.³³

In his book, *The Black Man's Burden*, Basil Davidson provides an indictment of the history of the nation-state in Africa. Propounded by the colonial administrations and accepted by the indigenous political elites, nationalism (or “nation-statism”) became a force that alienated Africa from its own history, and was in fact the “onset of a new period of indirect subjection to the history of Europe.”³⁴ Rather than accepting models “from those very countries or systems that have oppressed and despised” Africans, Davidson argues that indigenous models should have been adopted, or new ones invented in order to further the modernization of these countries, as had been done in Japan.³⁵ Davidson criticizes the African nationalists of the 1950s for accepting the colonial mentality that scorned tribalism

³⁰ Owusu, “Democracy and Africa,” 375.

³¹ Owusu, “Democracy and Africa,” 382.

³² Owusu, “Democracy and Africa,” 371.

³³ Owusu, “Democracy and Africa,” 380.

³⁴ Basil Davidson, *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State*, (New York: Random House Inc., 1992), 10.

³⁵ Davidson, *Burden*, 19, 75. Such models existed, Davidson argues, in the form of the Asante kingdom which had all the trappings of a nation-state: 76.

and aspired to create nation-states.³⁶ The colonial legacy of the nation-state and its institutions created lasting problems that made the “transfer of power,” in fact a “transfer of crisis.”³⁷ In terms of mass mobilizations, Davidson argues that because they needed the masses to press their demands, nationalist leaders brought the population into politics with promises of social change and improvement.³⁸ However, involvement in these mobilizations did not ensure popular participation in decision-making. Davidson argues that once in power these national elites were more concerned with rivalry among themselves than “the combined interests of the ‘masses.’”³⁹ While a lack of democracy and rule by corrupt leaders has been a problem for most independent African states, Davidson points to counter examples of “mass participation” within the African context. He argues that there was a practical application of mass participation in the Portuguese colonies during their armed struggle against the colonial state.⁴⁰ Particularly important during this time was providing the rural population with “a real measure of practical self-government” through local assemblies and their elected executives.⁴¹ Although he admits that the post-independence period was a story of “defeat and even of disaster” for these countries, Davidson argues that positive change can be enacted by dismantling the imperial nation-state legacy and introducing participatory structures.⁴² Davidson’s account of mass participation seems to provide an alternative vision to the strategy of passive revolution, one in which the population is actively engaged in decision-making and producing social change.⁴³

The third analysis of the consequences of colonialism in Africa that I examine is the argument put forward by Mahmood Mamdani. Like Davidson and Owusu, Mamdani emphasizes the importance of the colonial heritage. His argument cites the European division of African colonies into areas of direct and indirect rule. In the

³⁶ Davidson, *Burden*, 99.

³⁷ Davidson, *Burden*, 190.

³⁸ Davidson, *Burden*, 111.

³⁹ Davidson, *Burden*, 112.

⁴⁰ Davidson, *Burden*, 296.

⁴¹ Davidson, *Burden*, 299.

⁴² Davidson, *Burden*, 302, 321-22.

⁴³ Davidson, *Burden*, 295.

predominantly urban areas where British and French direct rule was the norm and where a European legal order existed, natives could become citizens and, with the right property qualifications, “all civilized men” could gain “equal rights.”⁴⁴ Thus, access to civil society was possible for a small “native” elite – but for the rest who were excluded from citizenship, direct rule was simply a form of “centralized despotism.” Where the European states set up indirect rule – predominantly in rural areas – customary law was implemented and the colonial power ruled through “traditional” chiefs in a form of “decentralized despotism.”⁴⁵ Mamdani’s argument is that this crucial “bifurcation” of the colonial state between rural and urban areas continued unaltered into the post-colonial era after “race” ceased to be a legal mode of distinction. After independence, the states were deracialized and Africanized, but they were not democratized. Two models existed for post-colonial states: first, radical regimes both deracialized and detribalized their states, emphasizing central control over local authorities. They increased the division between town and countryside, and constituted their rule on direct despotism. Secondly, conservative regimes attempted to overcome the urban-rural division through a clientelism which increased ethnic divisions. These states thus exercised power through a form of decentralized despotism. Mamdani shares Davidson’s and Owusu’s disappointment in the lack of democracy in African countries and also brings a serious indictment against both the colonial regime and the native elites.

As is apparent, all of these authors argue that western institutions like the nation-state and liberal democracy have been ill-suited to African countries. What prevents these analyses from being simple “cultural incompatibility” arguments is an awareness that so many problems were caused by the colonial administrations, and the failure to break sufficiently from this past. Mamdani pinpoints the damage done by colonialism to the Native Authorities – it is precisely the continuation of these institutions and the system of colonial administration that prevents the growth of democracy in Africa. Owusu likewise criticizes the colonial state and the native

⁴⁴ Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 16-17.

⁴⁵ Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 17.

authoritarian elites, but argues that participatory democracy can be found in the villages themselves (although presumably not in the Native Authorities criticized by Mamdani). As with Owusu, Davidson provides a vision of participatory democracy potentially capable of dismantling the colonial legacy in ways nationalist leaders of the 1950s and 1960s could not.

I would argue that despite their variations and differences, all of these arguments describe a type of passive revolution in which the native elites worked with the colonial administrators to achieve a type of government suitable to their ends. As these authors observe, a majority of the population did not reap the promised benefits of independence, and perhaps even more than in India, experienced it as a continuation of colonial-type systems of control. However, examining these authors also reminds us of the differences between the Indian and African situations. India has continued as a formal democracy since independence. Ghana has seen many cycles of civilian and military rule – both usually authoritarian in nature. Moreover, like other African countries, Ghana had the typical African colonial invention of Native Authorities that affected the power balance in society and politics.⁴⁶ I have only provided a very schematic account of Mamdani's argument, which does much to explain the importance of these institutions and the consequences of the structures implanted in Africa by Europeans. Thus, while I will argue that there was a passive revolution in both India and Ghana, it is crucial to remember the differences – as well as similarities – in context between Asia and Africa.

The contradictions and diversity among these accounts demonstrate the need to return to Gramsci's work in order to develop a stronger and more complex understanding of passive revolution that might be used to examine the historical cases of Indian and Ghanaian decolonization. Of course, any account attempting to reconcile a concept like passive revolution with a complex set of historical events will almost inevitably result in an incomplete picture – partial in terms of its ability to account for the historical complexity, and partial in terms of its treatment of the nuances in the theoretical concepts themselves. Like any account, this essay cannot

⁴⁶ Indirect rule in India took the form of Princely States, abolished at independence in 1947.

to hope capture the full complexity of the actual historical processes. Not only is its temporal scope limited – focusing as it does on the final negotiations for independence – but it contains only part of the original complexity within Gramsci’s theories. Nevertheless, I feel there are significant insights to be gained by placing the transfers of power in India and the Gold Coast in dialogue with each other, and within a theoretical framework based on Gramsci’s analysis of the passive revolution.

PASSIVE REVOLUTION IN THE PRISON NOTEBOOKS

As with many other terms, the exact meaning of “passive revolution” remains ambiguous in Gramsci’s writings. Gramsci took the term itself from the conservative Italian historian Vincenzo Cuoco, who used it to describe the unification of the modern Italian state, or the Risorgimento, as a revolution that he argued was carried out by the elite classes without active mass initiative.⁴⁷ In his terms a “passive revolution” represented the apparently contradictory concept of a “‘revolution’ without a ‘revolution.’”⁴⁸

When describing and applying this concept in greater detail, Gramsci seemed to imbue the term with at least two distinguishable and relatively separate meanings.⁴⁹ The first, which was similar to Cuoco’s usage, indicated a revolution that was directed from above by elites, and occurred without the active participation of the masses. This definition emerged out of Gramsci’s account and critique of the Italian Risorgimento – a process which had had a passive character because of the decisions taken by the movement’s leaders. His second conceptual framework described a passive revolution as a long historical process involving a set of gradual “molecular changes” in society. As I will argue below, these two frameworks do not represent an irreconcilable contradiction; rather they describe some of the different characteristics and forms that a passive revolution might take.

⁴⁷ Gramsci, *SPN*, 59 (Hoare and Smith note 11).

⁴⁸ Gramsci, *SPN*, 59.

⁴⁹ These are outlined by Hoare and Smith in their comments, Gramsci, *SPN*, 46.

Gramsci's First Definition

Gramsci's main example of a passive revolution was the Italian Risorgimento. In his view, the unification of Italy was an instance of revolution/restoration in which the leading groups exercised "domination" without "leadership," or "dictatorship without hegemony."⁵⁰ According to Gramsci, hegemony can be characterized as the "spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group."⁵¹ Without such hegemony, the dominant group must rule on the basis of force using the "apparatus of state coercive power which 'legally' enforces discipline on those groups who do not 'consent' either actively or passively."⁵² Gramsci argues that the bourgeois leaders of the Risorgimento had to subordinate Italy's other leading political forces (the traditional ruling groups like the aristocracy and clergy) and win the "active or passive assent" of their auxiliaries (in particular the rural population) in order to successfully unify the country.⁵³ Therefore, Gramsci particularly emphasized the importance in Italy of "binding together" an allegiance of the rural and intellectual classes.⁵⁴ In order to create a modern state, the Italian bourgeoisie had to win the support of the popular classes. It was their failure either to establish their hegemony over the aristocracy or to gain the active consent of the masses that caused a passive revolution in Italy.⁵⁵

Throughout his analysis Gramsci contrasted Italy's unification with the French Revolution. Whereas the Jacobins carried out a radical program and gained a mass following, the Italian nationalists including Mazzini's "radical" Action Party were afraid to give into popular demands like agrarian reform.⁵⁶ In France, the Jacobins were successful in binding the town and country together.⁵⁷ They were able

⁵⁰ Gramsci, *SPN*, 110; 106.

⁵¹ Gramsci, *SPN*, 12.

⁵² Gramsci, *SPN*, 12.

⁵³ Gramsci, *SPN*, 53.

⁵⁴ Gramsci, *SPN*, 74.

⁵⁵ Gramsci, *SPN*, 53.

⁵⁶ Gramsci, *SPN*, 61.

⁵⁷ Gramsci, *SPN*, 63.

to “impose” themselves at least temporarily on the bourgeoisie, leading to a much more advanced position in which they were able to make the bourgeoisie “the leading, hegemonic class,” and create the “compact modern French nation.”⁵⁸ By contrast, in Italy, the leading classes said they were trying to produce a modern state, but in fact “produced a bastard” in which the bourgeoisie were still subordinated to the aristocracy.⁵⁹ Gramsci argued that if the Action Party had incorporated the demands of the popular masses into the government, they would not have been politically subordinated to Cavour’s more conservative Moderate Party.⁶⁰ Thus, the passivity of the Risorgimento emerged from the fact that “the Action Party ought to have allied itself with the rural masses, especially those in the South, and ought to have been more ‘Jacobin’ not only in external ‘form’, in temperament, but more particularly in socio-economic content.”⁶¹

Gramsci’s Second Definition

On the face of it, Gramsci’s second definition of passive revolution tends to present important problems of interpretation. In several passages, he discussed passive revolution as a process rather than as a moment, describing it as a series of “molecular changes” in society that “progressively modify the pre-existing composition of forces, and hence become the matrix of new changes.”⁶² In one entry he suggested that there might be “an absolute identity between war of position and passive revolution,” or an entire historical period in which the two could be considered identical.⁶³ The difficulty in this passage is that in other areas Gramsci had described a “war of position” as an appropriate method of struggle for (left) revolutionary parties. Borrowing from the military analogy of trench warfare vs. mobile warfare in WWI, Gramsci discussed the strategies of “war of position” and

⁵⁸ Gramsci, *SPN*, 77; 79.

⁵⁹ Gramsci, *SPN*, 90. This argument is similar to the account of passive revolution in Kaviraj and Lietai (see above), who both argue that the INC had to resort to a “coalitional” alliance between the bourgeoisie and large landowners (Lietai’s “feudal elements”).

⁶⁰ Gramsci, *SPN*, 61.

⁶¹ Gramsci, *SPN*, 74.

⁶² Gramsci, *SPN*, 109.

⁶³ Gramsci, *SPN*, 108.

“war of movement.” While the war of movement represented a quick and forceful advance (on the military enemy, or political structures), the war of position was fought in the trenches of civil society and was an attempt to build an alternative hegemony and mobilize a national-popular consensus for this hegemony.⁶⁴ Many of those reading Gramsci have been troubled by the passages in which he equated passive revolution with a war of position. However, rather than ignoring or discounting these statements, it is important to analyze them, and to understand how they fit within Gramsci’s theoretical framework.

From his other writings and actions,⁶⁵ it is clear that Gramsci does not mean to equate a *working-class* war of position with a passive revolution; indeed, as I will discuss, a worker movement should be *anti-passive* in character in order to succeed. Rather, it seems in these passages that Gramsci meant to suggest a relationship between the Italian Risorgimento and the ensuing long-term war of position waged by the capitalist classes on the pre-capitalist elites with whom they had allied during that movement.⁶⁶

Indeed, Paul Ginsbourg has suggested that this second definition can be applied to the process of bourgeois revolution in Italy, in which the bourgeoisie gradually incorporated and triumphed over the pre-capitalist aristocracy.⁶⁷ John Davis has argued that “passive revolution” can be used to explain the long period of “continuity of Italian history from unification to fascism.”⁶⁸ Gramsci himself discussed these “molecular changes” in terms of “transformism,” which was one form

⁶⁴ Gramsci, *SPN*, 235.

⁶⁵ Gramsci’s commitment to a revolutionary political position are made clear in Alastair Davidson, *Antonio Gramsci: Towards an Intellectual Biography*, (London: Merlin Press, 1977).

⁶⁶ Gramsci also suggests elsewhere that the history of bourgeois revolutions in Europe in general might be considered “passive revolutions,” *SPN*, 118-20.

⁶⁷ Paul Ginsbourg “Gramsci and the Era of Bourgeois Revolution in Italy,” in *Gramsci and Italy’s Passive Revolution*, ed. John A. Davis, (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 46-49. Perry Anderson argues that in none of the European bourgeois revolutions were the feudal aristocracies destroyed. In fact, the previous ruling classes and the newer bourgeois strata tended to blend “in a common bloc” over time. This description seems particularly appropriate to Gramsci’s notion of “transformism.” Perry Anderson, *English Questions*, (London: Verso, 1992), 115.

⁶⁸ John A. Davis, “Introduction: Antonio Gramsci and Italy’s Passive Revolution,” in *Gramsci and Italy’s Passive Revolution*, ed. John A. Davis, (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 23.

of passive revolution.⁶⁹ He argued that in Italy there were two periods of transformism: molecular transformism from 1860-1900 in which individual democratic politicians were incorporated into the conservative political class; and from 1900 on, in which “entire groups of leftists” passed over to the moderate camp.⁷⁰ Thus, this second definition of passive revolution may not be as problematic as it might seem. The war of position may indeed have been associated with passive revolution during the process of the bourgeoisie’s struggle for hegemony with the Italian aristocracy.⁷¹ The identification between these concepts in this instance does not mean that the terms would be similarly identical in the case of a revolutionary workers’ movement carrying out a war of position; indeed, such a movement, properly constituted, could not be passive. Thus, Gramsci’s second definition seems to discuss passive revolution in terms of a process over time, one which in the Italian case is related to a war of position carried out by the bourgeoisie. However, I would argue that this second definition is a subordinate meaning of the term, and only one of perhaps several forms that a passive revolution might take.⁷²

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Gramsci argued that a “social group can, and indeed must, already exercise ‘leadership’ before winning governmental power.”⁷³ This moral and intellectual “leadership,” is also known as “hegemony,” one of the key terms associated with Gramsci. Gramsci situated “hegemony” on the opposite pole to the “direct

⁶⁹ Gramsci, *SPN*, 109; 58 n8.

⁷⁰ Gramsci, *SPN*, 58 n8. From this argument it might be possible to conclude that there are at least two types of transformism (i.e. two forms of the second definition of passive revolution): i) the long-term struggles between and unification of the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy, and ii) the conversion of leftists to the program of bourgeois politics.

⁷¹ Gramsci, *SPN*, 109.

⁷² Gramsci also discussed American “Fordism” as a possible form of passive revolution. See *SPN*, 279-80.

⁷³ Gramsci, *SPN*, 57.

domination,” of the state’s coercive power.⁷⁴ Thus, hegemony can be described as “consent given by the great mass of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group.”⁷⁵ In this formulation, hegemony/consent/direction are placed opposite to domination/coercion/force.⁷⁶ In a passive revolution the new ruling class occupies its position on the basis of “‘domination’ without . . . ‘leadership’: dictatorship without hegemony.”⁷⁷ By contrast, the active revolutionary party must be “directive” and obtain hegemony among the masses.

Gramsci went into great detail when describing the appropriate form for a revolutionary party – what he calls the “Modern Prince.” The party must work towards the “formation of a national-popular collective will” and assert its own hegemony over society.⁷⁸ While Gramsci stressed the importance of a leadership as a cohesive and directive force, he also emphasized the importance of democracy within the party.⁷⁹ Moreover, the relationship between the leaders and people should be an “organic” one. In the Italian Risorgimento, the leaders had had a “paternalistic” attitude towards the lower classes, and therefore had limited success in gaining any sort of hegemony among the popular masses.⁸⁰

Gramsci argued that, as an irreducible fact, “there really do exist rulers and ruled, leaders and led.”⁸¹ However, he also emphasized the importance of gaining effective leadership, not by demanding automatic obedience, but by always questioning the responsibility of leaders in any defeat or disaster.⁸² Therefore, while Gramsci acknowledged the importance of leadership to the political party, he also

⁷⁴ Here I am adopting Perry Anderson’s interpretation of hegemony and coercion and their asymmetrical distribution between the state and civil society. See Anderson, “Antimonies,” 41-44.

⁷⁵ Gramsci, *SPN*, 12.

⁷⁶ Anderson, “Antimonies,” 21, 22; Radhika Desai, *Intellectuals and Socialism: “Social Democrats” and the Labour Party*, (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1994), 15.

⁷⁷ Gramsci, *SPN*, 106.

⁷⁸ Gramsci, *SPN*, 133.

⁷⁹ Gramsci, *SPN*, 152, 155.

⁸⁰ Gramsci, *SPN*, 97.

⁸¹ Gramsci, *SPN*, 144. He also asks if “the objective [is] to create the conditions in which this division is no longer necessary?” Although Gramsci does not directly answer this question, he argues that in “a certain sense it may be said that this division [between leaders and led] is created by the division of labour, is merely a technical fact. . .” 144-145.

⁸² Gramsci, *SPN*, 144-45.

emphasized the democratic relationship which must exist among the different levels of a popular revolutionary movement.⁸³ He argued that there can only be a relationship of representation (or an organic cohesion within a political party) when there is *both* a sentimental (“feeling-passion”) and a knowledge-based bond between the leaders and led. In the absence of such a relationship, the link becomes “purely bureaucratic and formal.”⁸⁴

A WORKING DEFINITION OF PASSIVE REVOLUTION

What remained consistent among all the definitions of passive revolution within Gramsci’s writing (although sometimes present implicitly rather than explicitly) was that the demands of the majority of people (i.e. the non-elite or “masses”) – particularly the popular agrarian classes – were not incorporated into the program of the ruling parties. To be sure, the Risorgimento was characterized by popular upheavals and a certain degree of mass mobilization; however, this “revolution” was carried out in the interests of the ruling classes. The elites in charge of the process failed to win a popular hegemony because they did not engage the majority of Italy’s overall population in their movement or mobilize them under a banner of their own demands. The satisfaction of elite interests at the expense of popular demands is also found in Gramsci’s second definition of passive revolution. The process of “molecular changes” described here involved a series of power struggles amongst the elites. Although new social formations might gradually emerge out of such conditions, they would be constructed in the interests of the elites and without initiative from the base of society.

The transfers of power in India and the Gold Coast/Ghana were extremely complex processes and occurred in a significantly different context than that described by Gramsci for the Italian Risorgimento. Both the INC and CPP defined

⁸³ Gramsci, *SPN*, 152-55

⁸⁴ Gramsci, *SPN*, 418.

themselves as mass nationalist parties that sought to represent the nation and address issues of social justice and inequality. Therefore, within these movements, one might identify many *anti-passive* strategies – in their efforts at mass mobilization, and within their political program.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, I would argue that a major characteristic of these transfers of power was also their passivity. While claiming to represent the nation, both parties were run by particular social and economic elites in India and the Gold Coast. Admittedly, the interests pursued by the nationalist parties were often ones shared by much of the population, particularly the demand for independence from Britain. Nevertheless, many of the parties' policies, particularly their attitude towards labour movements and peasant activists, were formulated in the interests of the anti-colonial elites rather than as responses to more popular visions of social change. Insofar as a coalition of elites ran these parties, the motivations behind party policies could be very complex and even in tension with one another. However, as in the Gramscian framework, the nationalist parties carried out activities that were framed according to the needs of social elites and that operated through methods which met those needs.

⁸⁵ Bipan Chandra et al., *India's Struggle for Independence, 1857-1947*, (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1989), 507-12 argues that the nationalist movement under Gandhi was a hegemonic struggle that combined the strategies of war of position and war of movement. Gramsci also argued that the Indian nationalist movement encompassed war of position, war of movement and underground warfare: see *SPN*, 229-30. However, just as Lieten exaggerates the extent to which the INC leaders were responsible for an Indian passive revolution, I believe Chandra neglects the many aspects of Gandhi's policies that were not progressive. Although he is correct to argue that the "Struggle-Truce-Struggle" rhythm of INC policies gradually moved the nation towards independence, he ignores a) that the INC truces with the colonial government were often gained by abandoning more radical, but still attainable aims, and b) that there was a "passive" character to both sides of the movement because the party leadership had mobilized the masses to strive for goals primarily in the interests of the Indian social elites.

CHAPTER 2:

CHARACTERIZING THE NATIONALIST PARTIES

In order to understand the process of “passive revolution” in India and the Gold Coast, it is crucial to begin by examining the character of the nationalist parties. Both the Indian National Congress (INC) and Convention People’s Party (CPP) were coalitional parties that claimed to represent a variety of groups. Although these parties claimed to be broadly representational, and did gain a mass following for themselves, their leaders, strategies, and goals were middle-class (or primarily bourgeois in India’s case) in nature. Therefore, while both the INC and CPP worked to capture the support of the majority in order to push their claims to the colonial government, the changes these parties sought were derived more from the interests of the elites than from the base of society.

THE ORIGINS OF MASS NATIONALISM

India

Nationalism in India only gained a mass following after Gandhi’s arrival to the subcontinent during World War One. Since its founding in 1885, the INC had existed primarily as a party of the upper-class intelligentsia.¹ Particularly during the first twenty years of its existence, the INC could be characterized as “moderate,” concerned with administrative and minor constitutional reforms. As would later be the case in the Gold Coast, indigenization of the civil service was a crucial aim for the

¹ For an account of this history see Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India: 1885-1947*, (Houndmills: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1989), 88-92.

party. During this time the party agitated mainly through petitions, speeches and articles and put forward its arguments in liberal and legalistic terms. Moreover, the lifestyle of many INC leaders was highly elitist. Although a faction of “extremists” within nationalist politics was present from the early 20th century, this group tended towards terrorism by “heroic” individuals rather than towards mass politics. Thus, until at least 1905, the predominant paradigm of Indian nationalism was elitist – whether constitutional or radical.²

Gandhi brought to Indian politics a series of new techniques and a new ideology which he had developed in the South African context. There he had worked out a practice whereby disciplined volunteers were carefully trained. They then led non-violent *satyagraha*, whether peaceful violation of laws, mass courting of arrest, *hartals* (strikes), or marches. These movements always remained open to negotiation and compromise, and indeed, could be suspended with little warning or agreement.³ Thus, Gandhi developed a method of struggle in which popular forces could be used against a colonial government, but only under the control of his leadership and according to the principles of non-violent protest.⁴ Unlike other INC leaders at the time, Gandhi saw the potential of using the masses for political struggle, and was able to develop a theory and a program of action to channel this energy in specific and controlled directions.⁵

After World War I, the INC carried out four major popular campaigns against the British government: the 1919-20 protests against the Rowlatt Bills; the 1922 Non-Cooperation Movement; the Salt March and related Civil Disobedience agitations 1930-34; and the Quit India Movement in 1942. As D. A. Low suggests, each of these events and the political developments that followed them traced roughly the same course.⁶ In each, there was a pendulum swing between agitational politics on the one hand, and Council entry, or participation in government, on the other. To

² Sarkar, *Modern India*, 96 & 100.

³ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 179 cites a 1908 withdrawal from protest in South Africa based on a soon to be broken promise from Smuts.

⁴ Chatterjee, “Critique of Civil Society,” 153.

⁵ Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony*, 140.

⁶ For the following see D. A. Low, “Introduction: the Climactic Years 1917-47,” in *Congress and the Raj: Facets of the Indian Struggle 1917-47*, ed. D. A. Low, (Columbia: South Asia Books, 1977), 7-8.

begin with, there was a long “agitational run-up” in which Indian nationalists reacted against the colonial government’s policies (whether its appointing an all-white Simon Commission in 1928, or its declaring war in 1939 without consultation). After this came a civil disobedience campaign led by Gandhi, followed by a “striking mid-course break.” In each of these breaks, Gandhi startled his followers by attempting to make deals with the British government, like the 1931 Gandhi-Irwin pact, or the almost-achieved Cripps accord in 1942. Low mentions briefly that these attempted mid-course settlements were designed to hold the movements in check. However, each of these settlements, once they failed, resulted in a popular “undertow of unfulfilled expectations” which resulted in second agitational campaigns each time. Once the INC or the British government (as in the mid-1930s and early 1940s) had put a stop to the campaigns, popular agitation seemed to temporarily die out; meanwhile, the INC moved strongly towards participation in the legislature or government in 1923, 1934 and 1945. While Low’s outline is admittedly simplistic and somewhat haphazard, it highlights some of the main characteristics of INC practice: a shifting balance between agitational and conciliatory politics; an urge to bring mass pressure to bear on the colonial power, counter-balanced with an awareness among the INC leadership of the danger that popular mobilizations might slip out of the boundaries set out by the leadership. In the following chapters, these themes will be apparent in INC behaviour during 1945-47, and, to a lesser extent, in CPP behaviour in the Gold Coast in 1949-51.

The Gold Coast

Compared to India, nationalism in the Gold Coast developed late and achieved its aim of independence relatively quickly and with only rare recourse to agitational politics. Consequently, while I have only outlined Indian political developments until 1945 in broad strokes, here I will describe the finer details of the lead-up to mass mobilization in the Gold Coast. Although events here moved faster than in India, some of the same trends and themes will be apparent.

Nationalism as a mass phenomenon only emerged after WWII in most of sub-Saharan Africa, spurred on by the return of soldiers from the front, increased levels of education created by wartime colonial developmental policies, and the discontent caused by inflation and shortages of goods in the immediate post-war period. Particularly important was the emergence of an urban petty-bourgeois class of elementary-school-leavers – cut off from access to chiefly powers and anxious for economic benefits – as well as the growth of an increasingly discontented urban indigenous intelligentsia.⁷ Several prominent intellectuals, anxious to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by the 1946 Burns constitution (which provided for an elected African majority on the Legislative Council), formed the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) led by the lawyer J. B. Danquah. The aim of this organization was “to ensure that by all legitimate and constitutional means the direction and control of government should pass into the hands of the people and their chiefs in the shortest possible time.”⁸ In fact, the leadership’s goal was to replace the chiefs in the Legislative Council by calling for elections on the basis of “competence and not otherwise.”⁹ Like the INC, the main constitutional nationalist party in the Gold Coast emerged under the leadership of the urban – primarily Western-educated – intelligentsia.

Much more quickly than the early INC, but partly influenced by the Indian example, the UGCC apprehended the need to increase party membership. To this end, its leader Danquah in 1947 invited a younger, dynamic lawyer Kwame Nkrumah, then living in London, to return to the Gold Coast and serve as the secretary of the UGCC. His specific task was to reconcile “the leadership of the intelligentsia with the broad masses of people.”¹⁰ In his autobiography Nkrumah wrote that he first regarded the UGCC leaders as “reactionaries, middle-class lawyers and merchants.” Though he did decide to work with them, he claimed he was prepared to “come to loggerheads” with the executive if he found they “were

⁷ Dennis Austin, *Politics in Ghana: 1946-1960*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 49-50.

