

THE POLITICAL ELEMENT IN THE WORKS
OF
JOYCE CARY

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CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

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INTRODUCTION

A careful reading of the canon of an author's works usually causes the reader to recognize certain predominant themes, sources, and literary tendencies in the author. Joyce Cary is no exception to this general rule, and it is the object of this thesis to examine what I consider to be one of the most important aspects of his work: the political element.

It would have been curious indeed if Cary had been able to divorce his thought and work from political considerations. His whole family back-ground and his life up until middle age were intensely and personally affected by political considerations. His family, English landholders in Ireland for over two hundred years, were exemplars of the sort of small gentry who formed the very backbone of the English political system. Cary saw the effects of national and local politics as a matter of firsthand experience from his earliest years. As a young man he served for several years as a political officer administering British colonial policy in West Africa. In the nineteen-thirties and forties he lent his support to the Liberal party in Britain by writing Power in Men and Process of Real Freedom.

The question can here be legitimately asked "What have these political considerations to do with a literary study?". The answer is quite simply that the political

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element is a major and intrinsic aspect of a large part of Cary's work, both fiction and non-fiction. It is the primary theme in his four political treatises Power in Men, Process of Real Freedom, Britain and West Africa and The Case for African Freedom. National politics and domestic politics are commingled in his "political trilogy" including Except the Lord, Prisoner of Grace, and Not Honour More; and his four African novels, Aissa Saved, An American Visitor, The African Witch and Mr. Johnson all reflect, to a greater or lesser extent, Cary's political views on Africa. It is this section of his work, seven novels and four political treatises, with which I propose to deal in this thesis. In all, it represents about sixty per cent of his major works and should therefore justify a study of at least this magnitude.

Similar studies have been made ranging from the works of Shakespeare¹ to the modern novelists². In the latter field especially it is of prime importance to have a knowledge of the writer's political outlook if an intelligent criticism of his work is to be made, particularly in the cases of men like Koestler, Orwell and Dos Passos. Usually, a knowledge of the author's political views lends a completely new

1. Charleton, H.B., Shakespeare, Politics and Politicians. London: Oxford University Press, 1929.

2. Blotner, J.L., The Political Novel. Garden City: Doubleday, 1955.

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dimension of understanding to the critic and permits him to relate characters and events in the individual works more accurately to the writer's central interests.

Besides examining these works with the object of trying to define the essence of Cary's political thought and of relating that essence to his work as a whole, the present study has one other important, if secondary, objective. Cary's works, particularly his political treatises, are rather difficult to secure. In order to obtain them while preparing this thesis, I had to search as far afield as the National Library, the Ottawa Public Library, the University of British Columbia, the University of Toronto, and the Library of Columbia University in New York City. The copies which I was able to obtain are apparently the only ones extant in Canada. Since these volumes are out of print, it is unlikely that they will become more accessible in the future. I hope, by making a carefully detailed analysis of the material which they contain, to produce a work that will be of genuine value to the University library. It should be useful source material for any further study of Cary carried out either at the undergraduate or graduate level.

Although all the available pertinent reference material has been examined, the approach to the writing of this thesis is that it is more valuable to study Cary's own works and to extract and collate the ideas which they contain than

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to make a synthesis of existing critical doctrine on Cary. In this way too, it is hoped that a measure of originality is achieved which would be otherwise lacking. The works studied are grouped thematically, and not necessarily in chronological order. Thus, the political treatises on Africa are dealt with in succession rather than being interspersed with Power in Men and Process of Real Freedom. The African novels happen to fall into a natural chronological and thematic order and are therefore dealt with in the order in which they were written. In the political trilogy some violence is done to Cary's ordering of the novels in order to bring the life and character of the central figure, Chester Nimmo, more clearly to light, and also to facilitate understanding of the story which actually covers the period from Nimmo's babyhood to his death.

It will be noticed that the treatment of Process of Real Freedom is left until the end of the thesis. The reason for this is that I feel that Process of Real Freedom is Cary's most succinct expression of his political beliefs. Although it was written before Britain and West Africa and before the political trilogy, it nonetheless contains an account of Cary's views on politics and the democratic system which is clear, complete and more universal in its application than are the works which succeed it. Leaving the treatment of it for the last chapter is, I think, the best means

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of providing a summary of the ideas manifested in those other works of Cary's that are dealt with in this thesis.

AFRICA: COLONIAL POLITICS

In The Case For African Freedom Joyce Cary makes an urgent demand for action on the African problem not only by the colonial powers but also by such "disinterested" nations as the U.S.A., based upon his assessment of the contemporary political, economic and social situation in Africa. He is anticipating future developments and calling for action by the responsible powers which will help lead Africa through the crises before her. In contrast to this approach, Britain and West Africa, although written five years after The Case For African Freedom, deals almost exclusively with the past political history of Britain, Belgium, Germany and France in Africa. It actually makes very little reference to the future, aside from some minor comments upon the increasing need for economic development. Cary's principal interest in writing this work was to defend British policy in West Africa by revealing it as being disinterested, practical and humanitarian.

Britain and West Africa covers five main stages of development of British interest in Africa. The first deals with the seventeenth-century period of the merchant adventurers, men like John Hawkins whose only interest in the country was the possibility of a quick return on their investment, and who were among the first to find that slaves were a source of great profit. The first rush for quick profits in Africa was largely extinguished by the abolition of the slave

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trade in the eighteenth century. There followed a "neutral" period in which none of the great powers wanted to get involved in a seemingly backward and essentially barren continent. During this period, approximately from 1807 until 1870, the trend was toward a form of laissez-faire policy in which newly-founded countries like Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast were encouraged to handle their own affairs and not be a source of expense to the European powers. Then, after 1870, there was a tremendous resurgence of interest in Africa as the concept of a new colonial empire caught the fancy of Belgium, Germany, France and England. Since that time European interest has never flagged, especially with the increasing realization that Africa was a source of the raw materials so essential to modern industrialized society. With the evolution of a full-scale involvement in Africa, the European powers were faced with the problem of governing their colonies. The various powers answered the problem in different ways. In Britain and West Africa Cary seeks to demonstrate that the British government evolved the best of these answers.

It is Cary's contention that Great Britain was never really interested in becoming a colonial power in Africa. The British government shied away from getting involved in the administration of a savage and backward country whose resources, after the abolition of the slave trade, offered

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no hope of being able to reimburse the government for the costs of a full-scale colonial administration. The home government therefore sought to realize whatever profits Africa could offer at a minimum cost to itself by granting charters to merchant traders who speculated in African resources with their own capital. Cary calls what happened next a "process of involvement", a phenomenon which could be stated almost as an axiom of political science.

The traders, by virtue of their continuous contacts with the natives, came to be relied upon for far more than the mere bartering of goods. They came to be centers of influence in a savage world, civilizing and organizing forces in an otherwise uncivilized society. As the local tribes came to rely upon them as magistrates, so they also turned to the traders for protection from their enemies. Since the traders could not defend them single-handed, they called upon the British government for assistance. At this time the English populace was newly-aroused to the glories of nationalism and it would have been politically suicidal for any government to either let British traders be slaughtered or else to send out a weak force which might suffer a defeat in a tribal war. Thus, on more than one occasion, notably the Ashanti wars, Britain was forced to send out expeditionary forces of considerable size. Once the wars were won and the native chiefs deposed, new native leaders with a more peaceful attitude had

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to be elevated in their places. To maintain the status quo and avoid further incidents a British Governor was installed. In order to encourage economic growth and social stability the communications system had to be developed (an aspect upon which Cary dwells in every one of his African novels). To finance the building of roads, harbors and railways a taxation system had to be organized and the rudiments of a civil service originated. In this way, although the British government had long avoided expending time or money in Africa, it was drawn willy-nilly into the business of African expansion.

The same thing was largely true in the cases of Germany, Belgium and France. The home government first became involved through the necessity of defending the rights of its citizens. Once it was involved, national pride, such an important factor in nineteenth-century politics, prevented any thought of relinquishing the responsibilities attendant upon owning a colony. As Cary says:

Again it was shown that a first-class power with any footing, even a single trading station, upon the coasts of one divided and confused, cannot avoid the growth of its connections, until it finds itself drawn into the politics of the continent.¹

Cary deals at some length with the policy of government known as "Indirect Rule" developed by the British

1. Joyce Cary, Britain and West Africa, p. 36.

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Colonial Office as the best system for administering the protectorates while simultaneously developing the capabilities of native leaders. The system depends upon a British governor working through native intermediaries to administer a colony or protectorate. The essence of the system is co-operation, since, on the one hand the British representative is given very little physical power other than the implicit backing of the home government, while the native representatives depend for their appointments upon the Governor's approval. This implies two things: firstly, that the white Governor must exercise great tact and restraint in his dealings with the native population in order to avoid creating situations which he has not the resources to handle and, secondly, that the native system of government is preserved even though the functionaries of that system are constrained to give more than passing heed to the advice and guidance of the Governor. Totalitarianism, even the almost overpowering tendency toward paternalistic despotism, is avoided as one factor balances the other. Furthermore, the system is essentially practical since it allows a very small staff of white personnel to supervise the government of an enormous colonial area. The cost to the home government is low and the advantages to the rising native democracy are great.

Cary does not pretend that the system was perfect. The struggles of the political officers in his African novels

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to bridge the gap that exists between native and white concepts of government are often ludicrous and sometimes tragic. Burwash, the Resident in The African Witch, makes a practice of giving short, patient speeches on the merits of democratic government to the local Emir and his court whenever the opportunity arises, and the Emir listens politely, as one would listen to the prattling of a child whose feelings one did not wish to injure.

Cary also freely acknowledges the other weaknesses of Indirect Rule--slow economic progress, a tendency toward "laissez-faire", inadequacy in the face of post-war demands, and that it is now becoming outmoded as a form of government in the African dependencies. But it met the requirements of its time as a humane and practicable method of colonial rule. In the present day the British government has adopted more advanced policies in Africa. The new social consciousness of modern politics has seen to that. Cary accepts the new policies and recognizes their importance but he still points out that Indirect Rule had at least one indispensable quality which must in some way be preserved even in the modern master plans. It placed cardinal importance upon continuity of social custom and political policy and it preserved the traditions of the society to which it was applied. It gave the individual a sense of coherence and of self-respect as a member of

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a continuing process.

As Cary points out, it was not merely financial considerations which caused the British to adopt the Indirect Rule policy. The basic reason for its adoption was even more idealistic than practical:

The idea behind indirect government, briefly, is that any given civilization, however primitive, in Africa as in Europe, has a life of its own. It consists of people who have grown up with certain ideas, certain ties, obligations, expectations, and a certain relation with their own government. Any sudden and violent change in such a civilization, or its method of government, is like the dislocation of a human body. It breaks what was a living and homogeneous social unit, possibly crude and simple in form, but self-respecting and energetic, into a mere scattering of human units, despondent and usually corrupt.²

The British wished to retain the existing pattern of government as a unifying principle and a frame-work upon which the complexities of modern government could be developed. The authority and dignity of the native rulers was preserved and the British Governors were required to work their will behind the scenes.

At one point in Britain and West Africa Cary refers to

... certain political changes in the democracies, especially British democracy, where new classes had risen into power--classes traditionally and religiously taught to be suspicious of all governing authority...³

2. Id., Ibid., p. 54.

3. Id., Ibid., p. 45.

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He is referring to the eighteenth-century rise of the Protestant middle class, the "chapel people" like Mr. Plant in The Horse's Mouth, the God-fearing, somewhat narrow-minded, instinctively protestant class which came to dominate British politics and to create the mighty social revolution in the nineteenth century which was a consequence of and a reaction against the Industrial Revolution. Cary himself is a member of this class. His arguments and the policies which he recommends reveal his exact niche in it. He came of upper middle-class stock (almost small gentry) and was educated in a great liberal tradition. It is therefore not surprising to find that he stands firmly for the rights of the individual, for progress tempered with humanism, for the Kierkegaardian conception of faith as a "leap in the dark" trusting in the goodness of God. The policies that he asks for Africa are truly liberal, humanistic and even idealistic. But in both The Case For African Freedom and Britain and West Africa the background pride in the rightness and justice of the achievements of the British Government in its colonial empire proclaim that Cary is also something of a conservative. If this is a paradox it is nonetheless true. Cary is a liberal and a protestant in his demands for the future, but he is a conservative in his defense of the past. It is probably because he was writing about politics rather than being an active politician that he was able to maintain and express

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this equitable view.

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The Case for African Freedom was written in 1941, but the recommendations put forward and the conclusions drawn are in many cases still valid today. Despite Cary's almost instinctive respect for the guiding hand of the empire builders, he revolts at the essential idea of African colonialism i.e. that Africa was free game for any and all European takers to divide up as they saw fit or as the force of their arms and diplomatic agreements permitted. Even more strongly characteristic of Cary than his recognition of the value of intelligent white rule in emergent nations is his respect for the individual. This respect manifests itself in two ways. In the first place Cary sees the individual as an expression of the life force, that same force which drives Gulley Jimson in The Horse's Mouth to express himself through the medium of his art even with his last breath. It is the quality of life and vitality and energy in Dick Bonser which saves Tabitha Bonser in A Fearful Joy from her living death. It is the quality which embodies originality and the resurgent curiosity for and desire to grapple with the problems of life.

To Cary, the repressive and destructive proceedings of the colonial nations represent a disregard for and an annihilation of this spirit in the peoples of Africa. It is for this reason that he voices so strongly his revulsion against the first white settlers in South Africa who

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"described the natives as vermin and set out to hunt them down as we hunt rats", against the unspeakable horrors of the slave trade, and against the sanctions which permitted the Concession companies to practise an unofficial but nonetheless cruel form of slavery in the rubber plantations and copper mines.

Cary's second objection to European policy in Africa is presented in the form of a passionate proclamation of the necessity for preserving a belief in the value of the individual as a means of counteracting the efforts of autocratic systems to control modern society.¹ To him, the fact that a nation could allow its colonial administration to debase not just a few individuals but whole tribes and in fact whole nations, was a strong indication that its sense of moral and human values was debilitated, and that it was itself in grave danger of slipping into the status of a totalitarian society. Only the society that fiercely and conscientiously defends the rights of the backward and helpless peoples under its control is in a position to be conscious of threats to its own liberty.

To Cary, the paternalism of colonial rule is a necessity in Africa, but it can only be tolerated and can only excuse its existence if it truly shows itself to be the rule

1. Id., The Case for African Freedom, p. 121.

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of a wise parent. Such a rule must press for the rapid advancement of African civilization and, in fact, must consider that it is achieving its best objective when it ceases to exist. That is to say, the prime objective of colonial rule must be to train the native peoples to take over its functions as quickly as possible. Cary has this in mind when he quotes the words of a former Lieutenant-Governor of Nigeria who stated, "The great merit of British rule is that there is so little of it".²

What exactly are the facets of this problem which caused Cary to relinquish his essentially conservative position and to urge a policy which can only be regarded as anti-imperialist? Basically, he is concerned not just for the condition of the contemporary African but for the condition of Africa and the Africans of the future. He realizes that Africa is a continent economically, socially and politically removed from the status of a modern civilization. Furthermore, the most obvious solution, and the one most likely to be employed, is actually the worst possible answer to the problem. In a situation where it is necessary to bring a people forward through several thousand years of civilization, the most pragmatic procedure is to adopt a totalitarian form of government. The argument commonly put forward in such

2. Id., Ibid., p. 11.

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cases, notably by men in our own day like Colonel Nasser and Kwame Nkrumah, is that one applies the techniques of regimentation for the good of the people. (The authority and power of the people). The authority and power of the police state is supposedly used to guide an otherwise intractable people forward through the "period of emergence", the time which they require to adapt to modern life.

To Cary, the advantages of this procedure are vastly outweighed by the disadvantages. The totalitarian approach can have only one outcome--to breed other totalitarianisms. The force of the police state can only be destroyed by revolution, and the revolution in turn can only preserve its position by resorting to the same tactics which it struggled to overthrow. As heart-rending and foolhardy as it may seem to the colonial powers, the only successful way to bring freedom to Africa is to attempt to introduce self-governing democracies as quickly as possible, to let the Africans make their own mistakes and learn their own lessons the hard way.

At this point the colonial nations must not make the mistake of believing that freedom consists in lack of government and that by withdrawing all authority from a nation or tribe they are thereby conferring the gift of freedom. On the contrary, such an action, which reveals a profound misconception of the idea of freedom, generally results in chaos. Cary says:

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... we describe liberty, not as an absence of government, but as a kind of power, the power to do what you like.... For a government can increase a man's power to do what he likes. If any government, for instance, had offered Robinson Crusoe a free ticket to London and a settled income, he would not have hesitated long to exchange his abstract liberty for a real one.³

In this statement lies the essence of Cary's belief regarding the nature of freedom. To the concept of freedom as a lack of controls, he opposes the principle that freedom is a positive force, a strengthening, through the process of law and order, of the individual's ability to pursue his own desires. Mankind moves from the state of literal "lawlessness" in which freedom for the individual consists largely in opportunism, if it exists at all, to the position of modern society where the individual, while obliged to respect the interests of others, is actually supported at the same time in his efforts to satisfy his desires. Furthermore, the very complexity of the society whose existence depends upon laws and regulations actually provides the individual with interests far wider than those enjoyed by his ancestors, while giving him the opportunity to enjoy those interests. Thus the development of the spirit of civilized man depends upon the existence of a highly organized society. His ability to profit from this opportunity is a function of the amount of the "power of freedom" that that same society places in his hands.

3. Id., Ibid., p. 22.

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The agitations, letters to the editor and public addresses by which popular opinion is slowly shaped and expressed take far longer to achieve their end than do the more spectacular manifestations of physical force, but in the long run this form of pressure is the most effective. It is the demand for freedom making itself heard by peaceful means. The government which denies it cannot defend its actions on the same basis as the government which puts down a revolution. It must fly in the face of the moral sense of humanity. It is Cary's contention in The Case For African Freedom that this outraged sense of morality pervades all the races of the African continent however docile they may appear on the surface. It is a ferment which works in them unceasingly. It is all the more powerful in that the other nations of the world have become aware of it and, in turn, present the same moral question to the colonial government. Once enough voices begin to ask the questions: "What are you doing in Africa? What are you getting out of it? What does the African gain by your rule? Have you a colour bar?"⁴ there is no suitable answer which will silence them short of actually rectifying the grievances of the black races. In opposing these demands the colonial government must adopt a defensive and therefore hopeless position.