⁸ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 52, 53.

⁹ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 53.

¹⁰ Kwame Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah*, (New York: International Publishers, 1957), 61.

following a reactionary course.”¹¹ As I will describe in the next chapter, Nkrumah at first worked hard to gather new support for the UGCC, primarily from local youth societies that had emerged in the Colony and Ashanti towns. The members of these societies typically included farmers, petty traders, drivers, artisans, school teachers, clerks and letter-writers.¹² During 1947-48 the UGCC was also able to make common cause with cocoa farmers who had lost crops and income because of the swollen-shoot disease, and who were bitterly opposed to the government’s policy of cutting out trees to eliminate the infection.¹³ The party also tapped into popular discontent over economic conditions, a dissatisfaction recognized by the government-appointed Watson Commission in 1948. Its report listed a number of political, economic and social causes of the “unrest,” including the disappointment of ex-servicemen at post-war conditions; the frustration of educated Africans unable to take part in government; “controls, shortages and [the] high price of imported goods widely attributed to the machinations of European importers”; the policy of cutting-out of cocoa trees; the control of the CMB (Cocoa Marketing Board) which did not leave room for farmers’ representatives to determine uses of the Board’s reserve funds; and the shortages in housing, education and technical training.¹⁴

These issues finally came to a head after a month-long boycott of European trading firms in the Gold Coast. Most people in the country blamed these firms for the continuing high prices of goods; indeed, it was only following the extended boycott that the Chamber of Commerce firms finally promised to reduce their gross profit from 75 to 50 per cent on non-controlled commodities for a three-month “trial period.”¹⁵ A week after this agreement, on 28 February 1948, a march led by ex-servicemen set out to present the Governor with a petition; however, when they were blocked and then fired upon by police, rioting broke out in the capital Accra and other

¹¹ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 62.

¹² This list is taken from Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 55.

¹³ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 65, 58. Dennis Austin, *Ghana Observed: Essays on the Politics of a West African Republic*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976), 15 quotes the figure that 50 million trees, or a quarter of the total crop, had been lost to the swollen shoot disease by 1948.

¹⁴ Colonial Office, *Annual Report on the Gold Coast for the Year 1948* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1950), 125-26.

¹⁵ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 68, 72.

nearby towns. Several years later, the colony's Governor-General, Sir Charles Arden-Clarke, commented that these riots were "not serious by Indian standards but serious by Gold Coast standards."¹⁶ In any case, the colonial government of the time responded with some degree of panic and declared a state of emergency and arrested the UGCC leadership.¹⁷

These arrests had two important effects; first, they immediately made the UGCC and its leaders popular heroes. A less obvious consequence at the time was that their time together in prison and subsequent interactions starkly revealed the irreconcilable political disagreements between Nkrumah and the other leaders.¹⁸ Yet, although these differences became increasingly obvious and uncomfortable, the conservative UGCC leadership hesitated to expel Nkrumah, aware that the majority of the party's supporters would go with him.¹⁹ Nkrumah, who had already vastly increased the popular base of the party, then began to build up his own following within the UGCC, forming the Committee on Youth Organization.²⁰ By the end of 1949, Nkrumah had formally left the UGCC and founded his own party: the Convention People's Party (CPP).²¹ The aims of this party were to "fight relentlessly by all constitutional means" for "Self-Government Now" for the "chiefs and people of the Gold Coast." The party would be the "political vanguard," of the country and would work to remove oppression and to establish a democratic government. Moreover, the CPP would work to unite the territories: the colony proper in the south, the central Ashanti lands, the Northern Territories, and Togoland (then under British trusteeship). Finally, the party would operate "in the interests of the trade union movement" and "work for a proper reconstruction of a better Gold Coast" in which the people had the right to "govern themselves as free people."²²

¹⁶ Charles Arden-Clarke, "Eight Years of Transition in Ghana," *African Affairs* 226 (January, 1958): 30.

¹⁷ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 74.

¹⁸ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 82, 85.

¹⁹ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 92; Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 83.

²⁰ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 96; Austin, *Ghana Observed*, 22.

²¹ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 78.

²² The CPP's six-point program reproduced in Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 101.

As is apparent, this new party's program went beyond the modest aims of the UGCC; however, the CPP remained moderate in its own way. It continued to recognize the chiefs, fighting for their independence alongside the people's. Although it demanded self-government and independence, the CPP did not construct a systematic condemnation of British colonialism. Finally, although the CPP program was "socialistic" in many ways, the party did not seek a social revolution and their vision of an independent nation was of one which existed within the Commonwealth and the Sterling Area.²³ Indeed, their overall ideological commitment remained very hesitant, with little attempt to make members adopt any but the most general nationalistic ideological position. As we will see in the next section, this ideological ambiguity stemmed in part from the party's claim to represent the nation.

REPRESENTING THE NATION

India

Throughout much of its existence as a mass party the INC contained a coalition of various interests: members of the Hindu Right who sympathized with movements like the Mahasabha; supporters of Gandhi who were concerned with "upliftment" and his "constructive" program of national renewal; and left-wing activists who followed leaders like Nehru and Bose. The INC held this diverse assortment of interests together as a party by attempting to act as a representative of the Indian nation, or a "counter-state."²⁴ While control was centralized under Gandhi during agitational campaigns, in general the party's ideology remained "vague and incomplete" enough

²³ R. B. Fitch and M. Oppenheimer, *Ghana: End of an Illusion*, (New York and London, Monthly Review Press: 1966), 27.

²⁴ S. Bhattacharya, "The Colonial Working Class and the Anti-Imperialist Struggle," *Indian Historical Review* 12 (no. 1-2 1985): 277. See also P. K. Jose, "Gandhiji's Leadership of the Indian National Congress: A Study in Political Management," *Journal of Indian History* 61 (no. 1-3 1983): 219.

to permit other political parties, organizations and associations to exist within its fold.²⁵

The INC's labour policies during this era were indicative of the overall party divisions. Vinay Bahl argues that there were three "strands of thought" regarding tactics for handling labour within Congress. The first was represented by Gandhi and his associates, who sought class harmony and opposed coercion – either by mill owners or workers. Another set of reformist leaders like N. M. Joshi in the All India Trade Union Congress also believed in class harmony, but did not agree with Gandhi's methods and were willing to cooperate with the British government. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Shri Chakravarthi Rajagopalachari represented a second strand, one which had the support of industrial capitalists like the Birlas and Tatas. This group was more interested in protecting upper class interests, and tended to support police or military methods to control labour agitation. Nehru, Bose and other Congress Socialists comprised the third strand. Bahl argues that although they were "socialists," this third group shared the same "ideological orientation" as the others, in that the Socialists were interested in restraining worker militancy and bringing labour into the INC fold.²⁶ Because in some senses they dominated the debates within the INC during the 1930s and 1940s (and within the historiography), my attention here will be focused on the politics of Gandhi and those of the Congress Socialists.

In general, Gandhi's approach was a form of gradualism which sought to contain the economic demands of the lower classes and ensure that immediate losses to the upper classes would be minimized. Within his program the whole nation could be involved in a gradual movement towards social equality, the wealthy classes reassured of their safety, and popular aspirations restrained from making immediate radical demands.²⁷ Nehru, for one, was dissatisfied with this approach, and argued

²⁵James Manor, "How and Why Liberal and Representative Politics Emerged in India," *Political Studies* 38 (no. 1 1990): 29; Bhattacharya, "Colonial Working Class," 277.

²⁶Vinay Bahl, "Attitude of the Indian National Congress Towards the Working Class Struggle in India 1918-1947," in *Congress and Classes: Nationalism, Workers and Peasants*, ed. Kapil Kumar, (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1988), 5.

²⁷Francine Frankel *India's Political Economy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 47.

that class conciliation would not achieve economic freedom for the majority of Indian people. In his 1933 *Whither India?* he argued that “[i]n my own mind it is clear that if an indigenous government took the place of a foreign government and kept all the vested interests intact, this would not even be the shadow of freedom.”²⁸

Nevertheless, Nehru rarely opposed Gandhi’s policy actively. Indeed, he defended the bourgeois nature of the INC against its Communist critics, arguing in his 1936 *An Autobiography* that if one accepts that nationalism is middle class, “it is absurd to say that the leaders betray the masses because they do not try to upset the land system or the capitalist system. They never claimed to do so.” Although in his view a growing number of INC Socialists wanted to change these systems, “they cannot speak in the name of the Congress.”²⁹

Certainly, by the mid-1930s, socialists in the INC had gained a significant degree of influence. During the late 1920s Nehru had emerged as a leader of the left-wing INC faction which attempted to make the party support the twin goals of independence and socialism.³⁰ P. K. Jose argues that the socialist wing of the INC was more of a threat to Gandhi’s control than communal divisions, and they charged him with blocking social transformation and maintaining the status quo.³¹ In 1934 Nehru helped form the All India Congress Socialist Party whose objective was to achieve “complete independence and the establishment of a socialist society.”³² During these Depression years the socialists were at their peak, and “showed signs of dominating the Indian political scene” with many of their demands being adopted by Congress – including the establishment of the Mass Contacts Committee in 1937.³³ In Bihar after 1937 there were clashes between INC socialists, who supported the radical peasant *kisan sabha* activists, and the INC administration, which aided the zamindari landowners by watering down social legislation and squelching peasant

²⁸ Quoted in Frankel, “Class Conciliation,” 53.

²⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (Bombay: Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1962), 366-67.

³⁰ Jose, “Gandhiji’s Leadership,” 237-38.

³¹ Jose, “Gandhiji’s Leadership,” 247-48.

³² Jose, “Gandhiji’s Leadership,” 249.

³³ Jose, “Gandhiji’s Leadership,” 251.

unrest.³⁴ There was also tension over the growing number of Communist members within the INC, particularly when the Congress leadership in Kerala along with significant portions of the Tamilnadu and Andhra memberships declared their adhesion to the Communist Party of India (CPI).³⁵

However, during the 1930s Nehru himself had moved towards the centre and closer to the supporters of Gandhi in the party. Jose argues that he had become “disgusted with Leftist policies” which were often much more hesitant in practice than in words; moreover, Nehru himself was usually inclined to be extreme in his arguments, but cautious in his actions.³⁶ Like the more conservative members of Congress, Nehru frequently worked to contain the radical demands of groups that did not align themselves with the INC. Although the party claimed to represent peasant interests, even under Nehru’s (and Bose’s) leadership the INC took action against the anti-landlord agitation of the peasant *kisan sabhas*.³⁷ Other INC socialists followed Nehru’s course and gradually accepted Gandhi as the leader of the independence movement. By 1939 the Socialists had accepted the assertion that the INC represented all groups of Indian people, and that Gandhi was the only one who could unite them all.³⁸

Sabyasachi Bhattacharya argues that this attempt to represent the nation as a whole – although flawed with respect to “intellectual clarity and consistency with reality” – allowed the party to build a counter-hegemony that incorporated a spectrum of social classes and interests in order to confront the colonial state. Moreover, he argues that the INC evolved in “pragmatic response” to the demands of the Indian political context and did not fit into any Western model of a political party. Thus, the INC was successful in incorporating the working class into its movement at times because its character was not defined by class as one would find under Western capitalism, but was particularly open to the “non-class approach of Congress.”³⁹

³⁴ Jose, “Gandhiji’s Leadership,” 252.

³⁵ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 370.

³⁶ Jose, “Gandhiji’s Leadership,” 253-54.

³⁷ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 365.

³⁸ Jose, “Gandhiji’s Leadership,” 254-55.

³⁹ Bhattacharya, “Colonial Working Class,” 279-80.

Ranajit Guha makes a similar claim, arguing that both the working class and the bourgeoisie were “immature” as political forces. However, his argument is that the bourgeoisie was not able to extend its hegemony as a universal class like the western bourgeoisie (apparently) did. As a result, this class always spoke with “particular” interests and resolved its antagonistic relationship with labour through “discipline” and authoritarian control rather than through a more democratic process of persuasion or negotiation. The result, in Guha’s view, was an always existing separate and parallel domain of politics for the subaltern that was “only partially penetrated by elite nationalism.”⁴⁰ One does not have to accept Guha’s claim that the INC failed to achieve hegemony and operated by force alone in order to be skeptical of claims that the INC represented nation or was able to transcend class. Even Nehru was aware that the INC was “essentially a middle-class movement,” and that “nationalism works chiefly in the interests of that class.”⁴¹ In his autobiography, Nehru wrote that the Indian National Movement is a “*bourgeois* movement, and as its very name implies, and its objective so far has been, not a change of the social order, but political independence.”⁴² Therefore, while the INC may have created a popular counter-hegemony that opposed the colonial state,⁴³ it was not, as the party usually claimed, a hegemony that was based on a coalition of class interests, nor one that worked in the interests of all Indian people. The party was predominantly a movement sponsored by the middle classes, and its counter-hegemony emerged out of the interests of this social stratum. It was this subordination of mass energy and initiative to a bourgeois movement that led to many of the “non-revolutionary” or “passive” aspects of the transfer of power in India. As I will argue in the next section, a remarkably similar set of observations can be made about the CPP in the Gold Coast.

The Gold Coast

⁴⁰ Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony*,” 134-35.

⁴¹ Sarvepalli Gopal, ed., *Jawaharlal Nehru: An Anthology*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980), 21.

⁴² Nehru, *Autobiography*, 366; his italics.

⁴³ Although Guha is probably quite right when he argues that many Indian social groups remained untouched by an INC hegemony.

Dennis Cohen characterizes the CPP as a “party of representation” in the years before independence. In his view, a “party of representation” is one that gathers as large a following as possible, resulting in an organization that itself contains the various cleavages and interests of society at large. As such, the CPP’s aims were “to protect and enhance the interests of its members within the existing structure of society,” and to that end, it discouraged radical notions of change.⁴⁴ These characteristics make the CPP remarkably similar to the INC; indeed, neither party was organized along firm ideological lines, and both incorporated right and left wings, as well as associate organizations, within the party fold. CPP members were primarily united on the basis of their desire for “Self-Government Now,” and the vaguely-stated aim of developing the country “on the basis of Socialism.”⁴⁵ Dennis Austin claims that the party was socialist “in the sense that the leaders believe[d] that they [could] use State controls to manage the economy . . . and the resources of the public sector to consolidate the party.” However, this vision of state management was not combined with an interest in social equality, and Austin comments that there was “little that [was] egalitarian about the party’s members.”⁴⁶ For example, Nkrumah’s key supporter and right-hand man Komla Agbeli Gbedemah was a both a “national democrat” and “nascent entrepreneur,” who believed that his own social class would be freed by ending British rule.⁴⁷

The scanty development of an ideology within the CPP is apparent in Apter’s description of the party’s “right” and “left” wings. In his view, the “right” wing included the vast majority of party members – those who sought independence with little concern for the form of the future independent state or society. Apter describes the left wing as having more “sophisticated members” who had read some Marxist literature and had developed a socialist orientation combined with a more thorough

⁴⁴ Dennis L. Cohen, “The Convention People’s Party of Ghana: Representational or Solidarity Party?” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 4 (Spring, 1970): 173.

⁴⁵ David E. Apter, *Ghana in Transition*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 203.

⁴⁶ Austin, *Ghana Observed*, 40.

⁴⁷ Manning Marable, “Kwame Nkrumah and the Convention People’s Party: A Critical Reassessment,” *Transafrica Forum* 3 (Summer, 1986): 21.

ideological commitment to nationalism.⁴⁸ Similarly, a minority of the CPP Assembly members who wanted to move in a more radical direction coincided with a large majority of CPP rank and file (both inside and outside of the Assembly), who were satisfied with the opportunities before them.⁴⁹

As a party, the CPP placed almost no ideological demands on its members – requiring only a small membership fee.⁵⁰ One socialist who had come to the Gold Coast to work with the CPP was “shocked” by the low level of ideological commitment by the party leaders, writing that at independence “nobody was asking ‘What Is To Be Done’!”⁵¹ In its party constitution, approved in 1951, the CPP declared its intention to “establish a Socialist State in which all men and women shall have equal opportunity and where there shall be no capitalist exploitation.” However, there remained little correlation between the party’s description of its members as a “political vanguard for removing all forms of oppression and for the establishment of a democratic socialist society” and how the party worked in practice.⁵² Indeed, Austin describes the vain struggles by party leaders between 1951 and 1954 to reorganize the CPP and produce a “militant, disciplined body of followers out of a strongly localized society.” Significantly, this type of government was never formed before independence, and party discipline – both ideological and parliamentary – remained a problem until the end of the colonial era. Thus, though the centre could count on all members to support the rallying-cry of “Self-Government Now,” for many members local issues and concerns would remain dominant.⁵³

Despite (or perhaps because of) the lack of ideological conformity, a significant unifying force within the CPP was Kwame Nkrumah himself. As the founder and main organizer of the party, Nkrumah was central to the CPP in a way unmatched by Gandhi, Nehru, Patel or Azad for the INC. Not only did Nkrumah become an important symbol of unity for his party in the absence of another common

⁴⁸ Apter, *Ghana in Transition*, 210.

⁴⁹ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 156.

⁵⁰ Marable, “Kwame Nkrumah,” 21-22.

⁵¹ Ras Makonnen quoted in Marable, “Kwame Nkrumah,” 26.

⁵² Quoted in Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 162;163.

⁵³ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 175.

belief, he also was officially elected the party's chairman for life. As one of his supporters Gbedemah said, "Nkrumah provided the answers. If one did not know what to believe, the answer was, 'Follow Nkrumah.' If one did not know quite what to hope for, the answer was 'Follow Nkrumah.'"⁵⁴ In his autobiography, Nkrumah proudly quoted one of the party slogans of the time: "Kwame Nkrumah is the CPP and the CPP is Kwame Nkrumah!"⁵⁵

These claims of Nkrumah's importance are no doubt exaggerations; nevertheless, understanding his political ideas and organizational praxis reveals much about the CPP's political outlook and objectives. Upon first coming into contact with Nkrumah, the colonial administration was alarmed by his socialist connections in England and the United States. When he was arrested in 1948 the authorities found on his person a membership card to the British Communist Party – unsigned, however – and a document called "the Circle." "The Circle" was a manifesto for a proposed revolutionary vanguard whose goal would be a union of "African Socialist Republics." The organization would be authoritarian, and members would have to acknowledge the personal leadership of Kwame Nkrumah. Although this document reveals the authoritarian leanings of Nkrumah as a leader – particularly apparent during his rule of Ghana after independence – it did not represent the type of movement he eventually created in the country.⁵⁶ Nkrumah writes that by the time he returned to the Gold Coast he had come to understand the tactical importance of a *mass* movement for capturing the people's enthusiasm and winning concessions from the colonial state. Like many others at the time Nkrumah had been influenced by the example of Gandhi and the apparent success with which the INC had brought India to independence. Although he did not accept nonviolence as a creed, Nkrumah adopted it as a strategy for the CPP, terming it "Positive Action" rather than using Gandhi's term *satyagraha*.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Quoted in Marable, "Kwame Nkrumah," 22.

⁵⁵ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 271.

⁵⁶ David Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Father of African Nationalism*, revised ed., (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1998), 23; "The Circle" is also reproduced in Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 303-04.

⁵⁷ Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 15; see Chapter 3 for a more thorough account of Positive Action.

Nkrumah was a pragmatic politician who was willing to compromise on many issues with Britain in order to attain the goal of “Independence Now.” In his autobiography, he wrote that the “CPP was not merely a mass movement,” but was a political party, reasoning that “when the time comes for a ruling power to accord self-government it [i.e. Britain] will do so more willingly if it can hand over to a properly constituted political party with a majority backing rather than to a revolutionary nationalist movement.”⁵⁸ Thus, whatever Nkrumah’s political leanings, he was able to meet to British expectations by constructing a political party that primarily operated through constitutional means, and by avoiding political methods and demands that were too radical.⁵⁹ Nkrumah’s pragmatism probably did contribute to the quick and efficient transfer of power in the Gold Coast/Ghana; however, it also produced a governing party with neither a firm allegiance to the British governing institutions that it inherited nor a deeply rooted base among the country’s population.

CLASS STRUCTURE AND “CAPTURING” THE MASSES

India

It is important to realize that the INC worked through class structures that by and large operated on a top-down basis. D. A. Low has argued that the key to the INC’s success was its ability to capture the support of the “dominant peasants” in India.⁶⁰ These “dominant peasants” existed within a highly stratified countryside and were a significant group of property holders, working the land themselves with the help of hired labour.⁶¹ While large landowners “overwhelmingly” gave their support to the British, the situation of the dominant peasants was more ambivalent. Low argues that during the three decades of mass nationalist agitation, important castes within the

⁵⁸ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, ix.

⁵⁹ Geoffrey Bing argues that the CPP tended to be a moderate party, and that most of its actions differed little from the “commonplace” activities of British political parties. Geoffrey Bing, *Reap the Whirlwind: An Account of Kwame Nkrumah’s Ghana from 1950 to 1966*, (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1968), 109.

⁶⁰ Low, “Introduction,” 2 & 20.

⁶¹ Low, “Introduction,” 1-2.

dominant peasant groups increasingly threw their support behind the INC, undermining the British district officials who had previously depended on their support.⁶² Through the use of local notables in the villages, the INC could increasingly mobilize large numbers for its campaigns, whether agitational or – what was to become much more significant – electoral.⁶³

The INC leadership was primarily composed of upper-caste Hindus, mostly with Western-style education and training in various professions. Francine Frankel makes some interesting observations about the party structure at the local village level. Here, she argues, there was no real devolution of power to those on the lower rungs of the social ladder, whether lower caste subsistence cultivators, tenant farmers, or landless labourers. Rather, the overwhelming majority of INC recruits were admitted as “primary” rather than “active” members. Yet it was only the “active” members who carried out the tasks of “enrolling new members, raising funds, and carrying out other political and social welfare activities sponsored by Congress, [and who] were eligible to stand for party office.”⁶⁴ Thus, most of the rural population never had direct access to the INC organization, and as a result both the District and Provincial Congress Committees were controlled by an alliance of the dominant landowning castes, the middle class intelligentsia, and urban businessmen and merchants. It was the unique power of Gandhi’s nationalist ideology, which portrayed the INC as a movement accommodating *all* groups and classes, and advocated compromises to resolve any class or caste conflicts that did erupt, that reconciled the contradictions within the INC. It was also because of the party’s policy of postponing contentious social and economic issues until after independence that the INC could succeed in its claim to speak for the masses, while incorporating sections of the intelligentsia committed to social and economic reform, and at the

⁶² Low, “Introduction,” 20.

⁶³ Judith M. Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 354.

⁶⁴ Frankel, “Class Conciliation,” 29.

same time being dominated in practice by the urban business classes and middle class of rural landowners.⁶⁵

Much of the central party intelligentsia had strong connections with members of the indigenous industrial class, connections which had widened and deepened when Gandhi joined the Congress. The industrialists welcomed the idea of a “national liberation” that would undermine British trading and manufacturing interests in India; however, they were understandably opposed to anything that might look like social or economic revolution.⁶⁶ Gandhi’s program tended to fit well with these interests as it was opposed to class struggle or social revolution, advocating instead class conciliation and cooperation. Kristoffel Lieten argues that Gandhi’s strategy was to organize “long-term consent to the existing order.”⁶⁷ His strategy of political mobilization demonstrated to the bourgeoisie a technique of struggle which mobilized the population, but not for a socially militant struggle. Thus, Gandhi’s techniques captured the participation of the population, while still subordinating them to the hegemony of the bourgeoisie.⁶⁸

On the other hand, Francine Frankel writes that the INC probably did not rely on Indian industrialists for day-to-day or “normal” party operations and expenses. However, she argues that business leaders could often be very helpful in “smoothing the path” of the INC. During the 1937 elections, Nehru admitted that the INC had found it necessary to solicit “some big industrialists” for contributions. Moreover, Gandhi’s social welfare work attracted large “ad hoc” donations from capitalists for “nonpolitical” construction work, aiding the day-to-day contacts with rural populations.⁶⁹ Gandhi himself always had good relations with many industrialists, both with smaller businessmen, merchants and mill owners in Calcutta, Bombay and Ahmedabad, and particularly with industrial giants like the Tatas and Birlas.⁷⁰ It would be wrong to assume that these relationships with business determined Gandhi’s

⁶⁵ Frankel, “Class Conciliation,” 30.

⁶⁶ Low, “Introduction,” 19.

⁶⁷ Leiten, “Control over Labour,” 60.

⁶⁸ Leiten, “Control over Labour,” 65 & 60.

⁶⁹ Frankel, “Class Conciliation,” 32-33.

⁷⁰ A. K. Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, complete version, (London: Orient Longman Limited, 1988), 111 comments that staying at the Birla house while in Bombay was Gandhi’s “usual custom.”

approach to social and economic problems; rather, his political tactics inspired the confidence of business leaders by reassuring them on issues of social upheaval.⁷¹

The Gold Coast

The majority of CPP members were educated or semi-educated commoners – called “youngmen” and generally holding a low occupational status – as well as a growing number of urban semi-industrial workers and a large section of the commoner agricultural strata.⁷² The “youngmen” – often in their thirties – were storekeepers, petty traders, clerks, junior civil servants and primary school teachers. Fitch and Oppenheimer argue that the youngmen were “essentially a petty-bourgeois stratum” whose interests conflicted with those of the rural chiefs, the colonial system, and the wealthier commoner stratum – the UGCC intellectuals.⁷³ Moreover, these authors argue that the petty bourgeois element which constituted Nkrumah’s party was not the “real” oppressed class in the Gold Coast: truly oppressed were the landless agricultural labourers and sharecroppers who were in direct confrontation with the chiefs. Thus, Fitch and Oppenheimer claim that the CPP could never actually be an emancipatory party without including the poorest strata of society; as it was, it only represented Nkrumah and his “petty-bourgeois comrades.”⁷⁴ While other authors point out that Fitch and Oppenheimer are often too economic in their arguments about the Gold Coast,⁷⁵ it is nevertheless clear that the CPP primarily represented an intermediate class which could be described as “petty-bourgeois” or “lower-middle class,” and it is particularly significant that this class composition was similar to the dominant middle-class interests in the INC. Both parties tended to act on behalf of this constituency even while attempting to mobilize a multi-class spectrum of society.

⁷¹ Frankel, “Class Conciliation,” 34.

⁷² Jon Kraus, “On the Politics of Nationalism and Social Change in Ghana,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 7 (April, 1969): 110.

⁷³ Fitch and Oppenheimer, *Ghana: End of an Illusion*, 21; Maxwell Owusu, *Uses and Abuses of Political Power: A Case Study of Continuity and Change in the Politics of Ghana*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 221 describes these groups as belonging to the “lower middle class.”

⁷⁴ Fitch and Oppenheimer, *Ghana: End of an Illusion*, 22-23.

⁷⁵ Kraus, “On the Politics of Nationalism,” 111-12 is much more scathing in his critique than I am here.

CHAPTER 3:

MASS MOBILIZATIONS

This chapter will examine the behaviour and characteristics of the INC and CPP as mass mobilizational parties, particularly during the crucial transfer of power stage. In each case, it is necessary to understand the leadership's approach to mass mobilization and the role they created for popular forces. The INC carried out numerous popular political campaigns over several decades, developing a keen understanding of the strategies, benefits and dangers of mass mobilization. By contrast, the Gold Coast only experienced one mass political campaign under the CPP before independence – the 1950 Positive Action campaign. To different degrees, each party developed a relationship with the population to bring large numbers of people into the movement, and it is crucial to understand the terms on which they did so. Despite their apparent radicalism, both the INC and CPP were nervous about mobilizing popular forces. Both parties were interested in setting boundaries for mass action and controlling the behaviour of crowds. Moreover, both parties sought to limit labour and peasant activism that occurred outside of the party's authority. Thus, while the INC and CPP did much to mobilize the colonial populations, they did so in terms that subordinated popular action to the party program and the needs of the party elite.

MASS MOBILIZATION AND AGITATIONAL NATIONALISM

India

While Gandhi was a key mobilizing force for the INC and a symbol of nationalism for millions of Indian people, he also put forward a vision of mass mobilization that emphasized leadership and the necessity of elite control. Along with other INC leaders, Gandhi was uneasy with the participation of “the masses” and tended to regard them as ignorant and for the most part irresponsible.¹ From his first Indian experiment with mass agitation in the non-cooperation movement, Gandhi was alarmed by the uncontrolled nature of “mob” action.² Later in the face of the Chauri Chaura massacre³ and the parallel general uprising, Gandhi suspended the campaign and determined not to attempt civil disobedience “until we have obtained complete control over the masses.”⁴ Gandhi’s concern was to bring popular forces into the INC movement and to control their behaviour and modes of political agitation.

A key insight into Gandhi’s vision of the appropriate terms for mass participation was provided by his 1920 article, “Democracy Versus Mobocracy.”⁵ Although he used the term “mobocracy,” Gandhi’s subject was not the “undisciplined destruction” found in civil disobedience movements, nor the violence accompanying communal hostility, nor the type of brutality that was seen two years later in the Chauri Chaura massacre. His complaint was not merely with direct expressions of violence but with the over-enthusiastic behaviour of crowds at INC events, as demonstrated by the “mobocracy” of his arrivals at railway stations:

I have been ashamed to witness at railway stations thoughtless though unwitting destruction of passengers’ luggage by demonstrators who in their adoration of their heroes have ignored everything else and everybody else. They have made, much to the discomfort of their heroes, unmusical and harsh noises. They have trampled upon one another. They have elbowed out one another. All have shouted, all at the same

¹ Gyanendra Pandey, “Congress and the Nation, 1917-1947,” in *Congress and Indian Nationalism: The Pre-Independence Phase*, ed. Richard Sisson and Stanley Wolpert, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 126.

² Bhattacharya, “The Colonial Working Class,” 270.

³ On 4 February 1922 twenty-two policemen were killed by villagers in a violent reaction to police repression of a protest. See Sarkar, *Modern India*, 224-26.

⁴ Bhattacharya, “The Colonial Working Class,” 271.

⁵ For the following see Raghavan Iyer, *Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 3, 146-151. Although in many ways problematic, Guha’s extended discussion of “Gandhian Discipline” touches on this article in *Dominance without Hegemony*, 135-49.

time, in the holy name of order and peace. Ten volunteers have been heard to give the same order at the same time.⁶

Gandhi further complained that in these situations leaders were at the mercy of “mobs.” The solution, he argued, was to “evolve order out of chaos” and introduce “people’s law instead of mob-law.”⁷ To this end, he provided a list of twenty instructions for participants of these demonstrations.⁸ This article and the rules Gandhi proposed reveal some of the leader’s authoritarian tendencies with respect to mass gatherings – or what he described here as “mobocracy.” The intent of most of his rules was to make arrival and transit easier for the INC “heroes.”⁹ Moreover, his instructions would be enforced by trained *satyagrahi* volunteers, who themselves had specific codes of conduct.¹⁰ The role of these volunteers was particularly important, and Gandhi wrote that “[a]bove all, everyone should obey volunteers’ instructions without question.”¹¹ Gandhi claimed that these rules would help turn “mobocracy” into “democracy”; however, the powers he gave to volunteers and leaders tended towards an authoritarian rather than a democratic solution for his problems. Indeed, rather than encouraging autonomous, though respectful, behaviour from the attendees, Gandhi seemed to demand almost complete passivity from the people, writing that it “is no part of the audience to preserve order. They do so by keeping motionless and silent.”¹² In this article, as in other places, Gandhi emphasized the importance of discipline as a way to structure mass demonstrations and control the people’s behaviour within the movement.¹³

⁶ Iyer, *Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 3, 147.

⁷ Iyer, *Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 3, 148.

⁸ See Iyer, *Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 3, 149-51 for this list.

⁹ While most of the articles were designed to increase the comfort of INC leaders, Gandhi included some provisions to protect the crowd: Gandhi warned that women should be “specially protected,” and little children never brought into a crowd (numbers 16 & 17).

¹⁰ For example, that there “should be no raw volunteers accepted for big demonstrations,” that volunteers should carry a general instructions book, and that their first duty “should be to see that other passengers’ luggage is not trampled upon,” Iyer *Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, 150.

¹¹ Iyer, *Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 3, 151.

¹² Iyer, *Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 3, 151.

¹³ On Gandhi’s authoritarian tactics of mobilization, see Radhika Desai, *Slouching Towards Ayodhya: From Congress to Hindutva in Indian Politics*, 2nd ed, (New Delhi: Three Essays Press, 2003), 56-57.

In order for civil disobedience to succeed, Gandhi emphasized the necessity of self-discipline.¹⁴ He argued that individuals had to bring about changes in their personal life by reducing their wants and by exercising self-restraint and honesty.¹⁵ However, just as he emphasized the role of leaders and volunteers in controlling crowd behaviour, Gandhi seems to have accepted that most people could not develop the requisite self-discipline on their own. According to him, the leadership would be responsible for producing these changes; he argued that a positive effect would only be seen in the people “if the lives of leaders, both private and public, are perfect.”¹⁶ Gandhi did not expect “the majority” to seek personal change because everyone “cannot be expected to consider whether their actions promote or retard the welfare of their country.” In his view it “behooves those, who are learned, those who are thoughtful, whose intellects are trained or who are desirous of serving their country, to test every action of theirs,” which will induce “the multitude” to “copy the actions of the enlightened.”¹⁷ Similarly, he argued that the “mob” had no mind of its own and, therefore, “nothing is so easy as to train mobs.”¹⁸ Because mobs could easily be influenced for better or worse, a “selfless, dedicated and enlightened group of political workers” was needed to lead and protect the masses.¹⁹

Prima facie Gandhi’s relationship to the Indian population corresponded roughly to the role of a leader as described by Gramsci. The Italian theorist argued that a party’s leadership should develop the progressive elements of the masses and bring “discipline” to their “spontaneity.”²⁰ More than any other leader, Gandhi seemed to have a close relationship to the Indian population and command a significant following. In addition, he tried to foster a symbolic attachment to the people and identified himself with their struggles. Nevertheless, it remains uncertain whether Gandhi was an “organic expression” of the people as described by Gramsci. The dual nature of Gandhi’s approach was seen in his efforts to control “mob”

¹⁴ Iyer, *Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 3, 597.

¹⁵ Iyer, *Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 3, 506.

¹⁶ Iyer, *Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 3, 548.

¹⁷ Iyer, *Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 3, 342-43.

¹⁸ Gandhi quoted in Partha Chatterjee, “Gandhi and the Critique of Civil Society,” 185.

¹⁹ Chatterjee, “Gandhi and the Critique of Civil Society,” 185.

²⁰ Gramsci, *SPN*, 90, 198.

situations and foster self-discipline among the Indian people. As I have described, he often had a paternalistic attitude toward the INC's followers and did not trust them to moderate their behaviour or use self-discipline on their own.²¹ The people were expected to respond to the authority of the party leadership and *satyagrahi* volunteers, but received little encouragement to express their own initiative or spontaneity. Moreover, Gramsci argued that every member of a party was an "intellectual," thus allowing a space for authority and initiative from the party's ranks.²² Gandhi, however, seemed to believe the mass membership of the INC was *unintellectual* and unable to identify the proper behaviour for itself or its appropriate role in the struggle for independence. Therefore, in Gandhi's framework, the party's elite and trained volunteers provided the correct examples and enforced discipline in order to guide the masses to fulfill their party's aims.

Of course, mass mobilizations never achieved the standards of behaviour set out by Gandhi. Particularly during 1942, grassroots INC organizers engaged in violence and acts of terrorism and sabotage.²³ Moreover, the strikes, marches and rallies that occurred during mass agitations often conformed to Gandhi's characterized "mobocracy." Ranajit Guha argues that the indiscipline Gandhi complained about was in fact a "particular style of popular mobilization"; or rather, it was the "discipline" of the subaltern domain of politics – a separate domain from elite politics.²⁴ While one should not accept Guha's division of politics into a "subaltern" and "elite" sphere too easily, it is apparent that there were many aspects of mass agitation that could not be easily controlled by the nationalist leaders. Nevertheless, in many instances the INC leadership found itself able to intervene directly in order to moderate or halt civil disobedience campaigns.

In particular, the INC repeatedly worked to prevent widespread labour agitation in the country. Gandhi opposed the use of labour activism as a political weapon, writing that it "does not require much effort of the intellect to perceive that it

²¹ Gramsci criticizes this type of "paternalism" among party leaders, *SPN*, 97.

²² Gramsci, *SPN*, 16.

²³ See Sarkar, *Modern India*, 394-96 for a general description of the movement.

²⁴ Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony*, 141.

is a most dangerous thing to make political use of labour until labourers understand the political conditions of the country and are prepared to work for the common good.”²⁵ During the 1919 agitation, Gandhi spoke to mill workers in Girmigaon, but warned against the use of political strikes and *hartals* (work stoppages) as weapons. In particular, he told them not to join the April 14th *hartal* day unless they had permission from their factory masters.²⁶ Moreover, when the INC formed provincial ministries between 1937-39, their labour policies rarely supported the working classes, but were often repressive. For example, the United Provinces ministry received praise from the imperial government for its strict measures to maintain the peace and keep Kanpur quiet in August 1937.²⁷ These measures, used against about 24,000 striking mill workers, included a patrol of over one thousand policemen, several lathi (batons) charges on strikers, and at its climax, police gunfire against picketers. Commenting on the events, Nehru warned that the “workers should remember that the government is very powerful and will put down violence by violence and that the workers will be subdued in no time.”²⁸

Although Gandhi generally felt peasants were more suited to the discipline of civil disobedience, the INC tended to react harshly to radical movements by rural groups that did not fall under their own political umbrella. For example, in dealing with the peasant, or *kisan*, unrest in Bihar in 1946-47, the INC collaborated with the zamindari landlords to contain peasant agitation. At this time, many of the zamindari were members of the INC and put pressure on the party through a variety of means, even gaining a place for themselves on the arbitration committees formed to deal with the land issue.²⁹ Barik claims that during this time the provincial administrations lost any appearance of neutrality under the INC: the party ordered the police and military to fire at *kisans*, and the bureaucracy, judiciary and police collaborated with the

²⁵ Quoted in Lieten, “Control Over Labour,” 65.

²⁶ Bhattacharya, “Colonial Working Class,” 27.

²⁷ For the following see Bahl, “Attitude of the Indian National Congress,” 24-26; Sarkar, *Modern India*, 361, also argues that the INC was not popular among the trade union movement, which remained predominantly under Liberal or Communist leadership.

²⁸ Quoted in Bahl, “Attitude of the Indian National Congress,” 26.

²⁹ Radhakanta Barik, “Congress Politics and Peasant Unrest in Bihar, 1946-47,” in *Myth and Reality: The Struggle for Freedom in India, 1945-47*, ed. Amit Kumar Gupta, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1987), 400.

landlords in question.³⁰ The Bihar Maintenance of Public Order Act of 1947, passed in order to control the situation, placed much stricter conditions on the *kisan* leaders than on the landlords and was primarily designed to prevent peasant agitation.³¹ Thus, although in public the INC leadership called the landlord class regressive and medieval, their use of force was to control the *kisan* actions, rather than zamindari threats.³² Indeed, even the imperialist British historian Reginald Coupland praised the INC's agrarian policy, holding that "its treatment of the landlords was not intolerably severe," and arguing that "Congress policy might almost be called conservative."³³

Another sign that the INC failed to gain the type of "national-popular" consensus described by Gramsci is seen in the emergence of significant opposition parties.³⁴ Although it claimed to represent the whole nation, the existence of these opposition parties among groups like Hindu communalists, Muslims, Sikhs, *Dalits* and Communists belied these claims.³⁵ The most significant rivalry of course was that which developed between the INC and the Muslim League, eventually leading to the country's partition in 1947.

Modern religious communalism in India can best be seen as a middle-class strategy designed to provide greater access to economic and political opportunities for members of a given "community."³⁶ Many historians have emphasized Britain's role in increasing communal divisions between Hindus and Muslims by using the colonial state's authority to grant religious-based awards and opportunities.³⁷ This tactic was

³⁰ Barik, "Congress Politics and Peasant Unrest," 406; Sumit Sarkar also describes the INC's "incredibly hostile attitude towards Kisan Sabha militancy," in *Modern India*, 365.

³¹ Barik, "Congress Politics and Peasant Unrest," 407.

³² Barik, "Congress Politics and Peasant Unrest," 408.

³³ Quoted in Sarkar, *Modern India*, 363.

³⁴ On "national-popular" see Gramsci, *SPN*, 133 and 421 note 65.

³⁵ As a sample, these parties included the Hindu Mahasabha, Muslim League, the Akalis Movement, Dr. Ambedkar's All-India Scheduled Castes Federation and the Communist Party of India (CPI).

³⁶ Chandra et al. *India's Struggle*, 403. I use quotation marks to indicate that, although distinct religious communities existed in India, in practice their membership was often amorphous and the borders between "communities" frequently blurred.

³⁷ Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 13; Sarkar, *Modern India*, 140-44; Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, *Imperial Power and Popular Politics: Class, Resistance and the State in India, c.1850-1950*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 278-79.

successful because it played on existing inequalities between communities. For example, Muslims in India during the first half of the twentieth century were working to catch up with other communities and generally had less western education and as a result were less frequently employed in government services than Hindus. Thus, when separate electorates were proposed, they seemed to provide a safeguard and sense of security to many Muslim leaders.³⁸ Starting in 1909, with the first granting of electoral rights, the colonial government created communal categories and a separate electorate for Muslims.³⁹ Subsequent reforms, like the 1932 Communal Award providing separate electorates for Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and the Scheduled Castes, reinforced these distinctions.⁴⁰

Until the mid-1920s there was a significant degree of understanding between the Hindu and Muslim elites in the INC and Muslim League.⁴¹ Particularly during the Khilafat movement of 1919-1924, there was a remarkable degree of cross-community cooperation.⁴² However, despite the promise of this movement, Hindu and Muslim leaders eventually broke apart.⁴³ In many ways, the climate within India was not compatible with attempts at inter-community understanding. Indeed, the British-inspired system of separate electorates rewarded those who gained a following based on religious or communal groups and tended to undermine the appeal of secular movements.⁴⁴ Moreover, during the 1920s communalism also rapidly developed a mass character that was to have important ramifications within the Indian political scene.⁴⁵ An unprecedented degree of communal violence occurred during this

³⁸ R. J. Moore, *Endgames of Empire: Studies of Britain's Indian Problem*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), 109.

³⁹ Jalal, *Democracy*, 13.

⁴⁰ Chandra et al. *India's Struggle*, 290.

⁴¹ Richard Sisson, "Congress and Indian Nationalism: Political Ambiguity and the Problems of Social Conflict and Party Control," in *Congress and Indian Nationalism: The Pre-Independence Phase*, edited by Richard Sisson and Stanley Wolpert, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, 1-20), 9. The Muslim League was founded in December, 1906.

⁴² The Khilafat movement was aimed against the British and French decision to dissolve the Ottoman empire and remove the Caliph. See Brown, *Modern India*, 220.

⁴³ This division happened after Gandhi's withdrawal from the Civil Disobedience movement in 1922, but particularly when Mohammad Ali broke with Gandhi in 1925 over repeated communal riots. See Sarkar, *Modern India*, 234.

⁴⁴ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 234.

⁴⁵ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 59.

decade, with riots in many cities across northern India and particularly the United Provinces, which alone had 91 communal outbreaks between 1923 and 1927.⁴⁶

Another cause of the Indian communal rift was the nature of the INC party and philosophy. As many scholars have pointed out, the INC's ideology tapped into a series of cultural traditions that were often heavily coded with Hindu imagery and thematics.⁴⁷ Moreover, even when the INC leadership increasingly emphasized secularism in the late 1930s, lower levels of the party hierarchy did not necessarily follow suit. In 1937 the most prominent Congress Muslim, Maulana Azad, complained about INC policy which allowed Congressmen to join the communalist Hindu Mahasabha but not the Muslim League.⁴⁸ Moreover, when the party did appeal directly to the Muslim community, their aim was often misplaced. Gandhi tended to associate himself with more conservative and pious Muslims like Azad, rather than secular Muslims like Mohammed Ali Jinnah, leader of the League. By contrast, most Muslims who joined the INC were more interested in leftist politics rather than religion, and as such they tended to be more attracted to Nehru than Gandhi or Azad.⁴⁹ However, as Aijaz Ahmad argues, most INC leaders – particularly Gandhi, Azad and Patel – were not very interested in secular Muslims. Although the 1937 Muslim “mass contact campaign” led by Nehru attracted many secular Muslims to the INC, it was the only initiative by Congress to lead Muslims with a non-Muslim leader.⁵⁰

According to Asim Roy, most historians agree that the 1937 elections were a crucial moment for INC-League relations.⁵¹ In these provincial elections the INC gained a majority in six states and was the largest single party in three others. These results worried Jinnah that his party would not be able to control Muslim-dominated

⁴⁶ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 223.

⁴⁷ Ravinder Kumar, “Introduction,” in *Myth and Reality: The Struggle for Freedom in India, 1945-47*, ed. Amit Kumar Gupta, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1987), xx.

⁴⁸ Membership to the Mahasabha was made a disqualification to INC membership in 1938. See Sarkar, *Modern India*, 356; Aijaz Ahmad also discusses the presence of Hindu communalists within the INC in “Tryst With Destiny,” *The Hindu*, 15 August, 1997, 24.

⁴⁹ Ahmad, “Tryst with Destiny,” 25.

⁵⁰ Ahmad, “Tryst with Destiny,” 25.

⁵¹ Asim Roy, “The High Politics of India's Partition: The Revisionist Perspective,” *Modern Asian Studies* 24, (no. 1 1990): 389.

provinces, let alone have a role in the Hindu majority ones.⁵² Moreover, the INC did little to resolve these fears or build a basis for future relations. Rather, the results allowed them to dismiss the League as a serious competitor. In his autobiography Azad criticized Nehru for his failure to invite the Muslim League into the UP government after the 1937 elections. The League had had its greatest success in the UP and believed that it would be given a place in the administration if it supported the INC program. However, Nehru was unwilling to accept the League proposals for participation, creating a deep rift between the parties in that province and providing the League with political ammunition to use against the INC.⁵³

Sponsored in part by the colonial government and by the Indian communities themselves, religious communalism produced more drastic consequences than many would have imagined. Particularly after WWII this hostility between the INC and the League became irreconcilable, eventually resulting in Partition.⁵⁴ However, until the negotiations for the transfer of power, when they discovered the communal conflict had progressed too far, the British found their “divide and rule” policies extremely useful in limiting opposition to their rule and keeping various Indian factions pitted against each other.

Gold Coast

The CPP had a much shorter history of politics based on mass mobilization than the INC. Formed in 1949, the CPP had already taken office under British supervision by 1951, and it would remain there (save for two election campaigns) until independence in 1957. Thus, although many people were mobilized for civil disobedience under Nkrumah’s “Positive Action” campaign, this aspect of politics in the Gold Coast was extremely limited – particularly in comparison with India, where civil disobedience of one sort or another took place across three decades. A shorter and less comprehensive effort at mass campaigning inevitably had an effect on the character

⁵² Roy, “High Politics,” 389; Moore, *Endgames*, 110.

⁵³ Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 170-71. The League had been willing to accept the INC program in government, but asked that two out of nine members of the Cabinet be from the Muslim League. Nehru was only willing to provide one space and allowed the deal to fall through.

⁵⁴ See Chapter 7 for a discussion of this era and partition.

on the CPP, which was less cohesive, less well-organized in terms of mobilizing and controlling its members, and in many ways less radical.

In organizational terms, Kwame Nkrumah was certainly adept at building party support. Upon joining the UGCC and finding that the party only had a couple of active branches, he began a tour to set up branches in every part of the country. According to his account, within six months 500 branches had been established in the Colony alone.⁵⁵ His support came mostly from youth societies which had begun to emerge in the Colony and Asante. These organizations found a common cause with the UGCC, and Danquah and Nkrumah worked together at this time to join these local groups to their national organization.⁵⁶

It must be remembered that 1947-1948 had been an explosive period: Austin describes the colony as having been “on the edge of revolt.”⁵⁷ Mass agitations and uprisings in 1948 broke out with very little prompting from any political party – the strength of the boycott in early 1948 and the unprecedented rioting after government suppression in February demonstrated the extent to which people of the Gold Coast wanted economic and political changes. Indeed, the mass of people in the Gold Coast had serious economic grievances; in the rural areas, cocoa farmers had been hard hit by the swollen-shoot disease and the government’s policy of cutting out infected crops.⁵⁸ Urban dwellers faced the double burden of rising prices for imported goods and wages that lagged behind the increasing cost of living.⁵⁹ The boycott and riots of 1948 gave voice to these frustrations and hardships, also bringing prominence to the UGCC leaders arrested by the British government.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 73.

⁵⁶ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 58.

⁵⁷ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 66.

⁵⁸ This policy became a contentious political issue in the Gold Coast, and the CPP opposed it; however, after coming to power, their inquiry confirmed the British view that destroying infected trees – even those which appeared healthy – was the only way to prevent the disease from spreading. However, the CPP government did make efforts to gain the support of farmers in their efforts by suspending compulsory cutting, offering increased compensation, and carrying out an extensive propaganda campaign to encourage farmer cooperation. See Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 160.

⁵⁹ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 66, 55.

⁶⁰ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 66, 77.

When he left the UGCC in 1949, Nkrumah brought the party's mass following along with him. The new party was formed on a more radical basis than the old, committing itself to "fight relentlessly by all constitutional means for the achievement of 'Self-Government Now.'" Certainly, from its identity as a party of the "youngmen" and the disenfranchised, the CPP obtained an image for itself as a more radical party, less afraid to take on the colonial government. However, as Austin points out, there was ambivalence within the CPP's slogans from the beginning: it was unclear if emphasis would be put on the use of "constitutional means" or on the relentless mobilization for "Self-Government Now."⁶¹

The first significant test of the party's strategies and commitments came after the publication of the Coussey Report in 1949. This report was judged to be a "reasonable and progressive document" by Arden-Clarke. He said that it "advocated far-reaching advances towards self-government," including an election and an Executive Council with an unofficial African majority.⁶² However, assemblymen would be chosen by an electoral college and the twelve-member Executive would maintain three ex-officio members and be chaired by the Governor who retained his powers of "certification and veto" intact.⁶³ At first, Nkrumah reacted strongly to the proposed constitution, which he called a "Trojan gift horse," and discussed the need for "Positive Action." However, a mass campaign was postponed when the party decided to convene a "Ghana People's Representative Assembly" which proposed revising the Coussey recommendations into a moderate constitution providing for Dominion status within the Commonwealth.⁶⁴ Only when the government refused this proposal did Nkrumah again return to the idea of Positive Action in December 1949.

When explaining the concept of Positive Action in his autobiography, Nkrumah described it as using "constitutional and legitimate non-violent methods" like those developed in India, and as opposed to "armed revolution." He argued that

⁶¹ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 86.

⁶² Arden-Clarke, "Transition in Ghana," 32.

⁶³ Colonial Office, *Annual Report on the Gold Coast for the Year 1949*, (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1950), summarizes the Coussey Report, 78-88.

⁶⁴ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 87.

some form of action was necessary because freedom had only ever been won after “bitter and vigorous struggles,” and because the “educational backwardness” of the people meant they could only understand one thing: action.⁶⁵ Therefore, Positive Action was “the adoption of all legitimate and constitutional means by which we could attack the forces of imperialism in the country.”⁶⁶ According to Nkrumah, the “weapons” of Positive Action included: 1) the ambivalently worded “legitimate political action”; 2) use of “newspapers and educational campaigns”; and 3) as a last resort “the constitutional application of strikes, boycotts, and non-co-operation based on the principle of absolute non-violence.”⁶⁷ However, in the lead-up to this campaign, the party’s commitment to Positive Action was highly subdued. Rather than a call to arms, the CPP statement cautiously warned that: “The people of this country will be waiting for two weeks from today, December 15, 1949, during which the British Government might announce through the Governor, the acceptance of the principle of a Constituent Assembly to be implemented without delay; otherwise, Positive Action may be declared any time after the said two weeks.”⁶⁸

In his autobiography Nkrumah called the Positive Action campaign a “show-down” between the party and the government; however, this term seems rather exaggerated.⁶⁹ In the days leading up to the campaign, party newspapers twice reported it had begun, and both times these claims were hastily refuted by the party leaders. Meanwhile, when the Meteorological Employees’ Union threatened to strike – with the support of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) – during the lead up to Positive Action, Nkrumah intervened to postpone the strike as apparently it “might have endangered the success of the Positive Action.”⁷⁰ Action was only finally forced on the party by the TUC’s declaration of a general strike 6 January in support of the meteorological workers.⁷¹ Two days later, after much debate and hesitation,

⁶⁵ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 111.

⁶⁶ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 111-12.

⁶⁷ Nkrumah, “What I Mean by Positive Action,” quoted in G. E. Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History 1807-1957*, (Accra: The University of Ghana, 1964), 689.

⁶⁸ Quoted in Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 88.

⁶⁹ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 114.

⁷⁰ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 115.

⁷¹ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 89.

and after conferring twice with the Colonial Secretary (the second time Nkrumah brought three party members “whose views were less radical than most”), Nkrumah announced 8 January that Positive Action was to begin that night.⁷²

The campaign – the height of the mass mobilization for independence within the Gold Coast – was remarkably short. Arden-Clarke later recounted with satisfaction that firm action was taken to “maintain law and order,” and despite some riots “the country was almost back to normal” within three weeks.⁷³ The CPP leadership was quickly jailed and put on trial on charges of sedition, prompting an illegal strike, and “coercing” the government. Fitch and Oppenheimer are skeptical about the CPP’s support of the agitation during the campaign. At the height of action, one British reporter commented that Nkrumah looked like “the most worried man in the Gold Coast” and was anxious about losing control, and about violence or a “showdown.”⁷⁴ Similarly, reporters apparently observed a lack of “nationalistic fervor” among CPP leaders at their trial, and there was much bitterness among the working class over the failure of the strike and Positive Action. Indeed, trade unions increasingly played a smaller and smaller role in the CPP from this time.⁷⁵

MASS MOBILIZATION DURING TRANSFER OF POWER NEGOTIATIONS

India

The INC leadership, imprisoned since 1942, was set free in the spring of 1945 (Gandhi had been unconditionally released a year earlier due to ill health). Although a certain unity had prevailed during the war, the leadership which emerged from jail was still divided into right and left wings. The party’s popularity was very high, and since the Communists had allied themselves with the British to fight the war, many radicals and unionists were increasingly looking to the INC as a source of progressive

⁷² Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 117.

⁷³ Arden-Clarke, “Transition in Ghana,” 32.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Fitch and Oppenheimer, *Ghana: End of an Illusion*, 30.

⁷⁵ Fitch and Oppenheimer, *Ghana: End of an Illusion*, 31, 33.

politics.⁷⁶ It now it seemed possible to address the questions of social and economic change which had been subordinated during earlier struggles. However, the INC leaders proved more interested in curbing or lessening aspirations for social change while seeking constitutional concessions from Britain at the bargaining table.⁷⁷

Sumit Sarkar characterizes this period between the war and independence as consisting of two strands of events: a series of three-way “tortuous negotiations” between the INC, the Muslim League and the British amidst ever-growing communal violence; and “sporadic, localized, but often extremely militant and united actions” including the popular agitation against the INA trials and the RIN Mutiny and strikes, as well as peasant uprisings in Bengal, Travancore and Hyderabad.⁷⁸ Indeed, during the fall and winter of 1945-1946, there was significant tension within the country and frequent hostility involving the INC, the Indian Government, and other nationalist parties, particularly the Muslim League. National INC leaders, particularly Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel, led popular agitations over the Indian National Army trials and for compensation for government repression during the Quit India campaign, as well as to protest against the use of Indian troops in the recapturing of the Dutch East Indies and to mobilize for the elections of the winter and spring of 1945-1946.