4. Id., Ibid., p. 19.

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Cary's statement that "The greatest danger of an autocratic government is that it may lose its chance of delegating power until too late"⁵ contains the essence of what he considers to be the chief problem of African colonial politics. When this happens, the government in power is placed in the position of having to use more and more restrictive controls to counteract the effects of demagogic action stimulated within the colony by the government's own lack of progressive action. Subversive practices by one side and the use of force by the other side to control those practices combine to form an increasingly vicious circle. The normal channels of free communication between government and governed break down. The liberal solution, which Cary presents, is to turn the responsibilities of government over to the demagogues who otherwise would spend their time attacking the existing rule. Two main ends are thereby achieved. Irresponsible demagoguery is forced to become responsible administration and the disapprobation of the world is effectively silenced. The leaders of any imminent revolutionary movement, instead of finding fresh fuel for their wrathful demagoguery in every new hardship and debasement of their people, are then kept busy trying to find the means to overcome those

5. Id., ibid., p. 29.

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hardships. As national leaders in positions of authority it becomes their responsibility to answer for the shortcomings of the government. In effect, they then have to find more practical solutions to national problems than using them as sticks to beat the ever-guilty colonial government.

Cary's proclamation of the rightness of the British technique of colonial administration reveals an interesting dichotomy in his political philosophy. His humanitarian liberalism enhances his essentially conservative political belief. He admires the British Empire as an institution. He believes that it is well administered and that its policies are sound. He is opposed to radical changes in the system of government and despises totalitarianism of any type. Yet, in order to preserve his belief in the integrity of the British Empire he must urge a policy of colonial liberalism. He is liberal insofar as the rights of man are concerned, but he is conservative in his desire to preserve, not the status quo, but the idea of the Empire; the idea of an empire whose administrators can serve a colony unselfishly and, when the time comes, relinquish it in its own best interests.

He recognizes that rendering autonomy to colonies is a practice which brings its own special difficulties in its train. Although the other countries of the world may look on

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with approval at the action of the colonial power, the new nation is not necessarily grateful to its old master. The first move of a newly created state is to educate its people and the usual immediate result of widespread education is political turbulence which normally takes the form of violent nationalism. Nationalism, as Cary points out,⁶ is a middle-class phenomenon--the poor are too busy trying to survive to worry about such abstract concepts. Nationalism is, in fact, a result of the release of middle-class ambition due to the relaxation of colonial restrictions and the improvement of education and living conditions. A revolution based upon nationalist slogans can be successfully engineered by leaders who understand the motives which trigger the responses of the masses. The poor will respond to the promise of alleviation of their suffering, a condition of life that will give them food, warmth and shelter. These same stimuli will arouse not the faintest response in the middle and upper classes because they already have the necessities of life. To them the revolutionary leader must offer excitement to alleviate the boredom of their humdrum lives, dignity in the eyes of the world, and a sense of importance; in a word, nationalism. Revolutionaries come from the only group to which idealism can have an appeal: the middle and upper classes.

6. Id., Ibid., p. 113.

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In a very powerful passage Cary describes the revolutionary leader:

The typical revolution leader, everywhere in the world, is the mystical fanatic, to whom no reason can appeal because he lives in a world of fantasy; he is indifferent to human values, self-centered, merciless, because for him real men do not exist but only the abstract 'Revolution', spelt always with a capital letter because it is thought of as something real and independent. The nationalist leader is inhuman, dangerous, an enemy of God, because he has abandoned reason and lives with abstraction. For him such phantoms as the Race are much more real than living and suffering men.⁷

It is in passages such as this, where Cary gives free rein to his artistic insight, that he reveals a political perspicacity which surpasses the dry limitations of mere political theorizing. We find him here speaking in terms which, within the limitations of political philosophy, might sound flamboyant or histrionic. But it is Cary's great virtue that he is capable of employing his artistic gifts to give impact and elucidation to what is, in effect, a science.

Very few men would dare to say that fascism, communism, socialism, and the nationalist revolutions, the driving forces of modern politics, are the dreams of poets and idealists. Cary does it and he even goes a step further. He was one of the few writers who still dared, in the sophisticated materialism of the forties to declare that

7. Id., Ibid., p. 114.

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"It is the battle of ideals which fills the world with violence". We are much more prone to say that wars are a result of economic pressures. Cary did not accept any explanation so mundane. He was a conservative in his admiration and respect for the democratic process and in his desire to preserve it. He was a liberal humanitarian in his approach to colonial policy. But above these seemingly opposed attitudes, and uniting them, is his great and unshakable idealism, his belief that man does not live by bread alone, that the idea is always infinitely superior to and more desirable than the thing.

The violent nationalism which has resulted from the acquisition of autonomy by the African states was accurately predicted by Cary.⁸ He has pointed out with equal precision that it is impossible to avoid this period of violence by refusing autonomy to the Africans. In this age of rapid communication, every nation of the world has access to, in fact, is continuously bonbarded by, political propaganda, economic ideas and new social concepts. The attempt to defer the day of liberation and responsibility only offers a richer field for communism to work in. The solution is stated very succinctly:

8. Id., Ibid., p. 117.

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The only safe and wise course in African native districts is to hand over power gradually and continuously so that native responsibility increases at about equal speed with economic and political development.⁹

According to Cary's estimate,¹⁰ this rate of advance was being gravely underestimated by the colonial powers. The restlessness and impatience with political delays that was engendered in people by the first World War had even communicated itself to Africa. The war had released a great force for political freedom; a desire to improve the situation and an unwillingness to accept the old, slow rate of advance. The world is demanding immediate improvements which previously would have evolved over decades or even centuries. Communications have brought the challenge of Africa home to the conscience of the world. The knowledge that the political, economic and scientific capabilities of the modern world could effect a vast change in the African situation will act as a source of agitation both inside and outside Africa until the urgency of the demand is recognized and dealt with.

We have only to regard the events of the decade since nineteen-fifty to appreciate the truth of Cary's warning.¹¹ Nations have been created, boundaries redesignated, seemingly unchangeable institutions completely discarded, native

9. Id., Ibid., p. 116.

10. Id., Ibid., p. 118.

11. Id., Ibid., p. 21.

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tribesmen elevated to the status of world statesmen, and all at a pace which fifty years ago would have been literally incredible. Cary's statement that:

This war 1939-1945 will leave an even greater impatience; a fiercer resolution in all countries to see the world remodelled more nearly to the ideals of liberty and justice, and again, the demand will have to be satisfied!¹²

might cause some raised eyebrows among the more cynical political observers. But, after all, despite the injustice which still reigns in some parts of Africa, despite the bungling of many a newly-elevated black statesman, despite the opportunism of many new African states, one must admit that recent developments in that continent have followed Cary's prediction. They are at least efforts to enlarge the measure of freedom and justice enjoyed by the people of Africa.

In any case, Cary did not suffer from any delusions about what the immediate effects of granting selfgovernment to the African colonies would be. He realized perfectly well that freedom is heady stuff and that bestowing it upon the Africans would produce turbulent results. For, as he says:

Freedom, power in the people, is a nuisance to rulers; it is insolent, enterprising, vulgar, inconstant, ungrateful. It produces in any state an everlasting confusion and turmoil. It has the manners of a yahoo and the vitality of a mad dog. But you cannot do without it because it is life itself...¹³

12. Id., Ibid., p. 118.

13. Id., Ibid., p. 125.

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A cause for hope in the case of Africa which Cary often expresses is his belief that the African peoples are more receptive to change than are the more blasé inhabitants of the civilized countries. One of his favorite themes, reiterated again and again in Aissa Saved, An American Visitor and The African Witch, is the stagnant and restrictive nature of tribal life. To him the business of "the noble savage" is a ghastly myth. In fact, the tribal native lives a life of incredible boredom, restricted on every side by witchcraft and juju, and suffering from poverty and disease. That is why even the shoddiest trade goods and the brassiest entertainments of the civilized world are so desirable to him. They represent a new departure, an escape from the restrictions of tribal life.

To Cary,¹⁴ it is the individual, not the family, not the commune, not the party, which is the basic unit of every civilized state. Every advancement in the quality of the state is a reflection of the advancement of the quality of the individual and every change for better or worse in the state is an expression of the volition of the individuals who compose it. The ideal state is the one which gives the fullest freedom to the individual, freedom to develop his capabilities in the best possible direction. In order to

14. Id., Ibid., p. 121.

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avoid creating unhappy misfits the modern state must be of a complexity similar to that of the great modern industrial nations. Even though there are still a certain number of misfits in these nations, at least an infinitely vaster field of opportunity for their talents exists than would be the case in a tribal society. To Cary the all-important thing is the development of the spirit and gifts of the individual. It is for this development that Africa hungers and, in his opinion, this craving for the emancipation of the imagination is what will lead Africa out of the desert.

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The most striking characteristic of the African novels, taken as a whole, is the unevenness of their quality. The progress of Cary's struggle to master his trade is more than evident if we compare Aissa Saved with Mister Johnson. The former is disjointed in its action. Scenes change rapidly and with little warning or connecting narrative, giving much the same effect as one would have if a projectionist were to flash on a screen slides taken at random from a box. All the pictures deal more or less with the same subject, but the interweaving narrative is weak, and often turgid. Furthermore, the bursts of violent and excessively cruel action interspersed with periods of calm description or dialogue are disconcerting. The cruelty is especially repulsive and the argument which could be offered in support of it, that it is realistic, is of course hardly valid. Finally, Cary has made a cardinal error in splitting the reader's interest by including two central characters. Either Aissa or Ali could have borne the weight of the action very creditably alone. Since the reader is forced to take them together and to have his emotions battered by a double helping of horror at their ends, the dramatic effectiveness which might have derived from that same horror is immeasurably diminished.