For several weeks, the speeches by Nehru and other leaders were a serious cause for alarm among British administrators. In November 1945, sending a message to the new Attlee government, the Viceroy Wavell wrote that the INC speeches “can only be intended to provoke or pave the way for mass disorder.”⁷⁹ Nevertheless, despite the apparent ferocity of this campaign, the Viceroy and other officials realized that its primary goal was to gain popularity for the INC in the lead-up to the election.⁸⁰ Given the popular mood, it was politically essential for the INC to emphasize its role in the 1942 struggle; in regards to the INA agitation, Asaf Ali

⁷⁶ Chandavarkar, *Imperial Power and Popular Politics*, 320.

⁷⁷ Chandavarkar, *Imperial Power and Popular Politics*, 320-21.

⁷⁸ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 414.

⁷⁹ Nicholas Mansergh, ed., *The Transfer of Power 1942-7*, vol. VI, (London: H.M.S.O., 1970-1983), 451.

⁸⁰ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 420.

admitted that the INC “would lose much ground in the country” unless they took up the cause.⁸¹ Indeed, the Indian government had mistakenly left themselves vulnerable on this front with their (admittedly foolish) decision start the trials with “men against whom no brutality could be proved.”⁸²

Nevertheless, the moderate factions of the INC were at work: in his December appreciation of the situation, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian armed forces argued that the INC did not want large-scale uprisings before the elections; moreover, he believed that “most of the political leaders and big businessmen seem at present to be opposed to violent methods.”⁸³ Similarly, several British officials reported in November that G. D. Birla was “getting alarmed at the virulence of Congress speeches.”⁸⁴ Even in the fall of 1945 the INC was taking decisions that were far from radical, particularly with its campaign against the Communist Party of India which ended in the expulsion of Communists from the AICC in December 1945. Although this vilification apparently stemmed from the Communists’ cooperation with Britain during the war, Sarkar points out that similar accusations and attacks were not made against the Mahasabha who had also participated, or against the prominent INC leader Rajagopalachari who had supported the war effort.⁸⁵

The events which most served to moderate INC behavior and statements, however, were the popular upheavals in Calcutta and Bombay in November.⁸⁶ These agitations went on for several days, and control of Calcutta in particular was not easily re-established by the authorities. Wavell commented to the Secretary of State in a letter that there was a “very strong anti-British feeling behind the whole demonstration,” and that the situation remained very “explosive.” In his view, and in that of others in the government, the cause of the intensity lay in the “inflammatory speeches of the political leaders . . . working on the unstable minds of the youthful

⁸¹ Quoted in Sarkar, *Modern India*, 420.

⁸² A. J. A. Wavell: *The Viceroy's Journal*, ed. Penderel Moon, (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 191.

⁸³ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 577.

⁸⁴ Quoted in Sarkar, *Modern India*, 420.

⁸⁵ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 420.

⁸⁶ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 421.

Bengali.”⁸⁷ Birla wrote to a British official in early December with an assurance that no INC leaders wanted crisis or violence. The leaders had been led by popular impatience in the previous weeks; nevertheless, he was sure that “unrestrained language will be heard less and less in the future.”⁸⁸ Azad’s account of his speech to the Delhi INC workers used similar language. He commented that in

all nationalist movements, a stage is reached when the leaders have to decide whether they should lead or follow the masses. It seemed that in India we had reached that stage. If Congress believed that the Indian problem could be solved only through peaceful methods, Congressmen must be prepared to carry that message to the people and act according to it . . . What had happened in Delhi was in my opinion wrong. I said I would try to guide and direct public opinion and not merely follow the wishes of the mob.⁸⁹

Patel also tried to put a damper on these events, criticizing the “frittering away” of political energy on “trifling quarrels” with police.⁹⁰ Gandhi too was working to lower the tone of the INC agitations and was believed to have “issued orders that violence and incitements to violence are to be avoided” at least until after the elections.⁹¹ As General Auchinleck commented, “Congress now show [sic] signs of realizing that any serious deterioration in the discipline and obedience to authority of the Indian Armed Forces would not be in their own interest should they assume power and that it would be better to try first to gain this power by constitutional means rather than by insurrection.”⁹²

Other popular mobilizations against British rule during these months added tension to the political climate. In particular was the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) mutiny in February 1946. Between 18-23 February the RIN ratings agitated against racial discrimination in the services – first in a hunger-strike, then in civil disobedience demanding better food, equal pay, etc. as well as the release of INA

⁸⁷ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 553.

⁸⁸ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 633.

⁸⁹ Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 144. Here Azad is referring to an incident in Delhi in which “the people tried to set fire to Government buildings and destroyed public property.”

⁹⁰ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 421.

⁹¹ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 633; and Wavell in Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 713.

⁹² Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 674-75.

members and political prisoners and the withdrawal of troops from Indonesia.⁹³

While INC leaders officially denied involvement in the mutiny and asked that order be maintained, Congress Socialists and Communist activists like Aruna Asaf Ali were involved in the strikes and demonstrations that were organized in support of the ratings.⁹⁴ For his part, Azad recalls that the news of this mutiny “electrified the country and a vast majority of the people at once sided with them.” However, to him and other moderates in the INC, “this was not an appropriate time for any mass movement or direct action.” Because he wished to continue negotiations with Britain, he opposed the officers’ recourse to direct action, although apparently he sympathized with their anger over racial discrimination.⁹⁵

For its part, the British government was put on the defensive by these agitations. In February 1946, Wavell wrote with bitterness that it was “increasingly obvious that the students and mobs are out of hand.”⁹⁶ Eventually, the Indian Government was moved to make concessions: it announced in early December 1945 that only the “black” criminals of the INA would be tried.⁹⁷ In addition, by early spring 1946 Indian soldiers were removed from service in Indonesia and Indo-China, and a Cabinet Mission was dispatched to negotiate with Indian leaders in late March.⁹⁸

Both the British administration and the INC leaders were uncertain of their ability to control or stop a mass movement once started. The Quit India movement had had alarming qualities to both the protagonists, and the party leaders had lost control over their radical followers. During the fall and winter of 1945-1946 conditions were, if anything, more uncertain and charged.⁹⁹ Certainly a popular anti-imperialist mood had emerged after the war, and INC activists had tapped into this hostility in their speeches and statements. In this explosive situation, British officials,

⁹³ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 423.

⁹⁴ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 1081.

⁹⁵ Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 140-41.

⁹⁶ Wavell, *Viceroy's Journal*, 217.

⁹⁷ I.e. those for whom there were “allegations of gross brutality against the accused,” Wavell, *Viceroy's Journal*, 189; Sarkar, *Modern India*, 422.

⁹⁸ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 422.

⁹⁹ Barik, “Congress Politics,” 397.

conservative nationalists and their industrial backers found a common interest in re-emphasizing law and order – at least for the time being. Although the INC continued to carry the threat of a mass movement in their hip pocket, most party leaders were certain that negotiations and compromise would be their route to power.¹⁰⁰

Throughout much of the Indian nationalist movement, the INC elites both mobilized the population, and ensured their subordination to the party hierarchy. While it encouraged popular action, the INC leadership also tended to discourage mass initiative outside of the party program. With these methods, the party leadership could use the population as a weapon against the British, while protecting its own interests as part of the social elite. In order to protect the interests of its more powerful constituents, the party discouraged political action from labour and quelled radical peasant movements. The effect of these policies was not only to limit the radicalism of nationalist politics, but to enforce a passivity on the lower classes that undermined their ability to influence the aims or strategies of the movement. During the last days of the raj, the INC and its popular following posed the greatest threat to the colonial government. However, also during this time, the moderate party leadership found common cause with the government in preventing popular uprisings and moving towards a quick and stable transfer of power. One can readily understand the leadership's desire for such a transfer; nevertheless, abandoning the possibility of a mass movement also meant accepting many of Britain's plans for defining the character of the new state.¹⁰¹

The Gold Coast

In the Gold Coast the mass involvement in the 1950 Positive Action campaign did much to help the CPP – it brought them national prominence, unified their supporters, and convinced the British of the need to win the CPP over to their side. In later years, when deciding which party members should win a ticket in the CPP election campaigns, Nkrumah took as the primary criterion “loyalty” – a characteristic that

¹⁰⁰ Barik, “Congress Politics,” 398.

¹⁰¹ On imperial interests, see Chapters 5 & 6.

was demonstrated by the member's support for the party in 1949 and during the Positive Action campaign. However, there was no repeat of this movement. While the party leaders were still in jail, the colonial administration sponsored elections under the Coussey Constitution in early 1951, and the CPP – including Nkrumah from his jail cell – decided to run for office and was victorious. By 1951 the main nationalist party was safely installed in office and had begun to work in collaboration with Britain towards the dismantling of the colonial regime. In many ways, the time for real mass struggle seemed over, and to a large extent it was. However, the CPP remained a mass party (indeed, its membership increased as it became a governing party) and continued to rely on the support of the populace in rallies and elections. Thus, it is important to continue our discussion of the CPP's mass mobilization strategies, practices and ideologies, even during an era when the majority of people seemed to have lost their decisive role in colonial politics.

As Maxwell Owusu argues, neither the CPP nor its political opponents in the NLM (National Liberation Movement) nor the UP (United Party) ever really succeeded in carrying out mass political mobilization. He criticizes the CPP for not really making an effort towards “mass political socialization” before 1964; until that time local and regional CPP branches did not have a “systematic and clear political ideology” useful for mass mobilization.¹⁰² Rather than gaining support and members through such an ideology, the CPP's tactic at the constituency and regional levels was to find a small group of local notables to dedicate themselves to party work. These notables would then extend the party influence through “CPPification,” a process more similar to “political evangelization” than political or ideological socialization.¹⁰³

Beyond gathering allegiances, the party did little to involve the population in a particularly active way in national politics. Owusu argues that Nkrumah emphasized party organization at the local level, but that the party never saw the “so-called masses” as able to participate in local or national decision-making. Rather, their participation “began with the rallies and ended with the vote.”¹⁰⁴ On the subject of

¹⁰² Owusu, *Uses and Abuses*, 195.

¹⁰³ Owusu, *Uses and Abuses*, 184-85.

¹⁰⁴ Owusu, *Uses and Abuses*, 236.

party rallies, Owusu is skeptical, arguing that despite the popularity of such events, they hardly represented an active and instrumental involvement by the attendees. Rather, he claims that the rally was a social event, one in which participation was “at best symbolic-expressive.”¹⁰⁵ Although attendees did meet national and local leaders, no significant political questions were put to the people; they were generally informed of decisions already made. The problem with the superficial nature of this participation, Owusu argues, is that it left the party with a fragile support base, one built up on emotion rather than political socialization – a situation in which people were not mobilized in any lasting way but ultimately were kept involved through party patronage.¹⁰⁶

On the level of election campaigns, the party did continue mass mobilizations, though the requirements of voting called for even less commitment than had involvement in Positive Action or attendance at rallies. The Gold Coast’s first election was held in 1951, and the CPP’s activities in this campaign have been described enthusiastically by Dennis Austin. He wrote that money was raised from “local farmers, fishermen, and traders who had the good cause at heart,” and who saw the CPP as more than a party – rather a new order of society. In his view, the election campaign itself embodied “the force and vigor of a nationalist movement in full cry,” and although he admits that the CPP drew strength and numbers from already existing organizations, “it touched them all with its own magic.”¹⁰⁷ The party campaigned on the issue of “Self-Government Now,” universal suffrage, the creation of an upper house for the Chiefs (in addition to the existing assembly), economic modernization schemes including the building of roads, canals and railways, industrialization and “progressive mechanization of agriculture.” Social policies included free compulsory education up to sixteen years of age, free national health service, a housing program, piped water supply to all areas, and a national insurance scheme.¹⁰⁸ Over and above this list, the CPP electoral pitch combined emotion with self interest – an appeal to

¹⁰⁵ See previous chapter for an explanation of “symbolic-expressive” involvement in the CPP.

¹⁰⁶ Owusu, *Uses and Abuses*, 266-68. Austin’s observation that, in Ghana, politics “are the politics of clientelism” tends to support Owusu’s arguments: *Ghana Observed*, 4.

¹⁰⁷ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 127.

¹⁰⁸ CPP Manifesto 1951 reproduced in Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 130.

pride that put forth the CPP as the “Party of the People.” This emotive appeal was combined with the promise of immediate material benefits which would accrue with self-government.¹⁰⁹ The result – somewhat exaggerated by the British “first past the post” system – was a staggering majority of 34 out of 38 popularly contested seats for the CPP.¹¹⁰

Owusu challenges both the view common among historians that the 1951 elections represented the first “test” for the CPP and the “mostly a priori statements” within the academic literature about the party’s successful mass mobilization. He claims that the party’s success was not a result specifically of CPP efforts by themselves, but rather a consequence of the general conditions within the Gold Coast at the time. In his argument, the CPP’s success was due more to the weakness of its opponents who had no time to organize opposition: the UGCC was the only significant other party, and it was still trying to cope with the emergence of the CPP. Also at this time most of the country was unified in its demands to end the economic hardships of inflation, unemployment and cocoa cutting; moreover, Owusu claims that many country-wide strikes and demonstrations had occurred without the CPP’s initiative (as with the 1948 riots).¹¹¹ In his view the CPP succeeded in 1951 – without actually carrying out mass political socialization – because: a) they only needed a simple majority to win any of the seats; and b) the CPP had been the first national party to enter the political field, and during that time they remained the only significant player on the field.¹¹²

Owusu certainly understates the efforts made by the CPP at mass mobilization, as well as the practical difficulties of creating and motivating an electorate within a predominantly rural country.¹¹³ However, he is right to point out that others like Dennis Austin have exaggerated the level of popular mobilization and political socialization that was achieved by the CPP. Had the CPP remained active in educating voters during the 1950s, we might expect an increase in the voter

¹⁰⁹ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 131.

¹¹⁰ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 141.

¹¹¹ Owusu, *Uses and Abuses*, 189.

¹¹² Owusu, *Uses and Abuses*, 195.

¹¹³ Austin deals extensively with CPP electioneering in *Politics in Ghana*, chapters 3, 5 and 7.

participation rates. However, Owusu points out that there was little increase in the number of voters in elections between 1953 and 1958, and that the main parties were not able to improve substantially on the number of votes they received.¹¹⁴ During the 1954 elections (the first based on universal suffrage) 59% of the adult population registered to vote, although only 30% of those eligible actually went to the polls.¹¹⁵ Slightly less than 30% of the adult population voted in the 1956 election. Although in this election the CPP won 57% of the vote, they won 67% of the contested seats – enough for the “reasonable majority” they needed to continue with independence – but not exactly a soaring success for the party electoral machine.¹¹⁶

A large part of the CPP’s problem by 1956 was the growth of opposition parties, which had first played a significant role in the 1954 election.¹¹⁷ During the 1951 election, the CPP’s main opponent had been the UGCC, reconstructed as an alliance between the colony’s chiefs and intelligentsia.¹¹⁸ However, by the end of 1954 three regionally-based opposition movements had emerged to challenge the CPP government’s dominance. The Togoland Congress put forward a demand for a Ewe-controlled homeland, opposing the integration of British Togoland with the Gold Coast and demanding re-unification with the neighbouring French trust territory instead.¹¹⁹ Another regional party, the Northern People’s Party (NPP) emerged in time for the 1954 election. Demanding development, education and general “political and social advancement” for the Northern Territories, the party’s primary support base came from the chiefs and other traditional elements, as well as the small section of educated Northerners.¹²⁰

However troubling these regional claims were for the CPP’s vision of a unitary independent Ghana, far more of a threat was the emergence of the National Liberation Movement (NLM) in August 1954. As Holland points out, unlike the

¹¹⁴ Owusu, *Uses and Abuses*, 218.

¹¹⁵ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 238.

¹¹⁶ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 347-48.

¹¹⁷ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 200.

¹¹⁸ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 134, 141.

¹¹⁹ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 189.

¹²⁰ Paul André Ladouceur, *Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana*, (London: Longman, 1979), 112-15.

Togoland Congress and the NPP, the NLM did not emerge in an isolated section of the colony. Rather, it originated in Kumasi, “capital of the ancient kingdom of Ashanti.”¹²¹ The Ashanti territory was not only the geographic centre of the Gold Coast, it was the “heart of the cocoa economy.”¹²² Indeed, the immediate context for the formation of the NLM was the CPP’s refusal to raise the price of cocoa paid to farmers, even though the world price had nearly doubled since 1951 (increasing from £245 to £450 a ton).¹²³ The CPP’s refusal to increase the price led to agitation among farmers, particularly in the Ashanti territory which alone produced 46% of the colony’s cocoa.¹²⁴ Although this break with the CPP originated in agitation over the cocoa price, it also had roots in the growing conviction among Ashanti leaders that the CPP would not provide sufficient social and political advancement for their territory.¹²⁵ The youngmen of Ashanti, most of whom had previously been supporters of the CPP, led this revolt. In order to gain more political and cultural legitimacy for themselves, these youngmen turned to the paramount chiefs, who themselves were eager for allies to oppose the CPP.¹²⁶ In September 1954 the National Liberation Movement (NLM) was formed, and the Asante Youth Association (AYA) worked to spread this new party and convert the CPP in Ashanti into the NLM.¹²⁷ The party, an alliance of chiefs, youngmen of the AYA and farmers’ representatives, spread quickly; by mid-1955 it claimed to be distributing 3,000 membership cards a week.¹²⁸ Other groups, including the UGCC leaders joined the NLM. With a collection of prominent Ashanti CPP defections to the NLM, including J. E. Appiah, R. R. Amponsah and Victor Owusu, the party gained significant attention for itself and acquired a strong intellectual leadership.¹²⁹

¹²¹ R. F. Holland, *European Decolonization 1918-1981: An Introductory Survey*, (Houndmills, Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1985), 216.

¹²² Holland, *European Decolonization*, 216.

¹²³ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 253-54.

¹²⁴ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 255-56.

¹²⁵ Jean Marie Allman, “The Youngmen and the Porcupine: Class, Nationalism and Asante’s Struggle for Self-Determination, 1954-57,” *The Journal of African History*, 31 (no. 2 1990): 272.

¹²⁶ Allman, “Youngmen,” 272.

¹²⁷ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 261.

¹²⁸ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 265.

¹²⁹ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 268.

The NLM's goal was to interrupt the ongoing negotiations between the CPP and the Colonial Office. Their two main demands were fresh elections, so that the Assembly would reflect the changed political situation since 1954, and a federal constitution to limit the CPP's authority within the country.¹³⁰ Although Arden-Clarke tended to support Nkrumah and his party, one senior colonial official, A. C. Russell, estimated that "the bulk of the service had great sympathy for the NLM."¹³¹ The NLM also focused their attention on lobbying the Colonial Office to provide a federal constitution.¹³² Nkrumah's response, after Arden-Clarke refused to allow police crackdowns on the Ashanti politicians, was to establish linkages with the NLM's opponents in Ashanti while bringing the NLM itself into compromise negotiations.¹³³ Neither of these approaches worked, and the NLM boycotted the Achimota constitutional conference held under Nkrumah's request by Sir Frederick Bourne in February-March 1956.¹³⁴

Nkrumah and his party were firm in their desire to avoid a general election before independence. In his autobiography he wrote that the executive had voted unanimously against it, "and even to mention the subject was like waving a red rag before a bull."¹³⁵ Their worry was that, with the combination of regional parties in Ashanti, the Northern Territories and Togoland as well as their own "rebel" candidates running as independents, the CPP might lose the majority it needed to convince Britain to transfer power to their hands.¹³⁶ Finally, under pressure from the Secretary of State and the Governor, Nkrumah agreed to hold an election in July 1956.¹³⁷ In the end, the CPP won the elections, gaining 71 Assembly seats out of the total 104, and capturing a majority of the seats in each region, save in Ashanti where the NLM won 12 seats to the CPP's 7.¹³⁸

¹³⁰ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 277.

¹³¹ Quoted in David Rooney, *Charles Arden-Clarke* (London: Rex Collings, 1982), 179.

¹³² Holland, *European Decolonization*, 216.

¹³³ Holland, *European Decolonization*, 216-17.

¹³⁴ Holland, *European Decolonization*, 217.

¹³⁵ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 248.

¹³⁶ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 304.

¹³⁷ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 309.

¹³⁸ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 347-53; the Muslim Association Party also won one seat in Ashanti.

The CPP's clear victory in this election removed the threat posed by the opposition, as well as most of the final barriers to independence.¹³⁹ On 3 August 1956 Nkrumah introduced a motion in the Assembly calling for independence. The Opposition boycotted this debate, and the resolution was passed by 72 votes to 0. The rest of 1956 and early 1957 were occupied with negotiations to settle the constitutional questions surrounding the colony's independence. On 6 March 1957, Ghana became independent as a united territory.¹⁴⁰

Another major obstacle the CPP faced in their election campaigns was the problem of members splitting away from the party as independent candidates. Even in 1950 there were difficulties choosing which party members would stand for office. At this time, the organization was still being consolidated and the party's constitution had not been ratified; moreover, much of the leadership was in prison. Those in charge adopted the general approach of rewarding those who had supported the party in 1949 and during the Positive Action campaign.¹⁴¹ Already the party faced the problem of new members enrolling with the "intention of getting into the Assembly on the party's ticket" rather than because they were "convinced of the party's program."¹⁴² Before the 1954 election Nkrumah emphasized the need for loyalty and discipline among party members, and declared that candidates would be chosen on the basis of loyalty to the CPP.¹⁴³ However, in spite of Nkrumah's warnings, the problems of disloyalty escalated, and this time eighty-one "rebels" ran as independents. These "rebels" were expelled from the party as an example.¹⁴⁴ As a result, 160 of 323 candidates were classified as Independents, and well over half of these 160 could be considered CPP "rebels."¹⁴⁵ Even more than in 1951 "splintering" was seen within the party, as discipline was more difficult to maintain in a situation in which the main cause – national independence – was seen as already won.¹⁴⁶

¹³⁹ Holland, *European Decolonization*, 218-19.

¹⁴⁰ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 355.

¹⁴¹ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 119.

¹⁴² Gbedemah, a prominent CPP leader, quoted in Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 120.

¹⁴³ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 207.

¹⁴⁴ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 208-09.

¹⁴⁵ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 209-10.

¹⁴⁶ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 211.

Even more than the INC, the CPP was hesitant to invoke active political participation from the population. The Positive Action campaign was its first attempt at a mass movement, and was understandably tentative and problematic. Nevertheless, the campaign sufficiently pressed the party's claims. The colonial government, sensing their limited alternatives in a colony increasingly impatient for change, quickly conceded political reforms in 1949-1951 and brought the CPP into a collaborative position. As was expected, the CPP took advantage of this offer and moved away from large-scale active engagement with the population, relying on sporadic election campaigns to maintain these ties. Therefore, unlike the INC, the CPP did not have several decades of party mobilization to unify and solidify their membership. As a result, the party structure was significantly weaker than in India, and the ideological commitment of its members much more hesitant. Consequently, there was less involvement from the non-elites during the transfer of power in the Gold Coast, allowing elites in Britain and the colony more freedom to make decisions about this process and the character of the new state. The result was a colonial government that had a greater influence on the nationalist leadership than in India, and a nationalist party with weaker connections to the population and less conviction in the political institutions and procedures they inherited at independence.

CHAPTER 4:

FROM MOBILIZATION TO PARLIAMENTARY POLITICS

During their service in political office under colonial administration, the INC and CPP inevitably found themselves accepting compromises and becoming responsible for policies which could not satisfy all of their constituents. Inevitably the parties' social composition and political ideology altered as an increasing proportion of their leadership sought political power and favoured negotiation as the only method for attaining their goals. As a result of these trends, the involvement and importance of the non-elites declined. Not only did the majority of people play a less active role in nationalist politics under parliamentary democracy, they were rarely encouraged to involve themselves in politics between elections – certainly not in any kind of opposition to the government. Moreover, while in office the nationalist parties frequently followed policies designed to satisfy their vocal middle-class constituents – even at the expense of peasant or working-class demands. Thus, when asking what was “passive” about the changes in these countries, one must include the behaviour of the nationalist parties as governing powers. Of course, it is also important to acknowledge the colonial government's role in encouraging the conservative leadership within these parties. By placing the INC and CPP in responsible office, the British deliberately sought to control and moderate their actions.¹ To a significant degree, it was this commonality of interests between the colonial governments and conservative members of the nationalist elite that prevented significant social or economic change within these countries and subsumed the population within a

¹ See Chapter 5 for a discussion of the British role in this process.

program devised and structured according to elite interests during the transfer of power.

THE DECISION TO PARTICIPATE

India

In India, there were several attempts at “Council entry” for the INC before independence.² The two most important instances are the ones that I will deal with here: the INC provincial ministries of 1937-1939 and 1946-1947, and the Central Executive from the autumn of 1946 until independence. These periods were the only substantial INC experiences in office, but they did much to re-shape the character of the party. Particularly during the course of the provincial ministries in the 1930s, the INC changed from a movement founded in mobilizational politics into a party that was aware that its future lay in governance.

In 1935 the British administration introduced the Government of India Act, providing for elected assemblies in the provinces and expanded the electorate from ten to fifteen percent.³ The intention of this act was not to expand democracy, but to drive a wedge between the INC provincial committees (which would participate in the assemblies) and the INC high command, which the British saw as the real threat to their rule.⁴ As a result, there were significant debates within the INC on the issue of political participation. From the left, Nehru argued that accepting office under the 1935 Act would put the Congress in “a pit from which it would be difficult for us to come out,” since forming Ministries “would inevitably mean our cooperation in some

² In addition to the instances discussed here, Swarajists led by C. R. Das and Molital Nehru participated in councils in 1923. Also notable was the emergence, during 1933-1934, of a strong section favouring council-entry within the INC. See Sarkar, *Modern India*, 227-28; 231-33; 330-31.

³ Manor, “Liberal and Representative Politics,” 30.

⁴ Ravi Shankar Vasudevan, “Why the Congress Accepted Office in 1937,” *Studies in History* 4 (no. 1-2, 1988): 40.

measure with the repressive apparatus of imperialism, and we would become partners in this repression and in the exploitation of our people.”⁵

The party nevertheless chose to contest the 1937 elections in order to prove its popularity and disrupt the working of the provincial assemblies from within. However, when the INC won majorities in five out of eleven provinces and captured a total of 711 out of 1585 provincial assembly seats it opted to form eight ministries.⁶ It feared that not accepting office would mean that either “Section 93” governments⁷ would be introduced, or that rival parties such as the Muslim League would have room to expand their influence and prominence.⁸ Moreover, pressure came from a majority of INC provincial leaders who wanted to take position in office, fearing that their popularity among the people would decline significantly if “Section 93” governments were put in place.⁹ When a vote for total rejection of office was defeated, Birla wrote to the Viceroy’s secretary and described the decision as “a great triumph for the right wing of the Congress.”¹⁰

In the fall of 1945, following the release of INC leaders, the Viceroy announced that elections would be held in India during the cold months of 1945-1946. Azad recollected that, as in the 1930s, there were again differing opinions within the INC on how to proceed after communal differences had led to the failure of the Simla Conference.¹¹ Although he did not give names, Azad wrote that some party members felt that there should be a new civil disobedience movement; others wanted to boycott the elections, even in the absence of such a movement. Moreover, Gandhi and “a majority” of the INC’s Working Committee wanted to abandon the political field for “constructive” work. Azad, himself part of the more moderate constitutionalist wing of the party, argued that British Labour had always supported the INC and should be given a chance to prove its “bona fides.” His view, that the

⁵ Quoted in Ahmad, “Tryst With Destiny,” 6.

⁶ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 349.

⁷ Under Section 93 of the 1935 Government of India Act, provincial governors, subject to approval by the Viceroy, could assume full executive power themselves and bypass the authority of the provincial ministries.

⁸ Manor, “Liberal and Representative Politics,” 30.

⁹ Vasudevan, “Why the Congress Accepted Office,” 82, 84.

¹⁰ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 350.