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It is no secret that Cary was learning his craft as a writer of novels in the thirties. That he learned well is shown by the steady improvement in quality that marks the African novels. The errors of his first work crop up in both An American Visitor in which the juxtaposition of scenes is again too abrupt and which is marred by a rather rambling plot, and in The African Witch where Cary again divides the reader's interest between the fortunes of two apparently equally important protagonists. Here the dramatic unity and impact of the novel would have been greatly enhanced had it dealt principally with either Aladai or Elizabeth, but for some reason Cary could not seem to refrain from overpopulating his works with centrally important characters. Perhaps it is for this reason that in his later and more successful novels he chose the trilogy form--a form which permitted full emphasis to be placed upon each important character without having them get in each other's way. In any case, in Mister Johnson, the last of the African novels, Cary shows that he has overcome his earlier mistakes. The plot is unified and tightly controlled. Tedious descriptive passages are either kept to a minimum or else are projected through the eyes of Johnson, a technique which places them in a new perspective and makes them an integral part of a world seen in terms of the African mind. Above all, although Rudbeck, symbolic of the Empire and its problems, represents Cary's definition of

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"omnipotence",¹ his importance is carefully subordinated to that of Johnson.

Aissa Saved is not really a political novel in the sense that The African Witch or Prisoner of Grace are political novels. The central theme deals rather with the necessity for religious conviction in the life of the individual and the effects which powerful convictions can have upon the individual's fate when they are only haphazardly understood or when they conflict with deeper-rooted, almost instinctual modes of thought. Aissa and Ali follow concepts which are in reality only parodies of the ideas that the white teachers and missionaries have tried to transmit to them, but which are sufficiently alien to the traditions of their respective societies to ensure their own destruction.

One does detect however, as in The American Visitor, certain of Cary's political beliefs, particularly those that deal with the administration of an African colony. Bradgate, the political officer, really has very little grasp of the subtleties of village politics and he has a strong tendency to be one-track-minded. But he does understand that his is the delicate and difficult task of nursing the rickety framework of native government along as best he can, often in the face of opposition from white missionaries and traders. He

1. To Cary "omnipotence" implies "having final power in the universe" and not "capable of doing all things". See Aissa Saved, p. 8.

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administers the policy which Cary refers to as Indirect Rule in Britain and West Africa, the policy of retaining the existing native government and supplementing it with advice from political officers who must rely upon persuasion rather than force in their efforts to keep it moving in the direction of self-determination. Their position is made even more delicate in that they are prime targets for ministerial inquiries on the subject of "colonial exploitation" in the House of Commons, and of broadsides from well-meaning but politically unschooled missionaries who are quick to resent any form of restraint upon their own activities.

Bradgate encounters exactly this type of opposition from the missionary Carrs. His most diplomatic hints that they desist from stoking up the natives with religious fervor and from making forays into particularly dangerous native areas are received as examples of the "commercial and selfish" attitude of a typically overbearing political officer. The charge is completely unjust in this sense but Bradgate is guilty of a certain involuntary shortcoming. He fails to realize that the Carrs represent education and that education is essential to political progress. Nevertheless, he does his job conscientiously and to the best of his ability. He administers justice with a fairness and impartiality that is far from being appreciated by the natives. Also, he, like so many of Cary's political officers, has a penchant for

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building bridges and roads that are intended to eventually revolutionize the native economy but which often bring immediate and pressing political problems for the officer.

As a result of the missionaries preaching a group of converted negroes decides to carry out a raid on the pagan community across the river. There is a full-scale riot, and as a consequence of the exertions of trying to stop it, Mrs. Carr dies in premature childbirth. The affair is almost disastrous for both Bradgate and the Carrs in that an inquiry is made and there are some suggestions of negligence. However, the president of the inquiry exonerates everyone including the missionaries, Bradgate, and even the native administration. In this he is not indulging in what Jim Latter would hotly refer to as "the political game of grab and tickle" He is merely being realistic and realizing that sacking everyone would only serve to set progress back by about twenty years. As Cary points out:

The Yanrin native government was not a very good one, but it was as good as Yanrin could provide for itself at that stage of development, and there was nothing to be gained by abusing it.

... [the enquiry board president] did not write in the vein of a go-getter business expert seeking out inefficiency, but of a tactful friend encouraging a nervous household after some little domestic accident.²

His action demonstrates Cary's contention that even though a child may be stupid, only an ignorant or vicious person will

2. Cary, Aissa Saved, p. 159.

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tell it so. The intelligent parent praises it for whatever good points it has, and tries to find some other means of ameliorating its stupidity.

The other element in Aissa Saved that is pertinent to this discussion is the idea of injustice as an immutable factor in the universe. Cary's view of life is based upon this idea as upon a cornerstone, but this does not necessarily imply cynicism or disillusionment on his part. Works like Process of Real Freedom and The Horse's Mouth are more than ample iterations of his love of life and belief in the powers of man to cope with the problems it presents. But to him the ability to recognize and deal effectively with the problems of life, although motivated by a joyous idealism, must be based upon a well-founded concept of its realities. One of these realities is temporal injustice which is inherent in the very nature of a materialistic universe. The laws of chance and probability and the unpredictable nature of such factors as disease and accident invariably cause unmerited hardship to innocent people. Cary's reconciliation with the injustice in the universe is based upon his realization that it is a corollary of freedom. There could only be absolute justice in a universe where man's free will was not a factor. Also, change is a characteristic of progress in society and the change which may bring enormous benefits to a large section of a nation's people will also often inflict severe

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hardship on others.

Cary's own family had suffered in this manner as a result of the Land Acts of 1881 in Ireland. These Acts, although designed to reimburse the landlords for the loss of their holdings, could not adequately compensate families like the Carys who had lived in Ireland for generations and had devoted their lives to the interests of their tenants and their holdings. More than financial loss was involved. It meant the uprooting and destruction of a tradition and a way of life.

To Cary, the intelligent man recognizes the existence of injustice and does his best to counteract it, accepting whatever cannot be changed. It could be said that part of Cary's conception of the politician is a man who understands the inevitability of a modicum of injustice in all human affairs and, when necessary, accepts responsibility for having precipitated it, just as an army commander must accept responsibility for sending a given proportion of his men to their deaths in an assault upon a heavily defended feature.

Aissa does not understand that freedom of choice and injustice are inextricably mingled. As Jim Latter in Not Honour More opposes the destruction of his beloved Luga's tribal society, so Aissa deeply resents and struggles against her captors when she is accused of being a witch:

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She was too obstinate to perceive like other people that injustice is in the nature of things like bad weather and cannot be altered by resentment.³

She cannot "resign herself to anything". In the end she undergoes what she thinks is a religious conversion and makes a complete and tragic about-face. As always, the folly of one extremity of conduct is only aggravated by rushing to the opposite extreme. The result in this case is the horrifying destruction of both Aissa and her baby.

An even clearer statement of Cary's outlook on the subject of injustice and irrationality in the world is found in An American Visitor. Gore, the urbane and intelligent Assistant District Officer has seen his revered superior slaughtered by the natives he had befriended and for whom he came close to sacrificing his career. The great peaceful federation of warring tribes, which once seemed imminent, is nipped in the bud and utterly destroyed. Traders, prospectors and speculators have swarmed into the territory, completing the debasement and disruption of the old tribal system. The program for which Gore and his superior had labored, bargained and maneuvered is set back for years, if not forever:

3. Id., Ibid., p. 86.

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Gore's very eyebrows seemed fixed in the melancholy question, 'Why should everything go to pot at once, the sound and splendid as well as the bad? Why not keep the good and reform the rest? That wouldn't be hard. You've only got to be a little reasonable. Wait a bit, good people. These things you are destroying can't be replaced in a hurry and they may be necessary to you. Loyalty, truth, tolerance, kindness, even modesty will be wanted again--and you will enjoy the graces of life as soon as you know what they are.'⁴

One suspects that Gore is something of an autobiographical figure. The answer supplied to his conundrum is a derivative of Cary's own Platonic idealism: loyalty, truth, tolerance and so on do not perish with the foolhardy destruction of one tribal system, nor even of a beautiful and highly-organized society. The destruction of the old is part of the construction of the new. Oftentimes the most innocent and the most meritorious are irrationally destroyed or have their hearts broken by the folly of the mob. The only source of comfort that the true lover of mankind can find lies in the confidence that the qualities and virtues of the old will regenerate themselves in the new and that the process of social and political change, although devious and sometimes irrational, is in fact a process of advancement.

An American Visitor is Cary's response to the pique he must have felt when a young American woman suggested to

4. Id., An American Visitor, p. 23⁴.

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him that the exercise of parental authority in the raising of children was wrong.⁵ She felt that they should form their own ideas of good and evil out of uninhibited and unguided experience. The application of this concept to political life is Cary's definition of anarchy just as its application in religious life indicates to him a profound misinterpretation of the idea of reliance upon divine providence. A person's religious life must be based upon faith in divine providence, but it must also be conducted in a rational manner and under the guidance of both tradition and ordinary commonsense. Similarly, the development of a nation from savagery into civilization is most effectively achieved with the firm assistance of more experienced hands.

This does not imply that Cary discounts the importance of the dissenting voice or of the anarchist approach as a factor in the evolution of democracy. As he says:

If none had ever rebelled against the law in the name of freedom, we should still be living in the stone-age under the tyranny of some juju priest or tribal politburo.⁶

What he insists upon is that it be realized that democracy is a state of mind. It is the practical, everyday application of the principle of freedom of choice and responsibility in the field of politics. The democratic government must

5. Id., Ibid., p. 7.

6. Id., Ibid., p. 10.

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maintain a careful control over the excessive application of authority which tends toward autocracy while being equally careful not to let anarchic factions, however valuable they may be in terms of constructive criticism, overturn and destroy the framework of order in society. A democracy must be ready and able to destroy its enemies, but it also must be prepared to accept responsibility for its actions.

Miss Hasluck, the American visitor, does not understand that the administrators of the Empire felt very responsible for the outcome of their policies. Instead, she sees them fixed in positions of "domination and cruelty", ignorant of the damage they are doing in destroying the idyllic heritage of the black races. She is at first strongly opposed to the political officer, Bewsher, and the policy of tribal federation and self-determination which he hopes to implement in his district. Then, realizing that he is an idealist, she comes to admire and finally to love him. In the end she ironically causes his death at the hands of native tribesmen because she has undergone a religious conversion. She hides his pistol from him, feeling that by doing so she is demonstrating greater faith in divine providence and that God will therefore save them by a miracle.

Where Miss Hasluck suffers from being too realistic too much given to the idea of laissez-faire, Bewsher suffers from having rather too hopeful an idea of what he can

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accomplish with the savages. His desire is to federate the warring tribes into a great nation like the Hausa and the Fulani, with elected representatives and a rough form of central government. He wants to convert the tribal gods into Christian saints and, after a long slow process of nursing the tribesmen to some form of political awareness, to open the country to traders and prospectors. The natives would thus benefit completely from economic and educational development based upon a firm political foundation. The unfortunate thing is that the tribesmen only vaguely comprehend even the most rudimentary political ideas. They do not understand the benefits of federation and democratic government, and resent Bewsher as a meddler and an intruder.

When at last they actually do bury the hatchet and form a federation, it is for a purpose quite contrary to the scheme Bewsher has propounded. They are alarmed by the intrusions of more and more prospectors and missionaries into their territories. They feel that Bewsher has broken his promise to keep out the whites (actually he has been over-ridden by the central authorities) and that they must collectively kill him and drive out the whites. The upshot is universally tragic. Bewsher is killed, an armed patrol puts down the uprising and the federation is shattered. Prospectors and speculators pour into the area adding further to the disruption of tribal life by attracting away the

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young people who will work for wages in the mines in order to buy cheap trade goods. Progress comes to them, not as in Bewsher's dream of an orderly development, but as Cary believes it always does--dramatically, often cruelly, always without regard to the plans and hopes of dreamers.

Louis Aladai, the black prince who might be called the hero of The African Witch, is also something of a dreamer, but his dreams are stimulated by the English education he has undergone. He is a claimant to the Emirate of the state of Rimi whose incumbent is tottering on the edge of the grave. The position is also contested by a Mahomedan named Salé who has far less education but a great deal more political acumen than Aladai. The African witch is Aladai's sister, a ju-ju priestess of enormous influence. Her main interest in supporting Aladai's cause stems from her desire to preserve her own position against the Muslim purdah which would be invoked if Salé were elected.

Aladai's desire to become Emir and to rule in an enlightened manner runs into trouble from the start. Bruwash, the local Resident, is a well-intentioned but cautious civil-servant who is hesitant to risk any new or progressive ideas in Rimi. He would rather oppose Aladai's election in the interests of avoiding as much trouble as possible. Aladai has a fairly large following, but his followers support him for all the wrong reasons, the chief of which is their belief

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that he has a better ju-ju. He wants to bring democracy, education and freedom to Rimi and to abolish the practise of ju-ju worship and witchcraft, but the people rally around him because they believe he has a magic coat. His mistakes are twofold. He tries to apply sophisticated political and economic ideas to his nation without tempering them to suit its real nature, and he fails to appreciate just how vast is the gap that his people must traverse in order to be ready for the modern world.

Cary paints an indelible picture of the political atmosphere in such a primitive community:

The way to treat this wise and powerful man [the Emir] was to go down on your face before him and and throw dust on your head. You could cry out to him for help, but whether he gave it or not was his own mysterious affair. His gifts were like the rain; his anger like a draught (sic).⁽²⁾ If you give thanks for rain it is not from gratitude but to keep the god in a good temper; if you complain of draught, it is in this form: "We are sinful people".⁷

Every move Aladai makes, every new idea he tries to expound is hampered and baffled by the attitude of servile and fawning obedience which the native mind has learned is a prerequisite of survival in a paternal autocracy. Sound political theory or absolute gibberish would be accepted with equal haste by a populace anxious only to placate the ruler rather than trying to understand new political ideas.

7. Id., The African Witch, p. 226.

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This frustration, as well as the pressure placed upon him by the apparent election of Salé and the lack of support by Burwash, do not dampen Aladai's political idealism. He becomes obsessed with the notion that he is one in a million, chosen by some mysterious process to receive a white-man's education and to become the first enlightened ruler of Rimi. Unfortunately, a white officer who is somewhat jealous of his graces gives him a public beating and Aladai, wounded in his pride, takes to the warpath. He is, of course, placed in an insolubly frustrating position: he has tried to be as "white" as possible in his thinking and it is this very fact which continually arouses hostility in the whites and miscomprehension in the blacks. After brooding at length on the dilemma, he seems to find an answer in the preachings of a religious fanatic, supposedly Christian but essentially a worshipper of blood-sacrifice. Aladai, receding steadily from the high-water mark of his Oxford sophistication, convinces himself that blood-sacrifice in the form of self-sacrifice is a necessary part of the process of political freedom. Having reverted in his thinking to an almost completely primitive attitude, no amount of rational argument by friendly whites can move him from his idée fixe, and he and a few followers are annihilated in a hopeless banzai charge against government troops.

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The African Witch could be called Cary's treatise on African political education. Aladai's quandary is a picture of the frustration of a self-educated native mind dealing with the complications of modern politics. He also touched on this subject in The Case For African Freedom⁸ but it is in this novel that he gives fullest amplification to his views. The African witch, with her enormous powers for good and evil in a society haunted by bogies and spirits, the witch-hunts instigated by the jealous and the ignorant that often condemn to cruel deaths the brightest intellectual hopes of the race, the treachery, jealousy and nepotism characteristic of the native court and ingrained into the thought-patterns of the people, the conflict between pagan, Christian and Muslim interests, are all part of the Africa that continues to exist in the twentieth century.

In case the reader should miss the point, Cary later added a preface in which he gives a succinct exposition of his views on educating Africans. Africa will not and can not stand still any longer and wait for a slow, methodical process of education. The Africans will have education for the masses now, whether it appears to be a possibility or not. But the arguments generally presented in support of a policy of education are quite invalid. For example, of the

8. Id., The Case for African Freedom, p. 74.

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idea that education would help to stabilize society and prevent violence, Cary says:

The contrary is true. Education would bring in more violence, more barbarities; it would break up what is left to tribal order, and open the whole country to the agitator.⁹

Similarly, the concept that education is a natural right of every human being is indefensible by rational argument. Cary sees the education of ignorant peoples as a religious or moral duty, but points out that it is "very hard to justify such an assumption on any political or rational grounds". In other words, the problem of education in Africa is, like the problems of political and economic development, beyond the stage of being amenable to fully rational control. To use Cary's own image, it is like a stage coach without brakes hurtling down a steep hill. The driver's only hope is to flog the horses forward at top speed in the hope of outrunning the impending disaster and regaining control later. It is an application of the Kierkegaardian idea of the "leap in the dark" based only on faith. The leaders of the African nations must drive forward in the face of apparent and real dangers. The system that worked in England's political and social evolution is not the answer; the ju-ju system of Africa presents only a black abyss from whence the new nations are trying to scramble to safety. The evolution of the new

9. Id., The African Witch, p. 12.

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African nation takes place at a speed formerly unthinkable and therefore by a completely original process.

In Mr. Johnson Cary makes no reference whatever to ju-ju as a force in African politics. He concentrates only on the character of Mr. Johnson, the negro clerk, whose rise and fall is cast against a background of change and progress in the social pattern of Nigeria. Arnold Kettle, in his work An Introduction to the English Novel says:

The removal of the scene from London to Africa or India or South America does not necessarily involve an escape from the central tensions of our own civilization, on the contrary, it may illuminate them.¹⁰

Cary makes great use of this fact in his African novels in exploring one particular aspect of the problem of man in society and the course of action that he is forced to follow in order to be acceptable to his fellows or to sway their opinion,¹¹ and the results (often tragic) of trying to make a departure from ingrown tradition. Aladai's problem was that he tried to introduce new ideas at the national level. Johnson's problem is that he tries to do the same thing at the domestic level. Aladai failed to attain the full-scale support of his people; Johnson is betrayed by his own wife who thinks he is a madman.

10. Kettle, op. cit., p. 177.

11. This is the essential problem of politics.

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Kettle complains that Cary's view of Africa as presented in Mr. Johnson is oversimplified and conditioned by his own paternalistic attitude, that Cary uses this attitude as an excuse to justify Rudbeck's shooting of Johnson and that such an attitude ignores the rising tide of African nationalism and awareness. It is certainly not true that Cary's attitude toward African politics is paternalistic. In the second last chapter of The African Witch he places in the mouth of Judith Coote a concise exposition of his beliefs on the subject of Africa's political future. These ideas coincide almost exactly with those he expounded ten years later in Britain and West Africa. All that can be said of them in this regard is that Cary would probably have liked to see a paternalistic system if he had thought there was any hope for its success. The fact is that the British colonial system in West Africa from its inception was diplomatic rather than paternalistic. It placed the emphasis upon cooperation between British Residents and native rulers, and the essence of the system was that this cooperation was to be achieved by persuasion rather than by force. Furthermore, Cary most clearly saw that the system was outworn and that the colonies and protectorates had to be prepared for self-determination as quickly as possible, with the final end in view of their taking their places as members in some form of world union like the United Nations.