¹¹ For the following see Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 126, 128.

party should participate in the elections and not begin a mass campaign, was eventually successful. However, the party's election manifesto captured the ambiguity of the INC's commitment to participation in elections and eventually in government. After complaining that the Central Legislative Assembly was still "a body with no power or authority," elected on a restricted franchise and electoral rolls that were "full of errors and omissions," and that the INC was operating under a range of handicaps, the manifesto nevertheless stated that "the Congress has decided to contest the elections to show that the inevitable result of elections, however restricted, must be to demonstrate the overwhelming solidarity of the opinion of the voters on the issue of Independence."¹²

As in 1936, the balance within the INC had tipped in favour of elections because they were in the interests of conservative party members and the INC's capitalist supporters. Representing the Congress Right, Birla wrote to Patel that "we must take charge of the machinery even though we may not be fully satisfied with everything that these people are doing . . . In fact, without governmental machinery we are all feeling helpless."¹³ Moreover, by this time the party had realized that their main opponent was no longer the British but the Muslim League.¹⁴ With independence more or less guaranteed by the Labour government and the Viceroy, the party's focus was to attain governing power within the administration as well as a favourable decision on the *type* of independence India would reach. Consequently, the INC leadership was reluctant to engage in any mass political campaign which might disrupt their negotiations with the colonial government and threaten these goals.

The Gold Coast

While there had been many heated debates within the INC over whether the party should accept office in the provincial ministries in 1937, the CPP's decision to form

¹² "Election Manifesto" reproduced in Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 130-32.

¹³ Quoted in Partha Sarathi Gupta, "Imperial Strategy and the Transfer of Power, 1939-51," in *Myth and Reality: The Struggle for Freedom in India, 1945-47*, edited by Amit Kumar Gupta, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1987), 9.

¹⁴ Holland, *European Decolonization*, 76.

the government in 1951 seemed a natural one. Indeed, Nkrumah's party accepted responsibility quite readily. Moreover, Nkrumah made the brilliant decision to justify the party's actions under the doctrine of "Tactical Action," as a counterpoint to mass mobilization, or Positive Action. By Tactical Action the CPP meant that it would work through governmental channels towards liberation, but would remain aloof from "collaboration" with the British.¹⁵ Participation itself was necessary, Nkrumah argued, because remaining out of the government would represent a "negative course of action" that would allow "stooges and reactionaries" to take advantage of the situation. He believed that holding government positions would give the party further power and initiative, but would not preclude a resumption of Positive Action if the CPP were obstructed by the British.¹⁶ Thus, in Apter's words, Tactical Action constituted a very flexible combination of "ideological purity" and "political opportunism," permitting the party to justify cooperation with the British, while retaining the identity of a radical anti-colonial movement.¹⁷

As with the INC, there were several changes to the CPP that came with accepting political office. The mass people's movement was transformed into a parliamentary political party which inevitably had to accept a new set of changes and compromises. Certainly Nkrumah was cautious about participation in government and was careful to assure his assemblymen that the CPP remained alert to the dangers of working under the existing constitution and continued to be committed to "full self-government now." He thus maintained that participating in the assembly was not an end in itself, but a means to the goal of full self-government.¹⁸ Significantly, he reminded the assemblymen that they represented and were responsible to the people, not to the civil servants with whom they would be working. To that end, he called upon members to preserve their link with the people.¹⁹ At the same time, Nkrumah argued that participation in the colonial government was a necessary "probationary

¹⁵ Fitch and Oppenheimer, *Ghana: End of an Illusion*, 37.

¹⁶ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 142.

¹⁷ Apter, *Ghana in Transition*, 214-15.

¹⁸ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 140.

¹⁹ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 141.

period wherein we had to prove our worth and demonstrate ability to manage our own affairs” to the British administration.²⁰

THE EFFECTS OF POLITICAL OFFICE

India

In many ways, the real watershed for converting the INC to parliamentary politics and participation in government was the 1937-1939 Provincial Ministries. This term in office was their first test as a governing party; indeed, the INC thrived in power at the provincial level, and most ministers and legislators performed well in their new roles. The time in power altered the way in which INC members approached politics. Although many on the left remained distrustful of political office and the inevitable compromises it entailed, and those enthused by Gandhi’s “constructionist” program had no use for politics, significant numbers found political power enticing, particularly those from the dominant landowning classes.²¹ Indeed, more than converting longtime members, the INC’s enhanced position attracted new converts, and after 1936 the party’s membership multiplied. Membership leaped from half a million in 1936 to 3.1 million in 1937 and 4.5 million in 1938!²² Many of these new members were attracted to the possibilities of participation in representative politics. Moreover, civil disobedience and the requirements of *satyagraha* (spinning *khadi*, fasting, abstinence, etc), which had previously countered the tendency towards careerism, now became less emphasized among INC leaders who increasingly saw their future in parliamentary politics. Nehru had earlier created the Mass Contacts Committee in an attempt to strengthen the relationship of the party to the “masses” of India, but after 1937 there was little interest in the work of this committee, save for

²⁰ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 171.

²¹ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 357.

²² Sarkar, *Modern India*, 351.

establishing mass contacts among Muslims.²³ These factors account for the conviction among INC leaders, particularly after 1946, that their path to independence was not a revolutionary one, but one based on electoral campaigns and parliamentary majorities.²⁴ For many, the 1940 Individual Satyagraha and the 1942 Quit India campaign became final opportunities to gain credentials as nationalist activists.²⁵

Once in office in 1937-1939, the INC found itself unable to satisfy all the groups it claimed to represent – landlords and peasants, businessmen and workers – and was increasingly pulled to the right.²⁶ Not only did these ministries crack down on communal riots, but they used repressive measures against Left-led labour and peasant movements. Sumit Sarkar points out that even the imperial historian Coupland found “little to distinguish” INC ministries from the previous colonial administrations and wrote “...the Congress Governments can be said to have stood the test imposed on them in the field of law and order.”²⁷ Nehru, in private letters, worried about the conservatism of the INC ministries, labeling them “counter-revolutionary” and arguing that they were “merely carrying on the tradition (with minor variations) of the previous governments.”²⁸ Nevertheless, as Sarkar observes, Nehru did little in terms of concrete action to hinder the INC movement to the right.²⁹

During this time the INC also established a close alliance with Indian business. Although most industrialists were worried that the INC governments would take a pro-labour stand, by about mid-1938 a firm “understanding” had developed, particularly on issues of textile duties.³⁰ During 1938-1939 there was a shift in INC-

²³ D. A. Low, “Congress and ‘Mass Contacts,’ 1936-1937: Ideology, Interests, and Conflict over the Basis of Party Representation,” in *Congress and Indian Nationalism: The Pre-Independence Phase*, edited by Richard Sisson and Stanley Wolpert, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 149.

²⁴ Low, “Congress and ‘Mass Contacts,’” 154.

²⁵ Manor, “Liberal and Representative Politics,” 31.

²⁶ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 351.

²⁷ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 352. He also points out the AICC September 1938 resolution supporting “measures that may be undertaken by the Congress Government for the defense of life and property,” and condemning “people, including Congressmen . . . found in the name of civil liberty to advocate murder, arson, looting and class war by violent means . . .”

²⁸ Quoted in Sarkar, *Modern India*, 371.

²⁹ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 371.

³⁰ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 358-59.

business relations. Although capitalists had always maintained close relationships with Patel and other members of the “Gandhian Right,” they now also began to strengthen relations with parts of the Left wing. “After all,” Sumit Sarkar argues, “Nehru’s vision of a modern industrialized India . . . fitted in much better with bourgeois aspirations than the Gandhian evocation of rural simplicity and handicrafts, and there were enough indications already that the former’s socialist flourishes were eminently manageable.”³¹

Understanding how the INC financed their participation in electoral politics is particularly revealing. Although some large financial backers aided the 1937 INC election campaign (Birla contributed 5 lakhs of rupees for the Central Parliamentary Board, and R. K. Dalmia provided 27,000 of the 37,000 rupees raised by the Bihar PCC), most candidates had to finance their own costs, which came to at least Rs 2,000 per seat. Inevitably, these financial requirements had an impact on who could run for office. Perhaps unsurprisingly, a Bihar INC leader admitted that most of the party’s candidates were drawn from the zamindari classes.³² The support of this wealthy rural constituency would be rewarded in turn once the new INC ministries came to power, particularly in their measures against the radical peasant *kisan sabhas*.³³ However, most of the patronage that was available through government channels went to the large class of landowning peasant cultivators – the dominant rural classes.³⁴ As a result of their term in office between 1937-1939, the INC convinced many of these middle-class landowning groups – many of whom had previously been aloof from nationalist politics – of the benefits they could gain under Congress rule. Subsequently, many peasant landowners offered active support to the INC, weakening the support base of the raj in the rural areas.

One issue on which the INC clearly compromised their principles was their quiet abandonment in 1945-1946 of their demand for elections on the basis of

³¹ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 360-61.

³² Sarkar, *Modern India*, 350; similarly, *kisan sabha* militants in Bihar were blocked from seats because of landlord pressure.

³³ See Sarkar, *Modern India*, 365 and Barik, “Congress Politics and Peasant Unrest,” 400, 406-08. Although they frequently worked to influence the INC, it should also be noted that most of the wealthy landowners in the countryside supported the British government. Low, “Introduction,” 20.

³⁴ For the following, see Manor, “Liberal and Representative Politics,” 30-32.

universal suffrage. During the negotiations after the war, the Communists, Radical Democrats and labour leader N. M. Joshi all came out in support of revising the electoral rolls, providing a plan for doing so without too much delay. However, the INC like the Muslim League accepted the existing voting lists and was reluctant to advocate new elections after their success in 1937 and 1946 using the existing franchise. Consequently, without the support of the dominant parties, the demand for elections on the basis of universal adult suffrage was easily dismissed by the British.³⁵ Sarkar argues that more than abstract democratic principles were at stake in this issue, for elections on the basis of universal suffrage would have tested the Muslim League's claim to represent the majority of Muslims.³⁶ Although he is far from a neutral observer, one can agree with Azad's observations that the League had not engaged in mass struggle or sacrifice to gain independence and that their leadership had few ties to a popular following.³⁷ Subsequently, the party prevented elections based on universal suffrage in independent Pakistan until 1954 – at which time they were “routed.”³⁸

During the INC's service in the colonial government, the party's relationship with the colonial administration and population altered significantly. As I have argued, their decision to take political office and their behaviour in power represented a shift towards the party's right wing. Particularly in the vast expansion of members interested in political power and the increased importance of the dominant rural interests, the conservative forces within the INC were strengthened. Meanwhile, the party's relationship to the majority of people became more indirect and occasionally – when confronted with peasant or labour movements opposed to its policies – confrontational. Because of these changes to the INC composition and ideology, many continuities in political governance survived the transfer of power. As I will describe in the following chapter, the British administration worked hard to secure

³⁵ Gupta, “Imperial Strategy,” 9.

³⁶ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 427.

³⁷ Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 189; Sarkar, *Modern India*, 427 agrees and distinguishes the “sustained mass movements in the face of official repression” carried out by the INC to “occasional communal riots not unaccompanied by official complicity” sponsored by the League.

³⁸ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 428; the INC by contrast won elections on universal suffrage for the first thirty years after independence.

this moderation of the INC and ensure that many colonial institutions and values would survive the transfer of power to India.

The Gold Coast

From 1951 the CPP did establish good relations with the colonial power, serving in government for six years with relative success. Even during the lead-up to the 1951 elections, the CPP had worked with the government and was rewarded with official praise in the *Report on the First Election*.³⁹ The CPP's behavior in office was relatively moderate: they combined several progressive policies, including some community programs, school development, road building, etc., with a tendency to abstain from rocking the colonial boat too much.⁴⁰ For example, the CPP satisfied business and colonial officials by not taking any measures to restrict foreign capital in the colony, nationalize industries or banks, or impede the repatriation of profits as some had expected. Indeed, throughout the process of negotiating independence the CPP followed policies which broadly accommodated foreign investment.⁴¹ Nkrumah himself emphasized the importance of foreign investment to the Gold Coast, arguing that foreign firms needed assurances and a warm welcome.⁴²

In general, the CPP found itself settling into office quite comfortably after the 1951 election. Most members were happy to compromise on the immediate means of achieving "Self-Government Now" and easily accepted the shift to "Tactical Action."⁴³ The majority of those taking up positions in the assembly were reportedly able to improve their financial positions substantially.⁴⁴ Moreover, like the INC, holding office caused the CPP membership to balloon, and within eighteen months it had increased to 700,000 and had over 500 branches.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, there remained

³⁹ Quoted in Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 111; see also 104.

⁴⁰ Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 41.

⁴¹ Sarah Stockwell, *The Business of Decolonization: British Business Strategies in the Gold Coast*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 98 & 109.

⁴² Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 155-56.

⁴³ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 157.

⁴⁴ Owusu, *Uses and Abuses*, 193. This fact was a large reason for the existence of break-away independent candidates in the 1954 and 1956 elections. Many CPP members who did not win nominations decided to seek office through other means, rather than follow party discipline.

⁴⁵ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 171.

many difficulties in collaboration. Nkrumah recalled that the problems of the transitional period included divided authority at high levels, divided loyalties in the civil service, criticism against his government for not doing things it was not able to do, and the indifference towards the government by some who felt it could do nothing.⁴⁶

In particular, the CPP leadership faced a challenge from a radical minority within their own party that was intent on change and convinced that a transition period before independence was unnecessary.⁴⁷ These party critics were particularly impatient with the Volta River project,⁴⁸ the slow rate of Africanization of the civil service, and the close relationships developing between Nkrumah's ministers and their European civil servants, as well as between Nkrumah himself and Arden-Clarke.⁴⁹ Several formally prominent party members, including Kwesi Lamptey, Dzenkle Dzewu, Ashie Nikoe, Saki Scheck, B. F. Kusia, H. P. Nyemitei, and Nuh Abubekr, resigned from the CPP, primarily in protest against the slow rate of movement towards self-government.⁵⁰ Another group of critics emerged in August 1952, led by Kurankyi Taylor and Anthony Woode, president of the TUC.⁵¹ Nkrumah and the main CPP body easily weathered these attacks, and during the nominations for the 1954 election, they ensured that anyone too radical in their socialist position was denied candidacy. Consequently, the trade-unionists Pobee Biney and Anthony Woode were not re-nominated.⁵²

On the other side, the party was constrained by a range of colonial economic and political structures: the CPP had no authority over the police and army; it had no jurisdiction on the domains of the governor's "reserve powers"; it had to work with British bureaucrats who occupied the senior positions in the civil service; and finally,

⁴⁶ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 244.

⁴⁷ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 161, 164. Lamptey resigned in August 1951 and the rest followed within a year.

⁴⁸ Both the party's left wing and African businessmen were annoyed by the Government's agreement to give control of the Volta dam over to foreign (American) capital: Fitch and Oppenheimer, *Ghana: End of an Illusion*, 68 & 100.

⁴⁹ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 166.

⁵⁰ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 167.

⁵¹ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 168.

⁵² Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 169, 220.

it had to accommodate foreign business owners in the British gold mines as well as the foreign trading companies that owned ninety percent of the import-export trade.⁵³ In particular, the “dominant role of the civil service” and the influence of Arden-Clarke worked to reshape the party’s character.⁵⁴ In his autobiography Nkrumah complained about the civil service, arguing that, although difficult to prove otherwise, “it was impossible to believe that the civil service was as unbiased politically as it was supposed to be.” He claimed that too often when executing a government policy “officials either dilly-dallied or saw that nothing was done about it.” Moreover, he believed the service took every opportunity to “enhance the opposition against the Government.”⁵⁵ A less confrontational association existed between Nkrumah and Arden-Clarke, who had quickly developed friendly relations with one another. David Rooney describes their mutually trusting relationship, probably without too much exaggeration, as one of “master and pupil” in which Arden-Clarke served as Nkrumah’s mentor and provided “firmness and stability.” Indeed, Arden-Clarke apparently re-drafted the Prime Minister’s speeches from time to time, even finding one “quite hopeless” and rewriting it.⁵⁶

Along with these constraints, the CPP government also had to answer charges of corruption and political patronage. When discussing this issue many authors emphasize that the nature of Gold Coast society entailed a tradition of repaying debts among members of African families.⁵⁷ Perhaps more important was the social position of CPP members themselves. Most of the party followers came from the new urban classes that were interested in political change as an opportunity to better their own economic situation.⁵⁸ Owusu argues that Nkrumah realized the political advantage of having poor people with middle-class aspirations as followers. The CPP could aid them in a number of ways, whether by distributing bureaucratic appointments, creating well-paid jobs, or opening other avenues to “wealth, power

⁵³ Fitch and Oppenheimer, *Ghana: End of an Illusion*, 38.

⁵⁴ Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 40 describes how the party was “tamed.”

⁵⁵ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 151.

⁵⁶ Rooney, *Arden-Clarke*, 197.

⁵⁷ Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 43.

⁵⁸ Owusu, *Uses and Abuses*, 188.

and prestige.”⁵⁹ In his autobiography Nkrumah admits that there was a “possibility of bribery and corruption in the country.” He writes that things “had moved fast, the feeling of power was a new thing; the desire to possess cars, houses and other commodities ... was not unnatural in people who were suddenly made to feel that they were being prepared to take over from those Europeans.”⁶⁰

One policy which considerably extended the possibilities for patronage was the establishment of the CPC (Cocoa Purchasing Company) in late 1952, which was a subsidiary to the Cocoa Marketing Board and used its credit to grant low interest loans to farmers.⁶¹ As a result of soaring world cocoa prices, and a controlled price offered to farmers, the CPC was in charge of two million pounds of capital. By September 1954 the CPC had obtained approval from the government to loan 1,900,000 pounds to farmers. Meanwhile, the close relationship between the CPP and CPC – all the CPC directors were leading party members – was exposed by the opposition.⁶² Moreover, the official enquiry into the matter revealed that loans had only been advanced to those small farmers who first affiliated themselves to the CPP-sponsored United Ghana Farmer’s Council.⁶³ Thus, through their control of these funds, the CPP was able to “build a patronage machine” to buy votes from farmers.⁶⁴

Like the INC, the CPP moderated its actions and its goals while holding responsible political office. It also made significant compromises with the colonial government and shifted its relationship to the population. Furthermore, the party discouraged radicalism within its ranks, and many of its socialist members and trade union leaders resigned after 1951. Even more than in India, the Gold Coast colonial administration was successful in its bid to encourage the conservative side of nationalism. Having learned from their experiences in Asia, the British brought their opponents into government early; consequently, the “radical” CPP of 1949 was being

⁵⁹ Owusu, *Uses and Abuses*, 196.

⁶⁰ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 257.

⁶¹ Fitch and Oppenheimer, *Ghana: End of an Illusion*, 49.

⁶² Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 172-73. The (Jibowu) Commission of Inquiry into the Affairs of the Cocoa Purchasing Company was appointed in 1956; however, even in March 1954 opposition members were publicly accusing the CPP running the CPC in their own interests.

⁶³ Fitch and Oppenheimer, *Ghana: End of an Illusion*, 49.

⁶⁴ Fitch and Oppenheimer, *Ghana: End of an Illusion*, 50.

coached in the ways of governance by 1951. Like many in the INC, the CPP leadership responded to these efforts by moderating themselves and conforming to British expectations. As I will describe in the next two chapters, this conciliation by the nationalists allowed the British significant scope to determine the character of the independent states.

CHAPTER 5:

IMPERIAL INTERESTS AND THE TRANSITION

In preparing for the final transfer of power in India and the Gold Coast, British administrators employed a complex series of strategies. Colonial officials wanted to oversee orderly transfers of power to stable states that would retain close economic, political and even military ties to Britain. However, they were often forced to make concessions, speed up schedules, and modify their policies in the face of disruptive mass movements. Yet, even as they were being pushed towards independence, the colonial administrations attempted to guide the nationalists along a path of the British government's choosing. Because of the willingness of many nationalist leaders to follow this guidance, British authorities were able to help determine the character of the new state and to aid in producing a change that was "passive" and corresponded to the needs of the British and indigenous elites.

THE GENERAL AIMS OF BRITISH POLICY

India

In India the colonial government had always relied on a mixture of force and consent to maintain their rule. Sucheta Mahajan argues that although British rule in India ultimately rested on the armed forces, it also relied on ideology, and so was "hegemonic" or "semi-hegemonic" in the Gramscian sense.¹ Thus, while the police and military were always the colonial state's final defense, British rule was also buttressed by ideological concepts: the notion of Pax Britannica, the promise of law

¹ For the following argument see Mahajan, "British Policy," 57.

and order, the idea of a “civilizing mission,” as well as ideological state apparatuses such as the “steel frame” of the Indian Civil Service (ICS), and the educational, legal, judicial and legislative systems. Most officials viewed the ICS as a particularly important guarantee of British rule: Viceroy Wavell himself commented that in a country like India “control depends very largely on the confidence of the services and on the general impression that they will be supported and that it is not safe to provoke them too far.”² The weakening of this “steel frame” after World War II proved to be a significant worry for the colonial administration, and a strong factor motivating the British to transfer power as soon as possible.³

Throughout much of the early twentieth century, British colonialism in India had seemed to “reform” itself with political concessions handed out in 1909, 1917, 1919, 1935, 1942, etc.⁴ One of the most consequential reforms was the 1935 Government of India Act, which ended Dyarchy in the provinces by providing wholly elected assemblies without any *ex-officio* members. However, recent research has demonstrated that crucial reforms like this were primarily designed, as INC national leaders had feared, to *preserve* the colonial power by capturing the consent of “moderate” factions.⁵ The 1935 constitution did not provide for a representative government at the centre, but focused attention on the provinces – in the belief that the nationalist powers emerging in these arenas would be socially and politically

² Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 481.

³ Sucheta Mahajan, “British Policy, Nationalist Strategy and Popular Nationalist Upsurge, 1945-46,” in *Myth and Reality: The Struggle for Freedom in India, 1945-47*, edited by Amit Kumar Gupta, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1987), 57; Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 600 contains the Viceroy’s comment that “We have always run our Eastern Empire on prestige (some people call it bluff) – the prestige of British personality – never on numbers.”

⁴ The 1909 Morely-Minto Reforms introduced some elected members to the provincial Legislative Councils and provided for separate Muslim electorates. The 1917 Montagu Declaration had promised the development of self-government and gradual transition to Dominion status. The 1919 Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms instituted the system known as “Dyarchy” which provided for a mixture of appointed members and elected representatives in the Councils with increased electoral representation at the centre and in the provinces under a very narrow franchise. The 1935 Government of India Act ended Dyarchy in the provinces while retaining it at the centre and maintaining the principle of communal electorates. The 1942 the Cripps Offer proposed immediate participation in the government and independence after the war. See Muriel E. Chamberlain, *The Longman Companion to European Decolonization in the Twentieth Century*, (London and New York: Longman, 1998), 45-57.

⁵ Both Singh and Kumar discuss this recent research. Anita Inder Singh, *The Limits of British Influence: South Asia and the Anglo-American Relationship, 1947-56*, (London: Pinter Publishers, 1993), 13; Kumar, “Introduction,” xxii.

conservative. Most colonial administrators believed that the greatest threat came from those national politicians who were opposed to holding office, however divided they were on other issues – specifically Gandhi, the Gandhian right and the Left bloc. Thus, to the thinking of many British officials, a great advantage would be gained over the nationalist movement as a whole by dividing the INC along pro- and anti-office wings.⁶ Consequently, the 1935 constitution was an attempt to break the INC's provincial committees away from the party's central command – supposedly run by the non-cooperators and the anti-office group – and to erode the party's national character and centre.⁷

The 1935 Act, like so many other British reforms, illustrates the imperial strategy of eliciting more moderate behaviours and policies from nationalist groups by drawing them into positions of responsibility.⁸ After World War II, the colonial administration again frequently tried to employ this tactic of limiting opposition by incorporating its opponents into colonial institutions.

The Gold Coast

Many historians have suggested that a process of administrative reform began in the Gold Coast in the 1940s or even late 1930s with the shift from the policies of Indirect Rule to limited self-government intended to gain the allegiance of the educated classes.⁹ As might be expected, these arguments, which focus on administrative change, de-emphasize the importance of mass nationalist movements and amount to claims that the imperial power itself was the source of all reform.¹⁰ Richard Crook argues that the “revisionist” accounts by the likes of R. D. Pearce and J. Flint do not adequately explain British strategies behind the reform policies.¹¹ His argument is

⁶ Vasudevan, “Why the Congress Accepted Office,” 45.

⁷ Vasudevan, “Why the Congress Accepted Office,” 47.

⁸ Vasudevan, “Why the Congress Accepted Office,” 69.

⁹ See Richard C. Crook, “Decolonisation, the Colonial State, and Chieftaincy in the Gold Coast,” *African Affairs* 85 (January, 1986): 75-105 for an outline of this “revisionist” historiography and the following critique.

¹⁰ Crook, “Decolonisation,” 77-78.

¹¹ R. D. Pearce, “The Colonial Office and Planned Decolonization in Africa,” *African Affairs* 83 (no. 330, 1984): 77-93; J. Flint, “Planned Decolonization and its Failure in British Africa,” *African Affairs* 82 (no. 328, 1983): 389-411.

that reforms during the 1940s were not designed to move the colony towards independence; rather, the provisions for “self-government” were intended to establish a new collaborative alliance between the colonial government and indigenous elites – an alliance that would preserve the colonial authority.¹² Even David Fieldhouse, who emphasizes the colonial state’s attempt to liberalize itself, admits that, while policy makers during the 1940s envisioned handing power over to a new ruling class some day, the requirements of Africanization in the civil and military services implied that independence would have to wait until the 1970s or 1980s.¹³ Indeed, before 1948 the debate within the Colonial Office was primarily over which indigenous elites would provide the best collaborators for British rule. Liberals within the ministry wanted to construct a ruling coalition composed of lawyers and the urban intelligentsia while conservatives emphasized the role of chiefs in any coalition.¹⁴ None were asking whether or how the colonial state should be dismantled.

Despite these beginnings, after the 1948 riots, events moved quickly in the Gold Coast. Indeed, from 1951 the colonial authority established the CPP “radicals” as the main component of a new ruling coalition. British officials had learned through their work in India and other Asian colonies that bringing nationalist parties into government tended to moderate their behaviour. By carefully planning reform and progressively modifying their priorities, British administrators were able to determine the institutional framework and decide the terms of the CPP’s collaboration in the transfer of power.¹⁵

PUSHING TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE

India

¹² See Crook, “Decolonisation,” 78-79 for the following.

¹³ David Fieldhouse, “Decolonization, Development, and Dependence: A Survey of Changing Attitudes,” in *The Transfer of Power in Africa: Decolonization 1940-1960*, edited by Prosser Gifford and WM. Roger Louis, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 489-90.

¹⁴ Fitch and Oppenheimer, *Ghana: End of an Illusion*, 13.

¹⁵ John D. Hargreaves makes this argument in “Toward the Transfer of Power in British West Africa,” in *The Transfer of Power in Africa: Decolonization 1940-1960*, edited by Prosser Gifford and WM. Roger Louis, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 140.

Many historians have emphasized the “weakening” of the ICS as a crucial factor leading to the decolonization of India. Their accounts emphasize the growing number of Indians in the service, combined with a lack of European recruits after World War I. For the British, this imbalance was an alarming situation, and in the face of declining European applicants, they shut down all recruitment to the ICS in 1943.¹⁶ Consequently, by the war’s end, the service was critically understaffed and crucial “control points” had been neglected. Not only were Indians a majority within the service (in 1947 there were 510 Indians and 429 Europeans employed in the ICS), but through advancement many Indians had moved into positions of authority.¹⁷ Moreover, during the course of the post-war period Indian civil servants were increasingly viewing the nationalist parties as their future employers – and British administrators naturally began to feel that they could no longer count on the “undivided loyalty” of the service.¹⁸ By September 1946, senior British officials were of the opinion that it was “no longer possible to rely implicitly upon [the Services] to carry out the orders of a British Government.”¹⁹ The INC ministries of the 1930s had already severely undermined the morale of the services. Between 1937 and 1939 the same officials who had been responsible for repressing INC movements were forced to serve as the administrative subordinates to the new nationalist ministers.²⁰ Moreover, by the end of the war it was clear that the bureaucracy would be expected to support another round of nationalist governments, just at the time when INC speeches – attacking the administrative henchmen of 1942 and extolling its own “martyrs”—were having such a negative effect on the morale of the ICS.²¹

¹⁶ This included recruitment in India as well as Britain. See Brown, *Modern India*, 325-6.