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Most important, it must be remembered that the ferment of African nationalism and awareness was almost non-existent when Cary wrote his African novels. District officers like Rudbeck in Mister Johnson and Bradgate in Aissa Saved had, at times, to assume almost god-like powers in serving the interests of the Empire. Rudbeck's shooting of Johnson is an act of mercy prompted by pity. It is his means of reconciling those god-like powers with the humanity which he wishes to retain. It is the eternal problem of the ruler struggling to keep his identity with the human race while exercising super-human powers. Rudbeck's experience as an African political officer is the experience of every man who is given power over his fellows--he recognizes his duty and wants to do it but resents the estrangement which it inevitably entails.

For the natives of Rudbeck's district, the building of the road includes all the essential qualities of the civilizing process. It means a transition from a state of narrow-minded suspicion to intercourse with strangers, from parochial life to a form of national life writ small, from ignorant conservatism to acceptance of new concepts of life and society. As the tribesmen make a short physical progress through the bush they simultaneously make a tremendous mental progress in terms of political ideas. In a matter of days or weeks at most they bridge the gap of thousands of years

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and come to grasp with such notions as peaceful cooperation between tribes for the purpose of achieving an ideal, and of their membership, even at a primitive level, in the Empire. Most important of all, they make the transition from a state of savagery in which their only motivation is immediate tangible gain to a state in which they are capable of working solely for an ideal. In this case the ideal is the completion of the road. They are not sure where it comes from or where exactly the end of it is supposed to be, but they cooperate eagerly, nonetheless, in its completion. For the first time in their lives they are united in a common purpose and for the first time their motivation is idealistic rather than pragmatic.

The district as a whole, like those tribesmen who work on the construction of the road, is permanently affected by the road. Where there was a peaceful stagnation before there now seethes a new ferment. As always in such cases, more bad than good is the immediate result of disrupting a pattern of society. The crime rate skyrockets, disease and exploitation by traders increases and political unrest caused by the opening of new mental and physical horizons becomes a factor in the life of the district. But there is no going back, no possibility of retreat to the old system. Rudbeck gloomily realizes that what he had planned should be a benefit and a boon to the native society has become a

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juggernaut which he can scarcely control and which threatens to cost him his career.

Mister Johnson is Cary's best novel after The Horse's Mouth, but not necessarily because of any political ideas which he presents in it. It is an excellent novel because it is the fourth reworking and re-ordering of a set of characters. The pedigree of Mister Johnson can be read as a series of steady improvements in the three other African novels and its excellence in part derives from the fact that Cary handles the political ideas with far greater subtlety and restraint than in his previous works. He must have realized that the lengthy and explicit reiterations of his political and sociological views produced tedium rather than conviction. In a sense it is a great pity that he did not write his political treatises before he began writing novels. He would then have had relieved himself of the need for expressing these concepts in the novel form. There are whole passages in Aissa Saved, An American Visitor and The African Witch that could have been taken holus-bolus from Britain and West Africa or The Case For African Freedom, and which, however much the reader may sympathise with them, utterly detract from the novels as artistic works. Mister Johnson is quite free from these disfigurements. It is a conscious effort to produce an expression of an artistic intuition in

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the impressionist manner.¹² What cannot be said of the other African novels can be said of it: it is a great novel.

12. See the preface to the Penguin edition.

THE FUNCTIONING OF DEMOCRACY

Cary wrote Power in Men in 1938 for the Liberal Book Club, an organization founded by the Liberal Party in Britain to provide a series of books which, when disseminated throughout the country by means of local discussion groups under the supervision of Liberal party members, would provide the "spear-head of the local attack on the entrenchments of political reaction". The informative section in the end leaves of the book also announces that:

The aim of the Liberal Book Club is a simple one: It is to provide a platform for all who seek the truth and believe in the tenets of democracy and freedom. It believes that never before has there been a time when Liberalism and the principles for which it stands have been more urgently needed.... It will do all in its power to forward the principles of freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of action.¹

Also, the Club aimed to banish "ignorance, fear and prejudice from the minds of the ordinary voter" and to become "a movement of paramount importance in the fight for Freedom and Democracy". It published a book each month written specially for it by a liberal author. The books were available only to Club members. The Club numbered among its patrons and committee members such formidable talents as C.P. Snow, Alan Pryce-Jones, Captain B.H. Liddell-Hart, Augustus John, Compton Mackenzie, A.A. Milne, and Osbert Sitwell, to name

1. Joyce Cary, Power in Men, p. 277.

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but a few.

The fact that Cary was requested to contribute a volume to the Club gives us an intimation of the regard which these and other persons had for him at that time. His reputation as a writer was not yet fully established, resting as it did upon the merit of his African novels and a very few others. Power in Men was to be his first political treatise and yet the Club must have had a fairly high estimation of his capabilities or it would not have gone to the trouble and expense of publishing it. In fact, had it not been for this support, Cary's work might never have been published. There is no indication that it ever contributed materially to the Liberal cause or that it ever attained widespread vogue as a text on political theory. Only one recorded copy exists in any Canadian library.

One is nonetheless intrigued by the Club's manifesto and by the wholehearted support which Cary gives to it. Perhaps the British are more given to reading and discussing political tracts than are Canadians; perhaps people were more idealistic in 1939 than they are today; but one finds it almost incredible that an organization as worldly and practical as a national political party should believe that it could influence the political atmosphere of a country through the medium of reading and discussion groups! It is hard to believe that Cary, who so thoroughly understood the liberal,

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protestant spirit of England, who was so well aware of the importance of the "chapel people" and the political action meetings which he describes in the scene in Plant's residence in The Horse's Mouth, should not have realized that that very movement had been declining in political importance in England for more than a decade when he wrote Power in Men. Perhaps this same naive idealism which we find so charming in the individual is what has been fatal in British Liberal Party politics for the last twenty years.

In any case, Cary himself was not trying to win an election. He could afford to be as idealistic and frank as he chose and we can assess Power in Men entirely on the basis of the ideas which are presented therein without any regard for their value as workaday political arguments. The title of the book itself is worthy of more than cursory attention since it provides us with the theme of the whole work, and in a sense, with the essence of one of Cary's central political beliefs. To him, freedom is power in men. As has been noted in the discussion of The Case For African Freedom, Cary defines freedom not as an absence of restraint but as a real power, the power of being able to do what one wishes. It is a power natural in men but often suppressed in primitive or tyrannical societies. It cannot be kept in abeyance forever, but in order to be able to develop fully it requires the opportunities presented by a modern, highly technical

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society. It is an essential characteristic of mankind. As Cary puts it in the opening pages of Power in Men:

The weakest child has power and will. Its acts are its own. It can be commanded, but it need not obey. It is an independent source of energy which grows with its life and ends only with its death. This power is creative. This creative power is free.²

The book as a whole is a development of Cary's theories regarding this power for freedom in men. The first three chapters deal with the real, the metaphysical and the historical aspects of liberty as power. The real aspect of this power is the universal existence of the sensation of individualism in men and the means which they will choose to express it. The individual invariably feels himself to be a unique entity. The means chosen to reveal this uniqueness will vary with external conditions. For example, when the person lives in a police state his only means of exercising his instinct for liberty may be by dying. On the other hand, the force of objection to conformity often takes the form of creative activity. The artist's work expresses his revolt. Whatever the circumstances or mode of expression, each person has the power to reveal himself as an individual. The greater the possibility of expression afforded to the individual by the state, the closer that state is to a condition of absolute freedom. The end purpose of all government action is to

2. Id., Ibid., p. 1.

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increase the individual's power to do what he wants. This is not achieved merely by removing all sources of restraint. Rather, it results from a development through common action, of a multiplicity of choices--a situation in which the individual has the greatest scope to gratify his desires.

The process of freedom also takes place in the mind. All men have an equal amount of liberty of judgment. Any judgment made by an individual implies that he believes he has real independent power; that he is capable of differentiating good from bad. In some cases, however, the mind is held in bondage by certain dogmas or creeds which do not allow it to accept or believe new evidence. The innate freedom of judgment may be impaired by traditional beliefs so that judgments produced may be of no value. Cary's image is of a millionaire who is stopped in a crowded pavement because his superstitious fear prevents him from going under a ladder. This is a man who has a great amount of real freedom. i.e. the material power to do what he likes, but whose liberty is curtailed by his lack of moral freedom. Cary says:

Primitive races do not lack intelligence but freedom. They are crushed and bound by false ideas derived from past authority, and are stultified by the traditional creed that such ideas are superior to truth. They are taught to reject freedom of mind, and therefore their brains are almost useless to them. The power of the mind is the most important part of liberty.³

3. Id., Ibid., p. 16.

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Conversely, once the mind has been enlarged by education no external power can prevent it from ranging at large to examine new ideas and generate ever more strongly the desire for freedom. Since modern society depends upon the trained or educated worker, nothing can prevent the sure evolution of democracy.