¹⁷ David C. Potter, “Manpower Shortage and the End of Colonialism: The Case of the Indian Civil Service,” *Modern Asian Studies* 7 (no. 1, 1973): 68-69.

¹⁸ Potter, “Manpower Shortage,” 72.

¹⁹ This comment was part of Wavell’s appreciation of the Indian situation in his proposed “breakdown plan” submitted to the British government in the fall of 1946. Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VIII, 456.

²⁰ Mahajan, “British Policy,” 60.

²¹ Mahajan, “British Policy,” 60-61; Wavell frequently commented on the deteriorating moral of the Civil Services to the Secretary of state. For an example see Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 478. In a letter 16 November 1946 Nehru wrote that the senior civil service officials disliked being subordinated to those they had put in prison and who they had considered trouble-makers; Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. IX, 87.

The widespread rebellions of the Quit India movement and the political instability of the immediate post-war period made it clear that, if Britain wanted to hold on to India as a colony in the long term, firm control would have to be re-established on the basis of force. Indeed, foremost in the minds of most colonial officials during the fall of 1945 was the worry that another revolt like 1942 would occur, but this time would combine attacks on communications, agrarian revolts, labour unrest and army disaffection with the presence of released INA men with military and fighting experience.²² As the colonial administration admitted in December 1946, the INC held the support of “practically the whole of articulate Hindu opinion.” Further, they could create a very serious revolt that would only be put down after “a considerable amount of bloodshed.” However, even if the party was suppressed, the administration would “have nothing to put in its place” and would have to resort to official Emergency rule, “for which the necessary numbers of efficient officials [did] not exist.”²³ Moreover, in the immediate context of post-war demobilization and economic instability, Britain was not readily able to supply extra military force, and nor was it the wish of the Labour party, elected in the summer of 1945, to do so. Pethick-Lawrence, the Secretary-of-State for India, had told the Viceroy in August 1945 that his party was “both by its convictions and by its public utterances, committed to doing its utmost to bring about a settlement of the Indian problem.”²⁴ Therefore, for a multiplicity of reasons after the war British officials in both India and the UK were interested in finding a compromise with Indian nationalist leaders. By this period both the Conservative and the Labour policy for India favoured some form of devolution of power. Although the Labour Party was more willing to accept Indian “independence” than some Conservative members,²⁵

²² Sarkar, *Modern India*, 419.

²³ “Appreciation of Political Situation” December 1946 reproduced in Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 687-88.

²⁴ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 57.

²⁵ Indeed, as late as 1 July 1947 Churchill asked Attlee to change the name of The Indian Independence Bill” to “The Indian Dominions Bill,” “The India Bill, 1947” or even “The India Self-Government Bill.” See Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. XI, 812-13.

both parties supported the renewal of the Cripps proposals and a planned process of decolonization.²⁶

According to Wavell's own account, he had begun seeking solutions to the Indian problem when he had first become Viceroy back in 1943. Apparently he had quickly realized that long-term resolution of the political situation was impossible without the participation of the main nationalist parties – the INC and Muslim League. His first inclination was to resolve the deadlock and move towards constitutional reform during the war, while the administration still had a firm grip on the country and could control the situation. Thus, in the spring of 1945 (six months after he had originally sought permission from the British Government to do so) Lord Wavell invited Indian politicians to a conference at Simla where negotiations were carried out with the aim of establishing an interim central executive composed of Indian politicians.²⁷ Significantly, the Simla negotiations rapidly broke down on communal rather than British-Indian disagreements, and thus revealed what would be the main lines of conflict within Indian politics over the next two years.²⁸

After this failure Wavell continued to work to bring Indian politicians towards a compromise. However, between the fall of 1945 and the spring of 1946 the Indian government seemed closer to a crisis than ever before. During this time, the INC was conducting its campaign to bring to justice those who had suppressed the 1942 movement, along with organizing agitation to prevent the Government's trials of INA (Indian National Army) members. In November 1945, INA members were put on trial for treason and other crimes, but huge popular movements quickly began to agitate against the trials. By the end of November, Wavell wrote that the "distorted publicity" accompanying the trials was "doing a very great deal of harm to the government" and even threatened "the morale of the Indian Army."²⁹ This issue was only finally resolved in April 1947 when Nehru and Mountbatten were able to compromise on the final cases and block the passage of an all-party motion in the

²⁶ Singh, *Limits of British Influence*, 14

²⁷ Wavell provides an account of his efforts in a letter to H.M. King George VI in his letter 24 February 1947, in Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. IX, 806-07.

²⁸ Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 117.

²⁹ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 554.

Legislative Assembly that demanded the unconditional release of the remaining prisoners.³⁰

Alarmed at INC leaders' speeches on these issues, and particularly at the resultant uprisings in Bombay and Calcutta and the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) mutiny in February 1946,³¹ Wavell warned the government in London of the danger British rule was facing. In his "Memorandum" to the Cabinet of November 1945, he had already argued that the INC leaders' speeches "can only be intended to provoke or pave the way for mass disorder."³² Though he felt that they would wait until after the elections, Wavell was sure the party had a revolt in mind and "would attempt to paralyze the administration, as they did in 1942; they would also attack and possibly murder any officials." He felt that this action would take place in the next spring, and he argued that "[h]alf measures will be of no use in dealing with a movement of this kind, and the choice will lie between capitulating to Congress and accepting their demands . . . and using all our resources to suppress the movement."³³ The Attlee government, caught between two unfavorable alternatives, decided despite the risks to "tread a middle path" and hope for a settlement.³⁴

Although the colonial government remained convinced that most of the INC leadership wanted to postpone a mass nationalist movement until after the elections, continuing disturbances gained support from some Congress Socialists and Communists.³⁵ Moreover, the general level of agitation and political mobilization in India had the colonial government on edge. By late March 1946, the Viceroy wrote to King George that:

The last three months have been anxious and depressing. They have been marked by continuous and unbridled abuse of the Government, of the British, of officials and police, in

³⁰ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. X, 170.

³¹ See Chapter 3.

³² Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 451.

³³ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 452-53.

³⁴ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 600.

³⁵ For accounts of Communist and INC Socialist activities see, for example, Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. IX. Official accounts include comments on Jai Prakash Narain's "objectionable speeches," 434-36; Communist influences on labour and the "subversive propaganda" being carried out by the Communists and left-wing Congressmen 597; and Communist-sponsored labour trouble 684.

political speeches, in practically the whole of the Press, and in the Assembly; by serious rioting in Bombay; by a mutiny in the RIN, much indiscipline in the RIAF, some unrest in the Indian Army; by an unprecedented drought and famine conditions over many parts of India; by threatened strikes on the Railways, and in the Posts and Telegraphs; by a general sense of insecurity and lawlessness.³⁶

Certainly there was popular anger and resentment against the British in many parts of the country. Nehru wrote to Cripps about this situation, arguing that there was “a considerable number of young men and women” who believed that “only out of a big struggle can something worthwhile be achieved.” Moreover, because these groups represented the “prevailing sentiment of the Indian people,” unrest could spread rapidly.³⁷ Indeed, many in the administration were convinced that the students and mobs were already out of the leaders’ control.³⁸ Even many INC leaders seemed concerned that they might lose control of the situation because of the activities of Communists and radical activists in their own Left Wing.³⁹

The extent of British officialdom’s anxiety over the situation in India after the war was made clear by Wavell’s “breakdown plan,” which he submitted to the British Government in September of 1946. Predicting that the administration in its current state could not govern all of India for more than a year and a half, and that communal tensions had only been increasing – enough to cause the loss of 4,000 lives in the Calcutta riots of August – the Viceroy frankly declared that “our time in India is limited.”⁴⁰ According to his plan, Britain should first announce its intention to withdraw by the spring of 1948 and then depart from provinces according to a phased program (INC provinces first and Muslim League provinces later).⁴¹ As might have been expected, the Labour Government did not at first respond favorably to this plan and preferred to continue working for a three-way agreement.⁴² Between the autumn of 1946 and his removal from India in March 1947, Wavell continued to complain

³⁶ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 1233.

³⁷ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 858.

³⁸ Wavell to King George, Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 1233.

³⁹ The Bombay Governor described this situation to Wavell in a letter 27 February 1946; see Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 1079.

⁴⁰ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VIII, 455-57.

⁴¹ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VIII, 457-58.

⁴² Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VIII, 620-24.

that he did not know what policy HMG was pursuing and to insist that he needed an alternative procedure in case there was a breakdown of relations between the government, the INC and the League.⁴³ Although Wavell's phased withdrawal plan was never carried out, the document itself revealed that the colonial government would be unable to control or suppress a widespread INC rebellion once started.⁴⁴

The Gold Coast

When the post-war Gold Coast government found itself faced with wide-spread discontent, economic boycotts, and in February 1948 even riots in the street, it initially reacted with panic. Nkrumah and the UGCC leaders were arrested, a State of Emergency was declared, and ships and troops were called in to help control the situation.⁴⁵ The Governor appointed the all-white Watson Commission "to enquire into and report on the recent disturbances in the Gold Coast and their underlying causes; and to make recommendations on any matter arising from their enquiry."⁴⁶ The Watson Report described a range of political, economic and social grievances which were important causes of the unrest.⁴⁷ As well as citing various economic grievances – like high prices and shortages of goods – the report argued that problems also stemmed from the "feeling of political frustration among the educated Africans who saw no prospect of ever experiencing political power under existing conditions and who regarded the 1946 Constitution as mere window-dressing designed to cover, but not to advance their natural aspirations."⁴⁸ Out of the report's observations and recommendations came the Coussey Committee, an all-African body appointed by the Government to advise on constitutional reform.

The 1948 riots had posed a great worry for the colonial government. Reginald Saloway, who arrived in the Gold Coast and took up a senior post in the civil service in 1947 after leaving the Indian Administration, was shocked at "political and racial

⁴³ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VIII, 795.

⁴⁴ Sarkar makes this argument in *Modern India*, 422.

⁴⁵ Richard Rathbone, "The Government of the Gold Coast after the Second World War," *African Affairs* 67 (July, 1968): 214.

⁴⁶ Colonial Office, *Annual Report 1948*, 3.

⁴⁷ Several of these are outlined in Chapter 2.

⁴⁸ Metcalfe, *Documents of Ghana*, 682.

feeling as tense as I had ever known it in India.” According to his account, he was most struck by the lack of support among the people for the government. Even right up to the end in India, he argued, a large proportion of the people could be counted upon to support the raj.⁴⁹ The Gold Coast riots had also demonstrated the weakness of the government’s enforcement of “law and order” within the colony. In order to stave off another crisis the police force was strengthened and an intelligence system created.⁵⁰ In 1949 when he appointed Arden-Clarke governor, the Colonial Secretary warned him that the Gold Coast was “on the edge of revolution.” Although Arden-Clarke was skeptical about this claim, it does illustrate the level of anxiety the riots had caused among British officials.⁵¹

According to Saloway’s account, throughout the late 1940s, Gold Coast officials still regarded the CPP as a “rabble” and preferred to work with the chiefs. While Arden-Clarke was willing by 1949 to work with the UGCC, he continued to view the CPP as part of the “hooligan element.”⁵² Saloway claims that at the time he found this dismissal of the CPP, combined with the party’s threatening ability to create significant disorder in the country, a “paradoxical, ludicrous and dangerous state of affairs.”⁵³ With permission from the Governor, Saloway met with Nkrumah after the CPP had issued their ultimatum and warned him that Positive Action would result in violence and impede constitutional reform, arguing that the people of the Gold Coast “were not of the stuff of which Satyagrahis are made.” Rather, he urged Nkrumah to act constitutionally and run in the upcoming elections.⁵⁴ Saloway asserts that Nkrumah was eventually convinced, as were the rest of his Executive Committee, and that the Positive Action campaign was consequently called off.⁵⁵ But for the TUC strike and pressure from the CPP’s own rank and file, he argues, Positive Action

⁴⁹ Saloway, “The New Gold Coast,” 469; Richard Rathbone confirmed Saloway’s account in his article “Government of the Gold Coast,” 212.

⁵⁰ Reginald Saloway, “The New Gold Coast,” *International Affairs* 31 (October, 1955): 470; see also Rathbone, “Government of the Gold Coast,” 216.

⁵¹ Rathbone, “Government of the Gold Coast,” 216.

⁵² Rathbone, “Government of the Gold Coast,” 216.

⁵³ Saloway, “The New Gold Coast,” 470.

⁵⁴ Saloway, “The New Gold Coast,” 470. For more on the Positive Action campaign, see Chapter 3.

⁵⁵ Saloway, “The New Gold Coast,” 471.

probably would not have occurred at all.⁵⁶ Nkrumah's own account of these interviews is that the CPP and Saloway did not reach an agreement, and neither did the CPP cancel Positive Action.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, despite this disagreement, both accounts reveal the government's interest in steering the CPP in a more moderate direction and the extent to which the British rulers were troubled by the possibility of Positive Action.

Certainly Saloway and Arden-Clarke were among those officials who had drawn wide-reaching conclusions from the 1948 disorders. More than just voicing immediate concerns over employment and inflation, the uprisings demonstrated the possibility – newly emergent in the Gold Coast – that politicians could mobilize urban populations in the name of economic and political grievances. In order to prevent more disturbances, many in the colonial administration reasoned that they would either have to find solutions to the economic problems, or resolve the political frustrations of educated Africans. Given the difficulty of correcting economic problems in the immediate future and the prospects of working with moderate nationalist leaders, men like Saloway were prepared to welcome and implement the political concessions made by the Coussey Committee.⁵⁸

STEERING BY THE COLONIAL ADMINISTRATIONS

India

As described in previous chapters, the Indian colonial administration took some solace in signs after late November 1945 and the Calcutta and Bombay uprisings that “the more moderate elements of Congress are using their influence in the interests of restraint and against an early outbreak of disorder.”⁵⁹ Near the end of December, British officials had concluded that the INC would not initiate a mass movement until

⁵⁶ Saloway, “The New Gold Coast,” 471.

⁵⁷ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 115-17.

⁵⁸ Holland, *European Decolonization*, 132; Saloway, “The New Gold Coast,” 470-71; for a brief outline of the Coussey Report, see Chapter 3.

⁵⁹ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 600.

after the elections.⁶⁰ Indeed, the colonial officials had calculated that, although the Indian business community supported the INC, they were also “anxious for a solution without conflict and disorder.”⁶¹

The goal of the British administrators thus became to reach some sort of compromise with the “moderates” in the INC. In the 1930s they had dealt with INC uprisings by dividing the party’s left and right wings and bringing the moderates into constitutional politics with calculated political concessions.⁶² Mahajan argues that after the war the British realized that unless reform and compromise were successfully carried out, their choice would be between a “humiliating surrender” or a shift toward government based on autocratic and repressive principles.⁶³ In one of his first letters to the new Labour Secretary of State for India, Pethick-Lawrence, Wavell wrote that the “first big problem is the political situation,” advising that elections in the provinces and the centre should be held as soon as possible.⁶⁴ Later in the month he wrote that “we must find constitutional activities for the agitators and I am more than convinced that election is the first step.”⁶⁵

The Indian Government’s bind continued through 1946, with the Viceroy himself expressing annoyance at the perceived favoritism of the Cabinet Mission toward the INC and particularly Gandhi.⁶⁶ However, as Wavell himself admitted, this favoritism stemmed from “the necessity to avoid the mass movement or revolution which it is in the power of Congress to start, and which we are not certain that we can control.”⁶⁷ At the end of May 1946 the Viceroy emphasized the danger of another conflict with the whole of the INC and stressed that “at all costs” the government

⁶⁰ Secretary of State in Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 656; Commander in Chief of India, 674-75.

⁶¹ “Appreciation of Political Situation,” Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 687.

⁶² Mahajan, “British Policy,” 58.

⁶³ Mahajan, “British Policy,” 63.

⁶⁴ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 28 & 29.

⁶⁵ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VI, 68.

⁶⁶ See, for instance, Wavell, *Viceroy’s Journal*, 236, 324, 325, 367-68, 382, 454. Wavell himself was quite hostile to Gandhi, writing in his journal that Gandhi “is a remarkable old man, certainly, and the most formidable of three opponents who have detached portions of the British Empire in recent years . . . But he is a very tough politician and not a saint” (3 April 1946 p. 236). On one occasion, after receiving a “malevolent letter” from Gandhi, Wavell was sufficiently provoked to write: “He is a malignant old man” (15 November 1945 p. 185).

⁶⁷ Quoted in Sarkar, *Modern India*, 428.

must avoid facing united Hindu and Muslim opposition.⁶⁸ However, by the end of June the Viceroy felt that the danger of a mass movement had temporarily receded and concluded that there was less insecurity in the country.⁶⁹ After the failure of the Mission's plans, the Viceroy became convinced of the need to put the INC into government – even without the Muslim League's participation, which he had previously insisted on. Again, his desire was to prevent the possibility of a mass movement, make the INC's leadership control their left wing's involvement in labour activities – during July there was a postal walk-out and a threatened all-India railway strike – and keep the leaders occupied with administrative duties rather than political actions.⁷⁰ Wavell also felt then that with the INC participating in an interim government at the centre, the nationalist issue of punishment for civil servants involved in the 1942 repressions could be tactfully forgotten.⁷¹

At the end of July, in the face of widespread labour trouble, Wavell thus wrote London that there was an urgent need for a Central Government with popular support. He argued that, if the INC took power, Congress leaders would “realize that firm control of unruly elements [was] necessary,” and might “put down the communists and try to curb their own left wing.”⁷² Indeed, in August Wavell was told by “an unimpeachable source” that Sardar Patel wanted the INC to enter the government in order to prevent the growing chaos in the country. Eventually in the late summer of 1946 the INC and the minority parties did form an interim all-India government under Nehru's leadership (members of the Muslim League only joined the government a month later in October).⁷³ Wavell was initially satisfied with the INC's participation in government. Nehru provided him with an advance copy of a speech to foreign

⁶⁸ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VII, 734-35.

⁶⁹ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VII, 1084.

⁷⁰ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 431. Sarkar does not mention which parties sponsored these labour actions.

⁷¹ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VIII, 20.

⁷² Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VIII, 154. Wavell was right: in January 1947 the Bombay INC Government decided to do just that and concluded that the only way to deal with Communists was to “resort to detention without trial.” In relating this information to Pethick-Lawrence, Wavell commented that they might be right, but “it is a strange *volt face* from their old attitude to such executive measures; and it may come as a shock to you if they should resort to such ‘imperialistic’ methods.” For Wavell's comments see: Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. IX, 575.

⁷³ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 431; See also Wavell, *Viceroy's Journal*, 329.

press agencies, which the Viceroy liked and found “statesman-like.”⁷⁴ In an October 1946 letter summarizing Indian events to the king, Wavell wrote that the INC cabinet had taken “sensible” decisions. He also noted appreciatively that the Ministers had generally worked to demonstrate their moderation outside of Cabinet, although he complained that Nehru “periodically goes off the deep end.”⁷⁵

Yet, despite some amount of satisfactory work with them, Wavell was continually frustrated by what he called the INC’s “continuous campaign for power,” and their efforts to limit his special prerogatives.⁷⁶ He nevertheless remained optimistic that, despite the pull from left-wing elements like Jai Prakash Narain, the INC High Command was “becoming sobered by responsibility.” He looked forward to the (in his view) inevitable time when the High Command would have to “face up to its own Left-Wing and other revolutionary influences,” for as the party leaders gained power they were being “forced into a more realistic appreciation of what government of a great country really means.”⁷⁷ Indeed, in April 1947 the Governor of Bombay assured Mountbatten that there the relatively conservative INC ministry had become “fairly practical” and was beginning to feel that its real opponents were the Congress Socialists and the Communists.⁷⁸

The Gold Coast

Based on the final recommendations of the 1949 Coussey Report, the colonial administration in the Gold Coast worked out a new constitution and duly called national elections for early 1951.⁷⁹ When the CPP won a sweeping victory, Arden-Clarke decided to release Nkrumah and the rest of the banned party’s leadership from prison (where they had been since the 1949 Positive Action campaign). Even before the election campaign, it had become increasingly clear to British officials that no

⁷⁴ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VIII, 483, 498; Wavell had a similar favourable report in another instance: Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VIII, 637.

⁷⁵ 22 October 1946, Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VIII, 773.

⁷⁶ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VIII, 738.

⁷⁷ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. IX, 530.

⁷⁸ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. X, 87.

⁷⁹ Arden-Clarke, “Transition in Ghana,” 33.

government would be feasible without the participation of the CPP.⁸⁰ Arden-Clarke subsequently described the basis of his decision to include them:

Nkrumah and his party had the mass of the people behind them and there was no other party with appreciable public support to which we could turn. Without Nkrumah, the Constitution would be still-born and if nothing came of all the hopes, aspirations and concrete proposals for a greater measure of self-government, there would no longer be any faith in the good intentions of the British Government and the Gold Coast would be plunged into disorders, violence and bloodshed.⁸¹

Certainly the Governor was aware of the dangers of refusing to cooperate with the majority party; however, he also suspected that the CPP was a party that could be reasoned with, and one that could cooperate with the colonial administration.

Indeed, a famously close and amiable relationship eventually developed between Arden-Clarke and Nkrumah.⁸² Both men gave similar accounts of their relationship, which apparently began in mutual suspicion. However, as Arden-Clarke described, they both quickly realized that they “had the same objective, the attainment of full self-government for the country.” Though they differed on the means and timing, “both felt . . . that it would be in the best interests of the country and of ourselves if we worked with and not against each other.”⁸³ Even Arden-Clarke’s immediate subordinate, Sir Reginald Saloway, praised Nkrumah in 1955 for his “statesmanship” and “remarkable absence of rancor” from the start, recalling the mutual trust and good-will between the nationalist leader and the Governor.⁸⁴ Nkrumah himself wrote that after talking with Arden-Clarke he realized the Governor was “a man with a strong sense of justice and fair play, with whom I could easily be friends even though I looked upon him as a symbol of British imperialism in the country.”⁸⁵ The peculiarity of this relationship seems to be in Arden-Clarke’s willingness to compromise with Gold Coast nationalism. As he wrote to his mother, there “is no doubt that there is a powerful body of opinion in the highest quarter here

⁸⁰ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 91.

⁸¹ Arden-Clarke, “Transition in Ghana,” 33.

⁸² Rooney, *Sir Charles Arden-Clarke*, 126.

⁸³ Arden-Clarke, “Transition in Ghana,” 33-34.

⁸⁴ Saloway, “The New Gold Coast,” 471-72.

⁸⁵ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 137.

[in London] who think that I am going too far and too fast but as no one has been able to put forward an alternative working policy that has the remotest prospect of working I am being allowed to have my own way.”⁸⁶ It is apparent that the Governor was less hostile to African nationalism than many other administrators in the Gold Coast and London; moreover, he was able to perceive that nationalism had “seeds of conservatism” within it that could be brought into service in the government and could cooperate in the Commonwealth.⁸⁷ In later years Arden-Clarke himself defended the fast pace of Gold Coast decolonization by arguing that “good will” would have been lost at a slower pace, and asking whether, in that instance, “Ghana would still be a member of the Commonwealth?”⁸⁸

British administrators felt they had enough reasons for optimism to formulate conditions for leaving the Gold Coast. These included: establishment of a reasonably efficient indigenous administration, “safeguarding of the fundamental freedoms of democracy,” the acceptance of a constitution by a majority of the people, and “the conclusion of satisfactory defense arrangements and continued resistance to Communist infiltration.”⁸⁹ In particular, British officials insisted that the Gold Coast prove itself to be allied against the menace of Communism (flirting with non-alignment was already bad enough). In 1948 the Watson Commission had focused nervously on Nkrumah’s “Communist affiliations” and his apparent “aims for a Union of West African Soviet Socialist Republics.”⁹⁰ At the time, these worries had proved strong enough to prevent Nkrumah from being invited to serve on the Coussey Committee – although the rest of the UGCC working committee was invited to participate.⁹¹ The government’s panic may have had roots in their own general desire to “contain communism,” or in a desire to please Washington, or in the military crisis Britain was facing in Malaya, not to mention the fear of Nkrumah’s ability –

⁸⁶ Quoted in Austin, *Ghana Observed*, 2.

⁸⁷ Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 38-39.

⁸⁸ Arden-Clarke, “Transition in Ghana,” 36.

⁸⁹ TNA, PRO, CO 554/805/22, “Constitutional Developments in the Gold Coast,” 22 March 1955.

⁹⁰ Quoted in Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 85-87. Text of “The Circle” is reproduced in Nkrumah’s autobiography, 303-04. As Nkrumah writes, there was no mention of “Soviet” in his original text.

⁹¹ Austin, *Ghana Observed*, 22.

whatever his links to any communist organizations – to unite the urban and rural commoner populations in anti-British agitations.⁹²

Whatever the reason, within a few years the British administrators' unease had been calmed. Arden-Clarke wrote to the Colonial Office in 1954 that "the Government have behaved in an exemplary manner. They agreed to the cancellation of the passports of several persons who had recently gone behind the Iron Curtain," and when informed of a Communist Youth Gathering in Vienna, they agreed to withhold the passports of anyone suspected of going.⁹³ The Governor was pleased with Nkrumah's actions on other matters as well. After the 1954 elections, Arden-Clarke expected some of the new Ministers without experience to "disregard official advice" at first; nevertheless, he was confident that the Prime Minister could make them "toe the line," and believed that he was already at work on them.⁹⁴ Indeed, Nkrumah was making efforts to police his party. He worked to prevent attacks on British civil servants by CPP members, while making sure that he did not appear to have compromised the party's aims. On the other hand, he took care to reassure imperial administrators that any attacks coming from local CPP groups were not condoned by party leaders.⁹⁵ Certainly some types of attack were permitted; for example, the British administration allowed the nationalist press to abuse them as "imperialists," on the understanding that the party would only go so far. Moreover, the officials – as seen in Arden-Clarke's comments – had the secure knowledge that whatever was said to the populace, nationalist leaders had already accepted the discipline of parliamentary politics and the strictures of responsible government.⁹⁶

THE COMMONWEALTH AND POST-INDEPENDENCE RELATIONS WITH BRITAIN

⁹² Hargreaves, "Toward the Transfer," 136; Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 19 agrees that the colonial government "panicked" in the face of these disturbances, abandoning their more measured strategies.

⁹³ TNA, PRO, CO 554/1162/9, Arden Clarke to Sir T. Lloyd, 22 Dec., 1954.

⁹⁴ TNA, PRO, CO 554/1162/4A, Arden-Clarke to Sir T. Lloyd, 16 July 1954.

⁹⁵ Rooney, *Sir Charles Arden-Clarke*, 129.

⁹⁶ Apter, *Ghana in Transition*, 307.

India

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, India held significant strategic and economic value for Britain.⁹⁷ Particularly in terms of its strategic position and the manpower it had contributed to the war effort and to subsequent imperial ventures in Indochina and Indonesia, India provided crucial resources to Britain. Commercial trade with the sub-continent was also valuable, as were its crucial contributions to the Sterling Area. Added to these advantages were the financial contributions India made to UK defense by stationing and training substantial numbers of British troops (600,000 before the war) in the subcontinent, all at the Government of India's expense. When deciding how to proceed after the war, colonial officials listed these advantages and concluded that Britain's priority should be to secure "an orderly transfer of power to a stable India, and satisfactory defensive arrangements with the new India."⁹⁸ While it was felt that Britain could only increase her international prestige with an orderly and friendly transfer, the worst possibility was that Russia would gain control of India "either through lack of responsible Government or by communist revolution, or by [the] deliberate choice" of a nationalist government.⁹⁹ Colonial officials were anxious to avoid Soviet influence and encourage a defense alliance for a number of reasons. Not only did officials want to ensure safe passage for British shipping and air communications in the Indian Ocean, most felt that Indian manpower would be a important boon to the Commonwealth, that an Indian base for military operations in Southeast Asia would be useful, and that the importance of Indian natural and industrial products would continue to increase.¹⁰⁰ When calculating the benefits of keeping India in the Commonwealth in 1947, Mountbatten, who had replaced Wavell as Viceroy in March 1947, emphasized the increased prestige Britain would have if an independent India requested to remain a member. He also argued that India's membership was strategically important that a neutral

⁹⁷ For the following arguments see Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence 13 July 1946, Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VIII, 50.

⁹⁸ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VIII, 50.

⁹⁹ "Note on the Results to the British Commonwealth of the Transfer of Political Power in India," Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VIII, 50-51.

¹⁰⁰ Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. VIII, 53-57.

India would leave a gap in Empire defense, and that a hostile India would cut Britain off from Australia and New Zealand.¹⁰¹

As would later be the case in the Gold Coast/Ghana, British officials were interested in keeping India within the Sterling Area in order that their dollar earnings (in jute and tea, in the Indian case) could boost Britain's weak gold and dollar reserves.¹⁰² Even in 1949 when India decided to become a republic, British officials decided that it was in their interests to keep the former colony within the Commonwealth and Sterling Area.¹⁰³ Despite many misgivings, officials in the Colonial Office felt that the danger of India leaving the Commonwealth would be too great. In their view, without "the steadying influence of Commonwealth membership, it might be that India would display greater intransigence in her handling of international affairs."¹⁰⁴ Thus, throughout 1945-47 and into the post-colonial period, one of the most significant goals of the British government was to retain as many close ties as possible with the successor state(s).

For Mountbatten, persuading India to join the Commonwealth was a crucial objective, and he devoted much effort to the tricky diplomacy needed to convince Indian leaders.¹⁰⁵ His instructions from the British Government in March 1947 were to gain Indian membership in the Commonwealth and secure a defense agreement.¹⁰⁶ In April 1947 he wrote that the "most important single problem facing the staff" was how "to keep . . . India within the British Commonwealth"; and, "in order to achieve this" he was willing to "grant some form of Dominion Status as soon as possible."¹⁰⁷

However, since 1930 the INC had declared itself in favour of complete independence rather than "dominion status." Moreover, in January 1947 the Constituent Assembly had announced that its objective was to create an "independent

¹⁰¹ "Minutes of Viceroy's Twenty Ninth Staff Meeting, Item 5," in Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. X, 703-04.

¹⁰² Gupta, "Imperial Strategy," 14.

¹⁰³ Gupta, "Imperial Strategy," 36.

¹⁰⁴ Colonial Office working paper quoted in Gupta, "Imperial Strategy," 36-37.

¹⁰⁵ See Moore, *Endgames*, Chapter 6.

¹⁰⁶ Moore, *Endgames*, 137.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Moore, *Endgames*, 146.

sovereign republic.”¹⁰⁸ In April 1947 Nehru wrote to the Defense Member of the Interim Government, Baldev Singh, that under “no conceivable circumstances [was] India going to remain in the British Commonwealth whatever the consequences.”¹⁰⁹ However, Nehru also expressed an interest in retaining ties to Britain and even some form of common citizenship. Mountbatten interpreted this contradiction to mean that the INC had realized they “cannot” leave the Commonwealth “but cannot afford to say that they will stay in; they are groping for a formula.”¹¹⁰

Indeed, during the last moments of the independence movement, Dominion status apparently became much more attractive to Indian leaders of both the main nationalist parties.¹¹¹ By early March 1947 it was increasingly clear that a constitution acceptable to all parties might not be produced by June 1948, the British government’s announced deadline for full withdrawal. Therefore, a transfer of power to an Indian Dominion based on the 1935 constitution increasingly seemed to be the best alternative.¹¹² Although the INC (and Muslim League) did accept Dominion status and agreed to join the Commonwealth, the INC still stood firm on several issues with Nehru announcing at the end of May and beginning of June 1947 that attempts to secure foreign military bases in the independent states of South Asia would be viewed as an unfriendly act.¹¹³ Britain thus found it had been wrong to assume that Indian political leaders would compromise their country’s long term interests for imperial defense commitments.

Yet, as a negotiating party the INC proved willing to compromise with Britain if the resolution met the leadership’s interests – as with Dominion status, which would provide quick access to effective power.¹¹⁴ By using the population to press their demands, the nationalist leaders were also able to oppose or alter British plans in certain instances. However, as described in Chapter 2, the INC leadership was

¹⁰⁸ Moore, *Endgames*, 139.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Moore, *Endgames*, 143.

¹¹⁰ “Record of Interview between Rear-Admiral Viscount Mountbatten of Burma and Pandit Nehru,” 24 March 1947, Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, vol. X, 13.

¹¹¹ Holland, *European Decolonization*, 79.

¹¹² Moore, *Endgames*, 138.

¹¹³ Gupta, “Imperial Strategy,” 20.

¹¹⁴ Gupta, “Imperial Strategy,” 41.

unwilling to let their followers go too far, e.g. by seeking radical social or economic change. The British understood this class dimension of nationalism. As a result, they frequently succeeded in their appeal to the moderate politicians, creating common ground on policies that framed the character of the independent state and tied it economically and politically to the Sterling Area and Commonwealth.

Ghana

British administrators likewise worked hard to ensure a continuing influence in Ghanaian affairs after independence. As in the case of India, officials wanted their former colony to maintain a stable administration and follow an acceptable foreign policy. Indeed, the Colonial Office was sufficiently concerned about the Gold Coast's future to send F. E. Cumming-Bruce as an Advisor on External Affairs to Nkrumah's government in 1955. Although some of the Colonial Office staff believed Cumming-Bruce was "too pessimistic" and that he "in many ways overstate[d] the disquieting features in the Gold Coast situation," others declared his report to be a "frank statement of the position as seen by someone outside."¹¹⁵ In his report, Cumming-Bruce cited a range of problems in the Gold Coast, including both possible administrative failure and the anti-colonial and neutralist course the CPP was pursuing in foreign affairs.¹¹⁶ On the issue of administration, Cumming-Bruce emphasized that administrative collapse in a Commonwealth member would "present difficult problems," cause unfortunate consequences in other colonies, and jeopardize "our large commercial interests in the Gold Coast" itself. He was deeply concerned about prospects for internal instability, arguing that, although the African ministers had learned much due to high cocoa profits and the "personal influence of the

¹¹⁵ TNA, PRO, CO 554/815, Serial No. 20/55; CO 554/815/6, Gilbert Laithwaite to Cumming-Bruce, 3 Sept. 1955. The Secretary of State, Lennox-Boyd, passed Cumming-Bruce's report along to the Prime Minister, noting that he had read it "with interest," and that the problems raised within it were under serious consideration. CO 554/815/10 Lennox-Boyd to the Prime Minister, Secret, 13 September, 1955.

¹¹⁶ See TNA, PRO, CO 554/815/E/3, 19 Aug. 1955 for the following.

Governor,” there was “not likely to be much statesmanship in Government policy after independence.”

Cumming-Bruce further warned of the need to “counter the potent influence of the Bandung group” on the CPP, arguing that it was necessary to “widen the narrow horizon of Gold Coast Ministers, in particular the Prime Minister, [and] encourage them to take a reasonable attitude in external relations.” In particular, he was concerned about the influence of Nehru’s India, citing “a need for healthy external influence here in addition to our own to counter the political influence of India.”¹¹⁷ In related correspondence on foreign affairs, Cumming-Bruce again warned of the “Indian influence” which in his view was “already strong,” and he expressed concern that it would consequently be difficult for the African Ministers in the Gold Coast to see African affairs “realistically in the world setting.” Arguing that not preparing the Gold Coast adequately for external relations would present the United Kingdom “with awkward problems after independence,” he emphasized the importance of prior training.¹¹⁸

Cumming-Bruce was certainly not the only pessimistic voice on the subject of Gold Coast independence.¹¹⁹ Other British officials also emphasized the need to maintain continuous personal contact with Gold Coast ministers in order to ensure that their advice came from “responsible circles in the U.K.”¹²⁰ Indeed, the CPP’s approach to external affairs continued to worry British officials even after the colony reached independence. Already in June 1957 the U.K. High Commissioner, Maclennan, advised the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations that Ghana would inevitably side with the powers opposed to colonialism elsewhere. Proposing ways to moderate this behaviour, Maclennan suggested that the British government’s

¹¹⁷ TNA, PRO, CO 554/815/E/3, 19 Aug. 1955. Interestingly, Cumming-Bruce thought that “Canada seems to be in a good position to exercise such influence,” writing that Mr. Pearson was taking a “personal and sympathetic interest in the Gold Coast.” In general, Cumming-Bruce believed that Commonwealth countries other than India should be represented in Accra, proposing that Pakistan should be encouraged to do so in order to “offset Indian influence.” See TNA, PRO, CO 554/1395/E2, “Report on Visit to Gold Coast, 11 Sept. 1954.

¹¹⁸ TNA, PRO, CO 554/1395/E2, “Report on Visit to Gold Coast, 11 Sept. 1954.

¹¹⁹ See in particular HOC member Peter Smithers’ report TNA, PRO, CO 1032/136, Peter Smithers, 26 July, 1956.

¹²⁰ TNA, PRO, CO 554/805, “Constitutional Developments in the Gold Coast,” 22 March 1955.

response should be “to convince them that there is no difference of opinion between us on this,” but to argue that self-government should only be given once a country would be able to manage its own affairs. Maclennan accordingly suggested that “some judicious flattery of Ghana Ministers may from time to time help in suggesting that not every Colonial territory is as well equipped as Ghana for immediate independence.”¹²¹

Britain had good material reasons to be interested in retaining close ties with Ghana. As one Colonial Office prospectus argued, the United Kingdom derived “substantial benefit from Gold Coast membership of the sterling area”: the country provided 700,000 ounces of gold a year, as well as diamonds, and was “a considerable dollar earner through sales of cocoa and manganese.”¹²² Indeed, after the war when Britain had a significant shortage of dollars, the Gold Coast (because of its large-scale cocoa sales to the United States) made the largest dollar contribution of any colony save Malaya.¹²³ This contribution of course came at the colony’s own expense: between 1951 and 1954 over 79% of its dollar earnings were handed over to the Sterling Area each year rather than being invested within its own borders. Meanwhile, the richer members of the Commonwealth derived substantial advantages from these arrangements and could get away with contributing significantly less. In 1953 the prominent British economist Sir Dennis Robertson argued that within the Sterling Area

each country as a *country* agreed to hand over its surplus dollar earnings to Mother in exchange for sterling, and to go to Mother when it wanted extra dollars to spend. Naturally the degree of confidence with which it exercised or presented claims on the dollar pool depended partly on its political status: the little black children who were often the best earners could be smacked on the head if they showed too great a propensity to spend dollars, while the grown-up white daughters, who were often pretty extravagant, could only be quietly reasoned with.¹²⁴

¹²¹ TNA, PRO, DO 35/6214/110960, “Dispatch No. 10,” 10 June, 1957.

¹²² TNA, PRO, CO 554/803, “Note of Problems Which Will Arise When the Gold Coast Achieves Independence.”

¹²³ For the following see Fitch and Oppenheimer, *Ghana: End of an Illusion*, 44-47.

¹²⁴ Quoted in Fitch and Oppenheimer, *Ghana: End of an Illusion*, 46.

Economic development in the Gold Coast/Ghana also lagged because the colony's Ministry of Finance, under the direct control of the Colonial Office until 1954, pursued a policy of placing investments in Britain rather than in the Gold Coast.¹²⁵ Even after independence the country's investment portfolio was managed in London through the Colonial Office – and by 1961 its investments were calculated to have lost sixty million pounds in depreciation of stocks.¹²⁶ It was only after 1961 that politicians within Ghana took control of the state's economic resources in order to build up the industrial sector through socialist planning.¹²⁷

As in India, Britain worked hard to ensure that any political changes Ghana experienced when achieving independence would not effect widespread socio-economic alterations. If there had to be a revolution bringing independence to their colony, they would ensure that it was passive in nature by imposing whatever limits on economic, social and political reform they could. Even more than in the Indian situation, Britain succeeded in preserving many of its economic and political relations with the independent Ghana. Yet, although he proved willing to accept many British strategies and institutions, Nkrumah did not fulfill all of Britain's desires. In his involvement in the Non-Aligned Movement and particularly his close relationship with India in international affairs, he continued to be a source of anxiety for British officials until his overthrow in 1966. Nevertheless, at least for the first decade after independence, Ghana continued to function within the general limits set out for it by the colonial government.

¹²⁵ Bing, *Reap the Whirlwind*, 149.

¹²⁶ Bing, *Reap the Whirlwind*, 150.

¹²⁷ Fitch and Oppenheimer, *Ghana: End of an Illusion*, 82.

CHAPTER 6:

THE COLONIAL HERITAGE

A significant feature of the transfer of power in the Indian subcontinent and the Gold Coast/Ghana was the colonial heritage that continued to linger in the new states. Particularly in the form of the administrative machinery, this heritage played a dual role. On the one hand, it provided the mechanism necessary for governing and an important stabilizing force for the new states. However, by the same token, the personnel, traditions and operating norms of these institutions – whether the civil service, the army, the police forces, or even the parliamentary institutions themselves – had all been trained or fashioned under the British colonial government. These institutions, which had been created to reinforce a colonial state based on authoritarian principles, were supposed to be put to service in the interests of democratic post-colonial regimes interested in modifying the social structure and addressing inequalities. Although they were incorporated into the independent states, it is important to acknowledge the impact of the colonial heritage which moderated the new states and preserved elements of the colonial character within them.

Of course, the 1947 division of India and Pakistan was itself a result of the colonial heritage – a product of British divide and rule policies that had created separate electorates and encouraged communal antagonisms within the colonial state. However, the nationalist politicians too were responsible for Partition, and both the INC and Muslim League proved willing to divide the country when it seemed to suit their interests. During 1947 two hundred thousand people were killed in communal violence, and millions of Hindus and Muslims who were caught on the wrong side of

the border became refugees from their homes.¹ The violence and trauma of Partition demonstrated the extent to which the transfer of power affected much of the population and mobilized their energy and strength, but was nevertheless engineered primarily according to the interests of the political elites actually engaged in the bargaining process.

The creation of an independent constitution for Ghana likewise demonstrates the lack of widespread change that came with independence. Understanding this process reveals Britain's interest in producing an independent state that would be confined as much as possible to its colonial mould and illustrates the authoritarian nature of the heritage that the government of Ghana received. The framing of Ghana's constitution is a significant episode in its passive revolution – in this instance, the British used their influence to determine the character of the new state and ensured as much as possible that it would continue the traditions of their own regime in the Gold Coast and place limitations on the actions of indigenous politicians.

THE ADMINISTRATION

India

One of the most crucial continuities between colonial and post-colonial India was its state administration and bureaucracy. Ayesha Jalal has forcefully argued that the colonial legacies passed on through the Indian and Pakistani state structures overturned many of the goals for which the independence movement had fought.² I will demonstrate below that both of these states not only relied heavily on their bureaucratic administration in order to function as independent entities but also emphasized the centralized and authoritarian structures of the state system.

¹ Holland, *European Decolonization*, 78. For other accounts, see Sarkar, *Modern India*, 452; Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 224-230.

² Jalal, *Democracy*, 28.

To be sure, in the immediate post-independence period, it *was* necessary to restore and emphasize stability. Particularly in the aftermath of partition, both India and Pakistan had to devote extensive resources to deal with communal upheavals and re-establish order.³ Many, such as the prominent INC leader Sardar Patel, argued that continuity within the civil service should be maintained in order to provide stability for India.⁴ Although not all party leaders agreed with the retention of the centralized colonial apparatus,⁵ the INC, and Nehru and Patel in particular, moved quickly to take over the old colonial administrative institutions.⁶ Within their vision, the “steel frame” of colonial India’s bureaucracy would provide stability during the post-independence era, prevent the growth of separatist regional identities that seemed to threaten the unity of India in the wake of partition, and give structural support to the new independent indigenous regime.

Of course there were some changes in the administration. After independence the Indian Civil Service (ICS) was transformed into the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and gained a number of new recruits. Nevertheless, a significant minority of the old administrative personnel stayed on after the transfer of power. Of the 955 ICS officers before Partition, 392 (or over 40%) remained on in the IAS.⁷ Moreover, a large majority of government officials, as well as police and army officers, had been trained under the British colonial regime. As well, the Indian politicians about to take over the new state had been apprenticed in politics under the British raj.⁸ Therefore, along with the continuity in personnel came a continuation of the traditions and organizational norms of these colonial institutions.⁹ Furthermore, the colonial modes

³ Manor, “Liberal and Representative Politics,” 30.

⁴ Brown, *Modern India*, 359.

⁵ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 453 quotes Gandhi’s statement on the eve of his murder that the INC had “created rotten boroughs leading to corruption and . . . institutions, popular and democratic only in name,” advising that the party be dissolved and replaced by a people’s association (Lok Sevak Sangh) of self-sacrificing constructive village workers.

⁶ Jalal, *Democracy*, 28.

⁷ Jalal, *Democracy*, 18. Perhaps to control for the effects of partition, all of Jalal’s figures here apparently exclude Muslim officers.

⁸ Brown, *Modern India*, 357.

⁹ Brown, *Modern India*, 354. David Potter notes that the last “ICS man,” N. K. Mukharji, only retired in March 1980. See David C. Potter, *India’s Political Administrators: From ICS to IAS*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1.

of service lingered well into the post-colonial period. David Potter discusses the ICS tradition of “gentlemanly behaviour” among both Indian and British employees, a tradition that continued to be instilled at the IAS National Academy (established 1947) after independence.¹⁰ According to the interviews he conducted during 1966-1967, the young officers then in the IAS still tended, as a result of their training and first postings, to be instilled in the “norms and values in the ICS tradition.”¹¹ When commenting on developments in the service until 1980, Potter notes several important changes to the IAS, particularly the increasing representation of scheduled castes and tribes among its members. Nevertheless, he argues that the “essentials” of the ICS tradition continued to be evident even in the 1980s, including IAS functionaries’ “location and movement, engagement in the political process, and the high valuation placed on gentlemanly norms and values.”¹² Furthermore, like the ICS before it, the IAS continued to be an elite cadre, chosen through a competitive exam from the wealthy classes of society who could afford to train their children in English.¹³

While in many ways the administrative continuities in India helped positively to ease the transition to independence and self-government, it is important to realize the long term consequences of such decisions. Because of the maintenance of this colonial bureaucratic structure, independence leaders were less able to change or restructure social relations in the country in any significant way. In 1964, when Nehru was asked what his greatest failure had been as prime minister, he replied “I could not change the administration, it is still a colonial administration.” He argued that the continuing existence of this colonial administration “was one of the main causes of India’s inability to solve the problem of poverty.”¹⁴ Judith Brown also questions how well an administration based on these principles could aid a country that was apparently seeking radical change for itself.¹⁵ In 1934 Nehru himself had written that “no new order can be built in India so long as the spirit of the Indian Civil

¹⁰ See Potter, *India’s Political Administrators*, 115-20; 185-86.

¹¹ Potter, *India’s Political Administrators*, 199-200; these officers would have been recruited to the IAS between 1958-1964 and completed their training in 1960-66.

¹² Potter *India’s Political Administrators*, 232, 235.

¹³ Brown, *Modern India*, 358; Potter *India’s Political Administrators*, 232-33.

¹⁴ Quoted in Potter, *India’s Political Administrators*, 2.

¹⁵ Brown, *Modern India*, 359.

Services pervades our administration and our public services”; he maintained then that it was therefore “essential that the ICS and similar services must disappear completely.”¹⁶ Subsequently, while it became politically and administratively useful to retain this bureaucratic structure during the instability following independence, this particular colonial heritage proved to have significant drawbacks for the new state(s).

Ayesha Jalal argues that, to different degrees, both India and Pakistan relied heavily on the bureaucratic administration built up during the colonial era. In both countries the relationships between elected representatives and their constituents were largely confined to elections, and local bureaucrats were often the primary representatives of the people.¹⁷ Therefore, even after independence politicians tended to be placed in a subordinate relationship to the civil service because of the administrators’ familiarity with the political and administrative systems.¹⁸ As a result, politicians often required administrative backing in order to get support in their local area.¹⁹ Jalal terms this administrative dominance “bureaucratic authoritarianism,” arguing that while it existed at the lower levels of government, a “viceregal tradition” of executive powers dominating legislative bodies continued amongst the upper echelons. Both of these tendencies served to undermine the operation of substantial democracy within India after independence.²⁰ Even more than India, Pakistan was in a weak position: its institutional, strategic and economic resources were much fewer than India’s. Whereas India had inherited an existing centralized colonial administration intact, Pakistan’s central government had to be built from scratch in order to organize and coordinate administration at the provincial,

¹⁶ Quoted in Potter, *India’s Political Administrators*, 2.

¹⁷ Jalal, *Democracy*, 19.

¹⁸ Jalal, *Democracy*, 19.

¹⁹ Manor, “Liberal and Representative Politics,” 32.

²⁰ Jalal, *Democracy*, 20. In her text, Jalal argues that there is no “neat and sharp dichotomy” between democracy and authoritarianism -- both represent struggles between dominance and resistance. Rather, she emphasizes the distinction between formal democracy – in which the right to vote and freedom of expression are guaranteed – and substantive democracy – in which the people are actually empowered as agents, capable of resisting and renegotiating “relations of power and privilege.” For Jalal, authoritarianism represents the “organized power embedded in the institutional structure of the state.” Thus, in her view a degree of “covert authoritarianism” is inherent in *any* state structure, but its degree depends upon the presence of formal and particularly, substantive, democracy (3). Thus, while after independence India continued as a formal democracy and Pakistan as an authoritarian state, “bureaucratic authoritarianism” was present in each, although to differing degrees (19).

district and local levels.²¹ As a result, more autonomy was conceded to the civil service in order to consolidate state authority within the country's boundaries. The result was a civil service with an even wider scope and greater power than in India, undermining the operation of even formal democracy in Pakistan.²²

The Gold Coast

Significantly, while officials in India were worried about a lack of loyalty within the civil service because of the increasing majority of Indian personnel, the Gold Coast had the opposite problem, for its colonial bureaucracy was overwhelmingly staffed by British expatriates. In 1949 only 10.3 percent of senior civil servants were Africans; by 1954 that number had increased to 35.8 percent.²³ In 1955 a senior official in the Gold Coast, Reginald Saloway, described the problem of self-government as not a political issue "but a tremendous administration problem." He argued "that the key to this problem is the maintenance of the standard of the public service, largely through the retention of British officers."²⁴ Whereas in India (where he had previously worked), there had been significant indigenization before independence, Saloway argued that the Gold Coast government machinery would collapse if there was a large-scale exodus of British officers. Although 40 percent of senior civil servants were Africans in 1955, most were in comparatively junior posts and lacked experience.²⁵

Certainly when the CPP came to power in 1951 they overwhelmingly found themselves dealing with British administrators. Understandably, Nkrumah and his government were anxious to speed the pace of Africanization in order to train Africans to take over responsible posts.²⁶ However, he argued that care was needed for dealing with the "old colonial type[s]" in the bureaucracy who were required for

²¹ Jalal, *Democracy*, 18.

²² Jalal, *Democracy*, 21-22.

²³ *A Statement on the Programme of the Africanisation of the Public Service*, (Accra: Government Printing Department, 1954), 12.

²⁴ Saloway, "The New Gold Coast," 473.

²⁵ Saloway, "The New Gold Coast," 473.

²⁶ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 148.

the transitional period, but who were unhappy with the changes and with the fact that Africans were being given positions of authority.²⁷ According to Nkrumah, the Secretary of State was anxious that overseas officers would remain in order to guarantee an efficient administration after independence.²⁸ Eight hundred overseas officers were involved, most of them composing the “backbone” of the administration, and according to Nkrumah it was crucial to keep as many of them as possible.²⁹

The importance of the Gold Coast administration was that, as in India, the civil service was a “quintessential” part of the British colonial structure, and according to Birmingham it became an “entrenched heritage” within the post-colonial state.³⁰ In the Gold Coast, as in India and other Westminster-style systems, indigenous elected officials relied on civil servants for day-to-day guidance. Ministers frequently depended on their permanent secretaries to write up reports or propose alternatives; as a result, the origin for many of the actions taken by government ministers was with their European staff.³¹ Like Indian administrators, civil servants in the Gold Coast tended to derive their experience from, and base their codes of conduct on, a British model. David Apter perhaps exaggerates his claims that any drastic changes to administrative practice would have thrown the whole system into chaos; however, the issue was a significant political and administrative problem, and any substantial change to the bureaucratic system would have been extremely difficult to enact.³² Indeed, according to Apter even the most radical ministers within the Gold Coast government conformed their routines and decisions to fit the expectations of their British bureaucratic subordinates.³³ Apter describes British expatriates in the administration as simultaneously judges and teachers as well as dependable subordinates for African politicians.³⁴

²⁷ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 148.

²⁸ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 149.

²⁹ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 150.

³⁰ Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 40.

³¹ Apter, *Ghana in Transition*, 279.

³² Apter, *Ghana in Transition*, 279.

³³ Apter, *Ghana in Transition*, 279.

³⁴ Apter, *Ghana in Transition*, 280.

Taking into account the other constraints on African nationalists, Jon Kraus has argued that some historians have been too scathing in their judgements on the CPP for their apparently uncritical acceptance of “western” institutions like parties, parliaments and bureaucracies. He emphasizes that the scale and depth of the colonial heritage should not be underestimated. Both in terms of state structures and the transfer of values to elites within society, this heritage has been crucial. Particularly in the bureaucracy, universities, military officer corps and higher judicial circles, there was a significant “structural-value transfer.”³⁵ Indeed, it is important to remember that only a very small African political class emerged under the colonial regime – probably under one thousand members before independence. Moreover, this elite tended to have authoritarian leanings, and after independence it was primarily interested in ensuring its own privileged status rather than sharing power with other groups.³⁶

DIVIDING AND STRUCTURING THE STATE

India

In 1940 the Muslim League announced its Lahore Resolution that demanded “separate homelands by dividing India into ‘autonomous national states.’”³⁷ Asim Roy argues that “traditional” or “orthodox” historians have seen this resolution as the first demand for “Pakistan,” and have claimed that a linear path can be traced in League politics between 1940 and the 1947 Partition.³⁸ However, there is a growing quantity of evidence to question this thesis. As many historians have argued, the League’s resolution was very vague on details and did not even mention “Pakistan”; in fact, Jinnah later complained that it was Hindus and the British who had described

³⁵ Kraus, “On the Politics of Nationalism,” 115.

³⁶ Owusu, “Democracy and Africa,” 375-76.

³⁷ Jinnah quoted in Moore, *Endgames*, 119.

³⁸ Roy, “High Politics,” 386.

the Lahore resolution as a demand for “Pakistan.”³⁹ This resolution had evolved out of eighteen months of controversy within the League and was phrased in ambiguous terms in order to resolve the divisions among party members.⁴⁰ Moreover, within League policy during the early 1940s there was no clear vision of what geographical or constitutional form Pakistan would take.⁴¹ Any demand for “Pakistan” had to overcome the regional divisions among Muslims and offer something to those in Bengal as well as to those in the Punjab. Jalal argues that there had always been tension between communal and geographical identities within the movement for Pakistan.⁴² The 1940 resolution compromised with distinct geographic loyalties in its call for “Independent Muslim states,” whose units would be “autonomous and sovereign.”⁴³

There are also many indications that Jinnah – at least for a time – saw Pakistan as a bargaining counter and not his ultimate political goal.⁴⁴ The 1942 Cripps Offer had been formulated with the Lahore resolution in mind and would have allowed states to secede from India: according to its provisions any province could “opt out” of the Union if they desired. Although this proposal ostensibly provided for the “independent” and “sovereign” states asked for by the League, the League still rejected it on the grounds that “Pakistan” was not specifically named within it.⁴⁵ Roy argues against those who have accepted this “tenuous explanation” from the League, recalling that Jinnah himself did not “care much for the magic word” and had excluded it from the Lahore resolution. Moreover, Roy does not accept the explanation commonly advanced by scholars like Stanley Wolpert who hold that Congress’ prior rejection of the Cripps Offer had given the League no political choice but to refuse it.⁴⁶ Rather, Roy emphasizes the League’s willingness to accept (albeit

³⁹ Roy, “High Politics,” 388; Brown, *Modern India*, 332.

⁴⁰ Moore, *Endgames*, 117.