Historically, liberty has always been associated with conflict. This is a direct result of the dichotomy which is characteristic of real freedom. On the one hand men have an unlimited form of power--the power of imagination and enjoyment. This power is strictly personal and conflicts with the interests of no other person. On the other hand, economic and political power involve limitation and therefore produce conflict. The old liberal doctrines supported by Mill and Spencer produced incredible contradictions when applied to real life and it is these contradictions which Cary seeks to resolve while still presenting a strongly liberal argument. Thus, if Freedom is defined as power for action rather than as lack of restraint, the restrictions upon private action which are everywhere apparent become understandable. When one claims that liberty is absence of restraint or guidance, one denies the necessity and desirability of government or group action of any kind. If one accepts restraint as a natural and self-evident phenomenon, the necessity for government becomes clear and the aims of government and of group

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action accord with this concept of liberty. Those aims are to increase the power for action of the individual. No individual will ever be utterly and absolutely free to do what he wants on earth; there will always be certain restrictions in regard to the interests of others. But the individual is at least free to pursue his economic and political interests within certain bounds and a democratic system assists him in these ends. The element of conflict of interest always remains in the economic and political fields, but is decreased as much as possible through group action or democracy. Democracy is a system designed for the distribution of power. The alternatives are nationalism or totalitarianism, both of which seek the centralization of power at the expense of the individual.

The conflict of private economic and political interests is what originally led to the creation of government. However, if the communist ideal of equal distribution of wealth and votes were achieved, the element of conflict would still not be removed from society. In Cary's opinion, since man is an idealistic rather than an economic or political creature, conflict of interests must always be a characteristic of human society. He says:

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Religious wars, nationalist wars, what are now called wars of ideology are neither economic nor political, but ideal. [Those who make them] seek power to impose a rule of life, not only upon the political and economic system of a people, but its thoughts, pleasures, its total being. There is no man who does not wish to find others in agreement with him...⁴

Even without resorting to armed force, there is always an element of conflict in any healthy society. New ideas appear, the balance of wealth shifts, placing different groups in power, and new political parties seek to impress their ideas upon the masses. All of this involves conflict of interest in one form or another and such conflict is a sign of a healthy, progressive society. Nonetheless, there is always a requirement for a central regulating body to maintain the conflict within reasonable bounds and therefore a form of government will always exist.

Government is always distinct from the individual. Even in a democracy, which is by definition a form of government by the people, the government is a separate organization with powers superior to those of any given individual. This consideration leads Cary into a discussion of the question of whether the individual or the state should be master.

The question has been answered in different ways at various times, but Cary allocates all the answers to one of four main categories. The first is what might be called the

4. Id., Ibid., p. 35.

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absolute school which includes Plato, Hobbes, Hegel and the modern nationalist philosophers. This group holds that the state must be preeminent. Their argument is that the state has a better grasp of the long-range interests of society than has the individual. It may force the individual to do something against his will, but in the long run its judgment will prove to have been right. Besides, history shows that men in all ages have made a botch of things when left to their own devices. The result has always been wars, revolutions and unrest.

Opposed to this school of thought is that of the nihilists or anarchists including Backunin, Proudhon and Tolstoy. This group contends that the State is one of man's own creations and that he should therefore not be subject to it. It also presents the powerful argument that to override the will of even one man for an apparently good end is wrong. To the anarchist, law imposed by the state is a frustration of the natural law to which all men must naturally conform. Thirdly, one finds the class of people who, following the reasoning of Rousseau, claim sovereignty for both man and state. Man has an absolute right to liberty, but if he willingly makes a contract with his fellows then the majority decision resulting from that contract must be obeyed. Finally, the fourth group, including Marx and Spencer, claim that neither man nor state is absolute and that neither can

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be absolute since both are subject to natural forces (mainly economic and evolutionary) which are beyond their control.

Having mustered this array of ideas, Cary proceeds to dismiss them all on the ground of being the products of pure egotism. The Platonic, Hegelian, and Marxian systems, as well as the thought of Rousseau, are all projections of those individuals' egos. The Philosopher has a momentary insight into reality and tries to project it into an all-inclusive system, and all of these systems depend at one point or another upon the philosopher's assumption that he has private access to the will of God.

Cary insists⁵ that the question can only be solved by measuring the claims to supremacy of state and man against some absolute standard. Rousseau, Plato, Spencer and the others could not do this because they referred them only to their own system. If any one of those systems had met Cary's demand for universality its truth would have been obvious to everyone long since. Since this is not the case, Cary looks elsewhere for a standard which is independent of personal opinion. Jeremy Bentham was on the right track when he suggested his principle of "the greatest happiness for the greatest number" as being such a norm. Events have shown that the Benthamite norm was misleading, essentially because

5. Id., Ibid., p. 65.

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of the wide variations in the definitions and conceptions of the nature of happiness. Cary suggests as an alternative the norm of "the greatest liberty for the greatest number". As he says:

It is not therefore, like the old theories... anarchic and disruptive. It does not set man against state or state against man. It implies a state organized to give power to man. But since states are made of men, the state that gives power gets strength. On the other hand, the state made of free men encroaches upon liberty at its peril.⁶

In support of his argument he points out that the quantity of liberty in this sense is far easier to ascertain than is the quantity of happiness. Liberty, taken as meaning "free power", can be verified by reference to all forms of year-books which record hours of work, conditions of work, opportunities for leisure and all the other aspects of freedom or lack of it in the modern world. Furthermore, this standard takes in the economic factor. Cary acknowledges that the standard must be related to the cost of living i.e. since freedom is directly related to wealth, the real wealth of the individual must be reckoned as a factor in the standard.

What Cary's "standard of liberty" really can be reduced to is a standard of living. In accordance with his definition of liberty, the nation having the highest standard

6. Id., Ibid., p. 76.

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of living also has the greatest freedom. He freely admits that this is a very materialistic outlook, but then it is one of his cardinal beliefs that man's freedom is a function of his ability to organize the material elements of his existence. Everyone seeks greater material possessions, not necessarily for themselves but as a source of power and freedom from bondage to the will of others. The natives of whom he writes in The African Witch:

... desire wealth (if only a reach-me-down suit of cotton and a Manchester cloth for their wives) to satisfy need, to create some glory and dignity for themselves and those they love.⁷

Even the poet or the artist can function better in an atmosphere free from material concerns, whereas he can be utterly crushed and his talents needlessly wasted by poverty.

The standard of living and the standard of education are two factors which can be determined with reasonable accuracy in any society. They are also the two factors, as Cary argues in Process of Real Freedom, which determine the rate of advance of political liberty and the state of development toward democratic government in any given state. Cary does not claim that his standard will define the exact condition of a state in terms of use made of liberty. It is conceivable that the people of one country will make greater use of their liberty, be more progressive in spirit and

7. Id., The African Witch, p. 13.

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action, than will the people of another country. All Cary claims is that by examining the material condition of a country against the "standard of liberty" it is possible to determine the relative amount of freedom available to the individual. What the individual does with that liberty is unpredictable.

The fact that the individual may possibly waste or ignore his opportunities must not prevent the state from granting him the greatest possible scope for self-development. This brings us back to the original question: who shall be or can be supreme, the individual or the state? Does the State have the right to guide the blunderings of the individual or must the individual shake off and resent all attempts by external authority to control him?

Cary's answer to the question⁸ most closely resembles a modification of Rousseau's doctrine of the individual who has inalienable rights except when he voluntarily places himself under the rule of central authority by means of a "social contract". Cary's hypothesis is that the state, or rather the government which represents the state, is necessarily superior to the individual, but its policies must be based upon faith in the human character. It must give the maximum opportunity to the individual for self-development

8. Id., Power in Men, p. 92.

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and it must at all costs refrain from interfering even when the individual appears to be neglecting or wasting his chances. As in his other works on political freedom, Cary is primarily for the individual. He recognizes the necessary and indispensable nature of a centralized government whose powers are supra-individual, but he always reminds us that the state is, after all, only a collection of individuals and that the merits of a state are really the manifestation of the merits of its individual citizens. He says:

... the wealth and glory of a state is simply the realized liberty of its people, and no man can realize himself except in his own character.⁹

Therefore, the state, while being greater than any one person, must recognize that its own interests can best be served by aiding the individual to realize himself. Its primary duty is thus to devolve the power of real freedom upon its citizens as quickly as possible.

The old ideas of rivalry between state and individual are based upon a mistaken premise. As the freedom of the individual prospers so prospers the state. The more real liberty possessed by the private citizens, the closer the state is to having achieved what Cary envisions as the most stable form and in fact the end form of all government--true democracy.

9. Id., Ibid., p. 94.

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Although Cary sees democracy as the ultimate form of government he does not underestimate its weaknesses. Democracy is in its very essence a peaceful phenomenon. It is subject to attack both from within and without. The more advanced it becomes, the more prone it is to certain internal dangers. For example, a democracy like any other form of government must have a bureaucracy to carry out the day-to-day administration of the country. The chief characteristic of a bureaucracy is that it is impersonal and that it tends to judge all cases presented to it according to an established norm. In one sense this is a great advantage since it indicates that the civil service is working as efficiently as possible and that it is operating in a uniform and disinterested manner. In such cases the functionaries are not open to corruption by external forces or interests. On the other hand, bureaucratic uniformity can submerge the very quality which democracy is supposed to preserve--individuality. The rights of the individual to be treated as a separate case can be overlooked. Cary considers this to be the chief internal danger to democracy. It can only be avoided if the people and especially those in the government remember that, "Bureaucracy,... though essential to government, is itself unfitted to rule".¹⁰

10. Id., Ibid., p. 108.

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The right of free association, as Cary points out in Process of Real Freedom, must be jealously guarded for it is the strongest medium the people have for voicing their opinions. All democratic and most totalitarian governments are extremely sensitive to mass opinion and will control or direct the bureaucracy in accordance with it. The private citizen can only make his will felt by aligning himself with one or more pressure groups; not just the political party which claims his vote but also other associations which have a national voice and which are capable of expressing one or more aspects of his character.