⁴¹ Brown, *Modern India*, 331; Moore also comments on the ambiguity of the League position, *Endgames*, 115.

⁴² Jalal, *Democracy*, 13.

⁴³ Roy, “High Politics,” 391.

⁴⁴ Brown, *Modern India*, 332; Roy, “High Politics,” 388.

⁴⁵ Roy, “High Politics,” 394.

⁴⁶ Roy, “High Politics,” 394.

conditionally) the 1946 Cabinet Mission Plan only four years later.⁴⁷ Not only did this plan *not* name Pakistan explicitly, it also rejected the principle of partition. However, it did meet the League's needs by providing for a federation of the Hindu-majority and Muslim-majority provinces joined by a weak centre responsible only for defence, foreign affairs and communications. The Cabinet Mission Plan gave Jinnah and the Muslim League what they desired the most: a federation of two provincial groupings – one dominated by Muslims and the League and the other by Hindus and the INC. The plan gave the League control of Muslim provinces at the centre, refused the principle of secession, and provided for a weak central authority which would curb INC dominance.⁴⁸

The Muslim League conditionally accepted this plan on 6 June 1946, as did the All-India Congress Committee a month later.⁴⁹ By the end of July the Cabinet Mission members left India, content that they had provided a method for resolving the Indian problem. However, a few days later, after being elected President of the INC, Nehru suddenly announced that his party had significant reservations about the plan and was “uncommitted” to it, also refusing parity with the League in the Interim Executive Council.⁵⁰ According to Azad, this declaration placed Jinnah under significant pressure: he had agreed to the plan under the assumption that it would be the basis for a future constitution of India. However, Nehru's new statement implied that the Constituent Assembly – in which the INC would be a majority – would be free to modify the plan as they liked.⁵¹

When the Muslim League council met on 27 July, Jinnah reemphasized his demand for Pakistan, and the council passed a resolution rejecting the Cabinet Mission Plan and calling for Direct Action in order to attain Pakistan.⁵² Although the

⁴⁷ Moore for one is vague on the League's motivations for accepting this offer. However, he does recount Jinnah's statement of 9 April (when it appeared the INC would accept the Cripp's offer) that “Pakistan could be shelved” if there was a satisfactory position in the Viceroy's executive and provisions for provincial secession. See *Endgames*, 126-27.

⁴⁸ Roy, “High Politics,” 398-99. Roy admits that the offer was not perfect for Jinnah; he would have liked parity with the INC at the centre, and a stronger central authority in general.

⁴⁹ Roy, “High Politics,” 400.

⁵⁰ Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 165; Roy, “High Politics,” 400.

⁵¹ Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 165.

⁵² Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 165-66.

INC leadership then attempted to reaffirm their commitment to the Cabinet Mission plan, there was no repairing the break. On 16 August the Muslim League began its Direct Action campaign.⁵³ This call for Direct Action initiated a level of communal violence previously unseen in India. Riots began in Calcutta where 4,000 were killed and 10,000 injured between 16 and 19 August. Communal riots occurred throughout much of northern India: Bombay (1 September), Noakhali in east Bengal (10 October), Bihar (25 October) and Garmukteswar in U.P. (November), then “engulfing the Punjab from March 1947 onwards.”⁵⁴ By December 1947 Jinnah had abandoned the possibility of working with the Cabinet Mission Plan and definitively returned to the bid for Pakistan.⁵⁵

For the Muslim INC leader Abul Kalam Azad, the failure of the Cabinet Mission Plan “was one of the greatest tragedies of Indian history and I have to say with the deepest of regret that a large part of the responsibility for this development rests with Jawaharlal” for retracting the INC’s commitment to the Cabinet Mission Plan.⁵⁶ Ayesha Jalal agrees with Azad’s assessment of Nehru’s responsibility, but argues that Azad did not “disclose the extent to which the Congress High Command as a whole, and not just Nehru, was in the grips of the communal virus. . .”⁵⁷ Indeed, it has become increasingly clear that just as much as (or even more than) the League, the INC was responsible for the traumatic division of India in 1947.⁵⁸ Although the Indian historiography has usually condemned Jinnah and the League while affirming the INC commitment to unity until Partition in 1947, recent historiography has demonstrated how quickly INC leaders were in fact converted to the idea of separate Hindu and Muslim nations. Indeed, Nehru’s response to the League’s “Pakistan” resolution in April 1940 was apparently that “if people wanted such things as suggested by the Muslim League at Lahore, then one thing was clear, they and people

⁵³ Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 167-68.

⁵⁴ Sarkar, *Modern India*, 432.

⁵⁵ Jinnah posed this demand to Attlee and other HMG ministers in London Moore, *Endgames*, 130.

⁵⁶ Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 170; this comment is one of the passages only recently published in the completed version of his memoirs in 1988.

⁵⁷ Ayesha Jalal, “Azad, Jinnah and the Partition,” *Economic and Political Weekly* (May 27, 1989): 1160.

⁵⁸ Roy, “High Politics,” 387.

like him [Nehru] could not live together in India. He would be prepared to face all consequences of it but he would not be prepared to live with such people.”⁵⁹

Moreover, the next day Nehru stated that he had begun to consider the Muslim League and people like himself “as separate nations.”⁶⁰ In January 1946 Nehru told a member of the Cabinet Mission that he could accept Pakistan so long as there was a plebiscite and territorial readjustments so that Hindu territory was not included.⁶¹

Also in 1946, Sardar Patel recommended creating Pakistan in order to amputate the Islamic “diseased limb” from India.⁶²

In his memoirs, Azad argued that the INC did not do enough to prevent Partition and was too quick to accept Mountbatten’s plan to divide India. He also argued that until the end Pakistan was a bargaining counter for Jinnah, but that by March 1947 Patel and Nehru were becoming bigger supporters of Partition than Jinnah.⁶³ While Azad’s comments are quite insightful, Asim Roy raises the possibility that the INC converted Mountbatten to the idea of Partition rather than the reverse. Indeed, there are many reasons to suggest that several members of the INC leadership (including Patel and Nehru) had been considering the pragmatic value of Partition.⁶⁴ Moreover, R. J. Moore argues that in early March 1947 an INC resolution had accepted the principle of partition, and that Mountbatten was only convinced of it after a series of interviews with Jinnah between 5 and 10 April.⁶⁵ Mountbatten’s proposal, commonly known as “Plan Balkan” and finished in mid-April, had been based on Nehru’s 8 April suggestion for a strong centre, but the right for provinces or territories to secede.⁶⁶

In 1946-1947 INC leaders had become reconciled to partition largely because of their desire for a strong central government to take over the colonial state

⁵⁹ *Leader*, 15 April 1940 quoted in Roy, “High Politics,” 403.

⁶⁰ *Leader*, 15 April 1940 quoted in Roy, “High Politics,” 403.

⁶¹ Quoted in Roy, “High Politics,” 403.

⁶² Quoted in Ahmad, “Tryst with Destiny,” 21.

⁶³ Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, 197, 202.

⁶⁴ Roy, “High Politics,” 402.

⁶⁵ Moore, *Endgames*, 140.

⁶⁶ This plan was not the one ultimately accepted by the negotiating parties. See Moore, *Endgames*, 141-42.

apparatus.⁶⁷ Not only would firm central control give them the power to prevent regional separatist tendencies and bring the Princely States into the union, it would fulfill the vision of many in the INC – including Nehru and Patel – of a strong, unified and modernized India.⁶⁸ Moreover, both the INC and British officials believed that the “moth-eaten” Pakistan given to the Muslim League would be a short-lived venture. The assumption of many was that its military, economic and political weaknesses would cause it to break up quickly and return to the independent Indian state.⁶⁹ In June 1947 Azad stated that he believed “it is going to be a short lived partition,” and years later in 1960 Nehru stated that “we expected that a partition would be temporary, that Pakistan was bound to come back to us.”⁷⁰

Partition resulted from the Indian communal deadlock and the INC’s anxiety to escape this dilemma.⁷¹ However, if the INC gave shape and form to the League’s demand for Pakistan, the colonial context was its ultimate origin. A result of many complex factors, Pakistan must, in part, also be seen within the framework of India’s passive revolution. In many ways, it epitomized an era in which crucial decisions were made by elites, the consequences of which were borne by the base of society. Certainly much of the population was involved in the movement for Partition, and even helped strengthen the leaders’ claims with the violence of their communal bloodshed. Nevertheless, the violence itself was in part set in motion from the top and the negotiations regarding this division had been carried out by a small coterie of elites who chose the course which most satisfied their own varying needs.

The Gold Coast

In the Gold Coast there was no phenomenon as traumatic as Partition. Despite strong regionalism and a significant opposition movement, the country reached independence without territorial division. However, it is instructive to examine the

⁶⁷ Jalal, *Democracy*, 15; Roy, “High Politics,” 401.

⁶⁸ Jalal, *Democracy*, 16; Roy, “High Politics,” 401.

⁶⁹ Holland, *European Decolonization*, 76.

⁷⁰ Quoted in Roy, “High Politics,” 404.

⁷¹ Nehru’s remarks to Mosley in 1960 quoted in Roy, “High Politics,” 404: “The plan for partition offered a way out and we took it . . .”

process by which the colony's constitution was formed for it had implications that set the stage for the traumas of military rule after 1966. As with Partition in India, the imposition of Ghana's constitution was an important example of the "passivity" of the political change that came with independence. The colonial power, desiring to create a state organized and run according to British visions, and the nationalist leaders, willing to accept measures they found illegitimate in order to gain immediate power, were the operative agents taking these decisions. In the process of creating this new state, much of the population was affected, but was never brought into the proceedings, and indeed, seemed to be little more than an afterthought in the controversy of the elite negotiations over the constitution.

As in India the constitution for Ghana was prepared by agents of the British government and was based on the country's previous colonial constitutions. However, in Ghana, this constitution was not meant to be an interim measure until a constituent assembly could finish their work.⁷² Rather, the Colonial Office, anxious about the possible behaviour of an independent Ghana, sought to create a document that was deliberately difficult to change or amend. The result was an imposed constitution that was seen as illegitimate by the nationalist parties, and that was in fact quickly amended after independence.⁷³

In the Gold Coast the British Government decided to follow the model that they had developed for Ceylon which gained independence in 1948 after being groomed for it during the previous three years. In this instance the British Parliament did not review the Constitution as part of an Act of Parliament (as had been the case for the white Dominions), nor did it set up a Constitutional Convention (as in India and Pakistan).⁷⁴ Rather, the British Parliament simply passed a General Act of Independence that stipulated that the constitution itself was to be drafted by the Colonial Office, with the existing colonial constitution as the model.⁷⁵

⁷² As was the case for India: see Bing, *Reap the Whirlwind*, 197-80.

⁷³ Crowder, "Whose Dream," 19.

⁷⁴ Bing, *Reap the Whirlwind*, 179-80.

⁷⁵ Bing, *Reap the Whirlwind*, 180.

The leaders of the CPP were understandably hesitant to accept Britain's process of constitutional preparation.⁷⁶ They wanted to formulate a constitution themselves that was based on the Colonial Office draft but with simpler language (understandable for the average CPP supporter), a Bill of Rights, and the incorporation of many of the counter-proposals put forward by the NLM.⁷⁷ In order to create such a text, the CPP asked Geoffrey Bing, a British lawyer and former Labour MP, for his help. Bing had previously been appointed "Constitutional Advisor to the Prime Minister" in order to prepare a Government White Paper to accompany the 1956 Jibowu Report.⁷⁸ Later the Attorney-General of independent Ghana, Bing has left an account that is highly critical of the Colonial Office's behaviour in regards to the constitution.⁷⁹

For their part, colonial officials became increasingly hostile to Bing due to his alleged communist affiliations and authoritarian leanings. When first meeting Bing, Arden-Clarke described him as a "half-Irish, half-Chinese . . . ex-Bevanite Labour MP and a clever lawyer."⁸⁰ Within the Colonial Office there was apparently widespread distrust for Bing. A few months after independence one British official emphasized "the sinister influence of Mr. Bing" in Ghana, arguing that he was seeking to "produce as tense a situation between the United Kingdom and Ghana in communist interests as possible."⁸¹ Another British commentator, A. W. Snelling spoke in ominous terms about the "elevation of Bing" within Nkrumah's

⁷⁶ Bing, *Reap the Whirlwind*, 179.

⁷⁷ Bing, *Reap the Whirlwind*, 185.

⁷⁸ The (Jibowu) Commission of Enquiry into the Affairs of the Cocoa Purchasing Company (CPC) confirmed the improper relationship between the CPP and the CPC and found that "[b]ribery, corruption and extortion" existed among some CPC officials. For a summary see Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 341-42.

⁷⁹ See Bing, *Reap the Whirlwind*, 179-94.

⁸⁰ This impression on Arden-Clarke's meeting Bing is quoted from a letter to family 27 September 1956 in Rooney, *Sir Charles Arden-Clarke*, 202.

⁸¹ This appreciation of Bing was given in an interview by Sir Robert Jackson, the Chairman of the Volta River Project Preparatory Commission, TNA, PRO, DO 35/6214/110960, "Note for the Record," 2 October, 1957.

Government, and about, in his view, the increasingly authoritarian nature of the government itself.⁸²

In early 1956 the CPP had submitted its constitutional proposals to the Colonial Office, recommending that Ghana's constitution should be a "modification of our existing Constitution" and should follow the "conventions which have grown up in the United Kingdom."⁸³ In March 1956 the Colonial Office had responded, voicing significant concerns regarding the CPP's recommendations. The Colonial Office wanted: a greater separation between the executive and judiciary than the CPP recommended; more guarantees that regional assemblies would be created and protected from abolition; and a provision that the armed forces would not "become the responsibility of a Minister."⁸⁴ The CPP's proposed constitution submitted in the autumn of 1956 adopted many (although not all) of the revisions suggested by the British Government.⁸⁵ The document had been carefully crafted and included notes on the sources of most of its provisions – primarily drawn from other Commonwealth constitutions.

Yet, although Bing and the CPP were apparently optimistic about the possibilities for the document's success, believing that they had incorporated the Opposition's demands and moulded a document based on the British model, the British response was still negative.⁸⁶ Arden-Clarke's comments on the constitution were that there

⁸² Letter to Sir Ian Maclellan from A. W. Snelling TNA, PRO, DO 35/6214/110960, 20 September, 1957.

⁸³ TNA, PRO, CO 554/817/110960, "The Government's Constitutional Proposals for Gold Coast Independence," January 1956. The document does not specify which of the many UK "conventions" it invokes.

⁸⁴ TNA, PRO, CO 554/817/110960, "Memorandum of Observations by the United Kingdom Government on the Draft Constitutional Proposals of the Gold Coast Government," March 1956.

⁸⁵ Bing has reproduced the draft in *Reap the Whirlwind*, 456-95.

⁸⁶ Bing, *Reap the Whirlwind*, 186. In fact, it appears that many of the NLM's demands were not adopted by the CPP. Many of the issues raised by the NLM's proposals of April 1956 were similar to the problems later cited by the Colonial Office. For example, the NLM criticized the CPP for not providing enough power or stability to the regional assemblies; for giving insufficient security to the judiciary; and for only requiring a two-thirds majority for constitutional changes. Moreover, the NLM demanded a federal constitution with significant regional autonomy. See *Statement by the National Liberation Movement and its Allies on the Gold Coast Government's Constitutional Proposals for Gold Coast Independence*. (Kumasi: Abura Printing Works Ltd., April 1956).

did not seem to be much wrong with [Bing's] draft constitution except that nearly all the difficult and controversial points were left to be dealt with by subsequent acts of the Ghana Parliament. I expect the legal advisers in the Colonial Office will have a fit when they see it as it departs from the stereotyped form.⁸⁷

The Secretary of State responded that he could not “contemplate . . . that the existing instruments should all be revoked and replaced by a comprehensive new constitution embodying many features not in the present instruments such as codification of fundamental rights and constitutional conventions.”⁸⁸ He outlined the procedure by which Ghana would gain independence:

Firstly, the Parliament of the Gold Coast would be granted Statute of Westminster powers by an Act of the United Kingdom Parliament on the precedent of the Ceylon Independence Act. Secondly, the passage of this Act would necessitate issue of an amending Order-in-Council again on the precedent of Ceylon . . . Final responsibility for the terms of an Order-in-Council made on the advice of the United Kingdom Ministers must of necessity rest with United Kingdom Ministers, since until independence Gold Coast Ministers have no direct access to the Crown.⁸⁹

In short, no matter how good the draft, no constitution authored by Gold Coast politicians would be accepted – particularly not one that departed from the standard Commonwealth form.

In February 1957 the British Government published an outline of their own proposed constitution for Ghana. When providing the background to the constitution, the authors noted that “the United Kingdom Government has naturally taken the fullest possible account of the views of the Gold Coast Government” in drafting the document.⁹⁰ The officials were careful to note that the constitution they had written would provide “reasonable safeguards against abuse and a fair and workable foundation on which the people of Ghana will be able to build their independent

⁸⁷ Letter to Family 27 September, 1956 quoted in Rooney, *Sir Charles Arden-Clarke*, 202.

⁸⁸ Quoted in Bing, *Reap the Whirlwind*, 186; David Rooney *Sir Charles Arden-Clarke*, 202 commented that the Colonial Office rejected the constitution within two weeks, including what Rooney calls the “high flown aphorisms about fundamental human rights.”

⁸⁹ Quoted in Bing, *Reap the Whirlwind*, 186.

⁹⁰ Colonial Office, *The Proposed Constitution of Ghana*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1957), 4.

nationhood within the Commonwealth.”⁹¹ Establishing “safeguards” was certainly a high priority for the British Government which was concerned to prevent administrative failure and worried that the “African Ministers have an inadequate idea of the extent to which they are dependent on British officers and are liable to pursue policies that will discourage men from staying.” Moreover, even though the UK government realized that parliamentary democracy might be formally instituted, they believed that the country was “too immature for the Government to be responsible to the electorate in any real sense.”⁹² Bing argues that the Secretary of State’s main difficulty with the Gold Coast constitution was its provisions for Ministerial control of Civil Servants – even though this was the principle in Britain and the “older” Commonwealth countries. For its part, the British Government wanted to retain the principles found in the Ceylon and previous Gold Coast constitutions which made Civil Servants responsible to an independent Public Service Commission, itself not responsible to Parliament.⁹³ Bing argues that these provisions, which prevented parliamentary control over the administration, “struck at the foundation of the British Parliamentary democratic system.”⁹⁴ However, they emerged directly from the colonial context, as well as from the type of “bureaucratic authoritarianism” described by Jalal in regards to India and Pakistan. Even more than was the case for the Indian subcontinent, British officials in the Gold Coast were anxious to leave a strong administrative service that would preserve the norms of their rule and be a moderating influence on the actions of elected politicians. The result was a constitution that safeguarded the bureaucracy from elected officials!

The British Government also tried to ensure that their constitution would only be revised with difficulty. In order to amend the Constitution’s “basic clauses,” which made up a majority of its provisions, the new government would need a two-thirds majority in the Parliament as well as agreement from two-thirds of the

⁹¹ Colonial Office, *Proposed Constitution*, 4.

⁹² TNA, PRO, CO 554/815, Cumming-Bruce to Sir Gilbert Laithwaite, 19 August, 1955.

⁹³ Bing, *Reap the Whirlwind*, 189-90; See also Colonial Office, *The Proposed Constitution of Ghana*, 5-6.

⁹⁴ Bing, *Reap the Whirlwind*, 190

Regional Assemblies (i.e. four out of five) in consultation with the Regional Houses of Chiefs.⁹⁵ When he saw the Colonial Office's draft, Arden-Clarke commented that all the Gold Coast parties would call it "bogus and fraudulent"; nevertheless, he was hopeful that it would work, "and once it is working they [i.e. Ghana's Government] will not find it too easy to change it."⁹⁶ In the event, the independent government repealed the restrictions on amending the Constitution by December 1958 and in 1960 established a republican constitution, as India had done in 1950.⁹⁷

Although the Ghanaian post-colonial government succeeded in dissolving the constitution imposed by the Colonial Office, the process of its adoption illustrates many of the constraints on Gold Coast politicians at the time. The Colonial Office used whatever resources it had at its command to create a transfer in which the population remained passive and an independent state that resembled the colonial apparatus was constructed. Their influence was one that emphasized bureaucratic and authoritarian structures within the state, at the expense of more democratic institutions. With these beginnings, it should be unsurprising that post-colonial states like Ghana were not more committed to these democratic processes and institutions which had been given such a tenuous existence in their countries.

⁹⁵ Colonial Office, *The Proposed Constitution of Ghana*, 11.

⁹⁶ Letter to Lady Arden-Clarke 1 February, 1957, quoted in Rooney, *Sir Charles Arden-Clarke*, 208.

⁹⁷ Bing describes how the government met all the constitutional requirements for the repeal process in 1958 *Reap the Whirlwind*, 192-93. For an account of the adoption of the republican constitution and its actual text, see Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 363-416 and 430-46

CHAPTER 7:

CONCLUSIONS

The transfer of power to independent states in Asia and Africa was a crucial period: it was both the culmination of colonial rule and the foundation of new independent states. During this era, the character of each independent state was decided, and the main nationalist parties gradually evolved from oppositional mass movements to governing political parties. In order to understand the nature of these changes, it is crucial to recognize the interests that were affected. With independence, earlier nationalist promises for widespread social and economic change were largely left unfulfilled, and the pattern of political change itself was decidedly “unrevolutionary.” In numerous ways, the transitions in these countries represented a type of “passive revolution” described by Gramsci.

As with many theories, there are multiple ways to interpret Gramsci’s concept of the passive revolution. Within his own writings, this “‘revolution’ without a ‘revolution’”¹ could be categorized in similar terms to the Risorgimento – a national “revolution” organized and led by social elites but without significant active initiatives from the masses. The other major connotation Gramsci gave this term describes small-scale molecular changes over time – as in the process of inter-elite struggle among the Italian bourgeoisie and traditional ruling classes for social dominance during and after the Risorgimento. Each of these definitions describe situations in which the lower classes were kept passive and prevented from exercising their own initiative. Consequently, the interpretation of Gramsci that I have used here stresses a type of “passive revolution” in which the population was mobilized for a

¹ Gramsci, *SPN*, 59.

program that operated in elite interests rather than according to popular needs. I have stressed the role of elites and elite interests, arguing that a great measure of the “passivity” of these movements came from the lack of active mass participation and initiative. Although the populations were involved and mobilized, the nationalist parties were constituted primarily on the basis of *elite* interests and goals.

In this essay I have focused on the final moment of power transfer – the last few years of negotiation (1945-1947 in India; 1951-1957 in the Gold Coast) in which the new states were created and the colonial authority dissolved. I have done so not because this period represents a distinct era in itself, separate from what preceded and what followed it. Rather, it was in this period that the three-way power pull between the nationalist elites, the British administration, and the various non-elite groups was most clear. The dynamics of this period illustrate the control the nationalist parties sought over their followers, but also the constraints the parties found themselves working under in their negotiations with the British. I believe that any account of a passive revolution in these countries must take account not only of the nationalist parties’ aims and actions, but also the British efforts to produce a change that was “passive” and non-revolutionary.

Both the INC and CPP claimed to be mass parties that represented the interests of the nation as a whole; indeed, most indigenous groups in India and the Gold Coast shared a common interest in ending British colonial rule. However, in their approach toward labour and radical rural movements, the parties frequently demonstrated their middle-class bias. Even as they mobilized the population against British rule, INC and CPP leaders also worked to keep these groups subordinated to party discipline. In India, the INC tended to oppose labour’s involvement in politics and could take harsh action against radical peasant movements that operated outside the party’s fold. In the Gold Coast the party was very hesitant to mobilize popular forces in its 1949 Positive Action campaign and also tended to be wary of radical labour activism. Much more than the INC, the CPP shied away from mass mobilization and was quick to accept collaboration with the British.

Even more than in their mobilizational strategies, the parties encouraged passivity from the people during their involvement in parliamentary politics under the British colonial regime. Most people were less involved in democratic politics during this phase, and the parties did little to encourage popular political initiative. Indeed, while in office, they often reacted harshly to popular movements agitating against nationalist administrations or their more powerful constituents. Moreover, once in office, both parties tended to attract large numbers of new members who were interested in the awards that came with political office. Particularly in the Gold Coast, the CPP was built less on ideological commitment to a party program and more on the economic awards that it could offer to its followers.

While the party elite did much to encourage passivity from the lower classes, it is also important to acknowledge the effects of the actions of the colonial government. Just as the parties exercised control on their popular followers and limited their range of activities, the colonial government worked to control the nationalists and place constraints on their behaviour. Even more than the nationalist leaders, British colonial officials wanted to see a passive change and unrevolutionary transition to independence. Officials actively worked to moderate the behaviour of nationalist leaders and their parties. Above all, they sought relationships with the post-colonial regimes that would benefit British interests. They wished to forge a relationship that would preserve economic contributions to the Sterling Area, military support to the Commonwealth, and international prestige for Britain by the achievement of successful and cordial transfers of power. Of course, in both the subcontinent and the Gold Coast they wished to hand over power to stable, moderate regimes free from revolutionary socialist influences or Soviet control.

To facilitate these goals Britain used a long-standing policy of encouraging moderation from the nationalist parties. By bringing them into responsible political office, Britain ensured that nationalist leaders would restrain their more radical followers and cooperate more readily with British policy. Therefore, at the same time as anti-colonial movements pressured British administrations – accelerating their planned departure and forcing them to provide political compromises – colonial

officials worked to bring nationalist radicals under control by setting up collaborative partnerships with moderate anti-colonial leaders. In this way Britain was able to play a decisive role in determining the character of the new state. The colonial heritage, too, placed significant constraints on the nationalist leaderships and affected the character of the new states. Particularly in the administrative apparatus handed over to the new regimes, the nationalists found themselves working with institutions, personnel and norms that had all been developed by an undemocratic colonial state. These instruments were put to service in the new nations; nevertheless, in many ways they retained their colonial character and were only gradually altered.

The partition of India and Pakistan and the creation of a constitution for independent Ghana were significant events in themselves, and also important signs of the passivity of these transitions. In a fundamental sense, the creation of two states in the Indian subcontinent was a product of imperial rule. Throughout the colonial era, Britain had followed a “divide and rule” policy within India, emphasizing the pre-existing social separations by providing communally-based political and economic awards. The actual creation of Pakistan, from its apparent original inspiration in the Muslim League’s Lahore Resolution of 1940, was largely a creation of elite negotiation and discord. The INC eventually accepted this division when it seemed to suit their interests by allowing for a strong unitary state without the Muslim-majority territories, rather than an inclusive, though weak-centered federation. To be sure, popular forces were mobilized to support this demand for Pakistan; nevertheless, the decisions regarding its creation were taken primarily on the basis of elite interests.

The drafting of a constitution for independent Ghana demonstrates the extent to which Britain wanted to produce a passive transition to independence. Here, the Colonial Office wrote the constitution, not only refusing to consider drafts that emerged from the indigenous politicians themselves, but creating a document that emphasized the non-democratic authority of the existing colonial bureaucracy. Quite deliberately, officials placed significant limits on the powers of elected ministers, particularly in their authority over the civil service. With little faith in indigenous politicians, the Colonial Office created a constitution that would embody their own

vision for the independent nation, and that would be very difficult to revise. The result was not a lasting document (a republican constitution was adopted three years later in 1960), but an uncertain commitment to the imposed political system by social elites and a weak heritage of democratic traditions within the country.

The case of Ghana's constitution illustrates the great political problems of the period. In many instances, initiative from below was blocked and active popular participation in politics discouraged. Rather than power moving dialectically – both from below and above – political authority and initiative predominantly came from elites. Therefore, even as major changes were achieved in these countries and independent states with indigenous rulers were created, the democratic process that emerged was not participatory, and social power continued to rest with elites. Although one must acknowledge the achievements of these nationalist movements, one must also keep in mind their failings and the constraints they faced, both of which undermined the fulfillment of their promises for the independent states. By using Gramsci's concept of passive revolution it is possible to explain the contradictions inherent in this era and the process by which a wide section of the population was mobilized, but was refused an active role in the formation of social and political change.

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