Another internal weakness characteristic of a democracy is the waste which results from duplication of production or of production of unnecessary items in a state where no central planning is imposed and no control is maintained over the privately owned means of production. Cary feels however that the disadvantages of the system are more than balanced by the benefits accruing from free competition. He also makes a rather weak apology for labor strikes in saying:

... the waste due to strikes is set off, or should be set off, by greater liberty and greater prosperity in the workers.¹¹

In the light of the modern world's experience of labor unrest the true nature of things seems rather distant from what Cary

11. Id., Ibid., p. 147.

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suggests. Often the only factor which has saved an industry and its workers from economic suicide through strikes has been rather firm guidance on the part of the government.

There are also two main "external" dangers inherent in democratic society. The first, a weak foreign policy, devolves from the division of opinion characteristic of democratic representation. Instead of having a government and, to some extent, a nation fully unified behind a national foreign policy prepared in advance to meet every occasion, one has the situation of a country which is often indecisive in its foreign policy because it lacks the support of part of the electorate. This condition sometimes leaves it open to attack, especially since the defense policies are often not as fully coordinated as they might be. There is no way that Cary can conceive of to avoid this danger. As long as at least part of the electorate is opposed to some aspect of foreign or defense policy it will be too much to expect decisive action of the same standard as can be achieved by an autocracy. It is just one of the risks which democratic nations must sustain and can only be finally eliminated when all nations are converted to democracy.

The second external danger is the provocation of attack by dissemination of democratic propaganda in non-democratic states. The only hope for the democratic nation is to be aware of the threat and ready to meet it when it

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comes. Frequently a free nation which criticizes the oppressive rule of a totalitarian state provokes attack upon itself. The alternative to free expression of opinion, pacifism, is a weakness ultimately leading to destruction. For Cary, the analogy with the democratic state must be that of the strong and righteous man who neither hesitates to denounce tyranny nor fails to vigorously defend himself and his neighbors if they come under attack.

The next logical step from national democracy is to international or world democracy. Even though he was writing in 1938, with a second world war looming in the offing, Cary had considerable insight into the prospects for eventual world unity. He recognized nationalism for what it is--a worn-out concept to be put away with other antiquities like child labor and laissez-faire. He states:

Nationalism is called the foremost and deadliest enemy of democracy. It has caused more wars than religion or greed and it is the chief barriers to world democracy. It is the bitter enemy of truth, knowledge, of liberty and all its creative arts; and the excuse for hatred and lies.¹²

He is not referring merely to imperial jingoism. He is talking about the isolating and stultifying concepts of nationalism which prevent liberation of trade, freedom of intercourse, and raising of the standard of living throughout the world. To be sure, love of country is a form of nationalism which

12. Id., Ibid., p. 164.

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must never be and probably never can be obliterated. It is the good and noble aspect of nationalism and has nothing to deride it. But the economic and political nationalism which was understandable enough in the times of difficult communications has seen its day and under modern conditions is both inexcusable and untenable. Now, a quarter of a century after Cary adumbrated this belief we see its actual transformation into the European Common Market with its new departures into previously almost unimaginable realms of political and economic unity.

Isolationism, especially an isolationism based upon nationalist slogans, is today becoming a less and less viable mode of existence. Formerly it could be maintained on a basis of fear of the unknown but, as the unknown becomes more and more familiar through the media of modern communications, and as economic pressures fuse together once implacable enemies, isolationism and nationalism become more and more outmoded. One tends to support Cary's belief that world democracy and world organization, although still in a primitive condition, must eventually be accepted as readily and supported as wholeheartedly as are nationalist ideas at present. His statement that:

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... the world is nearer real security now than it was thirty years ago. For it is beginning to understand its own nature, the nature of its problem, and the means of peace. It is beginning to see that world security is exactly the same kind of problem, on a larger scale, as public security within a state, and that the same means must be used to get it, the establishment of a real law sovereign over the world.¹³

is essentially the creed and spirit in which the United Nations was conceived.

Occasionally, amid Cary's ideas on world and national politics, one stumbles upon something which is almost breathtaking in its naivete, as for example when he supports his arguments for the advent of world democracy by saying "The only powers which dream of world conquest are weak and divided".¹⁴ Perhaps in 1938 world communism was far from being so well-recognized a threat as it is today, but the looming menace of a rearmed Germany should have been apparent, at least to a student of world politics. That such a statement could be made then and not now is something of a proof of the passage quoted above. If the world does not seem to be a great deal closer to peace than it was in 1938, at least it cannot be denied that we now know who our enemies are, and are in little doubt as to the gravity of the problem.

The spirit of Power in Men, like Process of Real Freedom is one of enthusiasm and cleareyed hope for the future of

13. Id., Ibid., p. 178.

14. Id., Ibid., p. 187.

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the world in the midst of the threat of war. Cary is never afraid to make a new departure from currently accepted beliefs and here he runs true to form. The long century of peace and glory for the British Empire between 1812 and 1914 is for him a misleading accident of history. Sentimentalists look back upon it as the "golden age" when in actual fact only ignorance and incapacity on the part of world rulers to do worse prevented it from being a blood-bath. Once the means for global war became readily available and the rulers realized that no real power restrained them, they did not hesitate to use aggression to achieve their desires. Cary's views on the contemporary situation could be summed up in a modification of a line from Adonais, "We are not dead, we are wakened from a dream of life".

It has taken two world wars and the atom bomb to bring home to the democracies of the world that their only hope is in unified, firm and progressive action. Isolationism is not the answer to the problems of the world, neither is shallow nationalism, nor is a policy of appeasement. We realize now that survival and peace depend upon world organization of a type scarcely dreamed of twenty years ago. We have learned a bitter lesson, but, in learning it, the progress of democracy in the world has taken a step forward which can hardly yet be fully comprehended. We see everywhere, and most vividly of all in the U.S.S.R., the evolution of the democratic process in accordance with Cary's theories.

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In an age more marked by pessimism and sophistry than by faith and hope, he can only be described as a phenomenon. The more hopeful developments in recent international politics are manifestations in some respects of his hopes for the world, and are therefore living testimonies to his qualities of optimism and faith.

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The second, or what is here referred to as the "Political" trilogy, was written rather late in Cary's life. It includes Prisoner of Grace, Except the Lord and Not Honour More, which were written in 1952, 1953 and 1955 respectively. Their narrative order is somewhat inverted in that the events recounted in Except the Lord take place before those in Prisoner of Grace. Not Honour More terminates the trilogy of which the theme is the three-cornered love affair involving the lives of Chester Nimmo, Nina Latter and Jim Latter. The action covers a period of almost sixty-five years, from about 1860 to about 1925.

One is not justified in calling this trilogy "political" on the basis of plot alone. The plot, after all, is based upon the ancient business of two men loving one woman. Only in Prisoner of Grace does the plot deal with political action and then only in the sense of Nimmo's public actions being projected by Nina upon a screen of more personal events. The important factor in the trilogy as a whole, and the element which gives it its right to the sobriquet "political", is Cary's use of these works to demonstrate the political nature of human relationships. He shows that the word "political" can have peculiar meanings and far wider and more commonplace applications than is normally considered possible. The politics with which this trilogy deals are

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only partially, in fact almost incidentally, those of public life. By far the greatest emphasis is placed upon the politics of family life and the politics of love and hate between individuals. To appreciate this aspect of the work one must keep in mind a definition of the word politics which implies the handling or managing of human relationships and which extends to include the manipulation of the emotional and spiritual life of one person or group of persons by an individual.

Except the Lord, which covers approximately the first thirty years of Chester Nimmo's life is chiefly of interest in this discussion for two reasons. On the one hand it presents a picture of the politics of family life, specifically those of Nimmo's relationship with his elder sister Georgina. It also reveals the development of that intricate and often baffling political character which only seems to fully blossom forth after Nimmo's marriage to Nina. The story deals with Nimmo's childhood at home where his father is a farm foreman and an evangelistic lay preacher who literally and humbly believes in the doctrine of the Second Coming. The atmosphere is one of Dissenting piety, poverty and moral sturdiness. Nimmo's mother dies while he is very young and Georgina, the eldest in the family, is forced to drop out of school and assume the duties of mother and housekeeper to the other children. Richard, the brother, is the

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academically gifted member of the family who lolls about reading and finally manages to achieve a scholarship to Oxford. This is a tremendous attainment for a person of such humble background and the whole neighborhood hopefully anticipates great things of him. Instead, after taking a second-class degree, he resigns a good post in the University College in London to take an obscure job as a clerk. Finally he ends up back in the family cottage, reading and dreaming and ostensibly writing an endless literary work. Chester, as an ambitious and budding young politician is exasperated with his lack of grasp of the "real" interests in life. To him, Richard is a failure; a man who is intrigued with life and humanity rather than with the drive to power. It is only years later, after coming to understand the suffering and self-abnegation of his father and Georgina, that Chester sheds his crassly material desires and begins to understand the spiritual force that sustained them and Richard.

Chester grows up in poverty and drudgery and seems to be headed for a life of menial toil until he accidentally forms a relationship with an anarchist society following the doctrines of Proudhon. He educates himself largely by reading the socialist works with which the society provides him and, in time, becomes a unionist organizer among the local farm workers. He eventually leads an abortive transport-workers strike which takes place some ten years before the

great London dock strike of 1889. In fact, the ups and downs of his early adult years are associated with the fortunes of the contemporary labor movement. We see before us the formation of a young politician whose idealism first takes the form of anarchism, then socialism and in later years ripens into radical liberalism. Chester renounces his father's God after witnessing His failure to make a Second Coming on two different occasions and, more fundamentally, as a result of the lifetime of degradation and drudgery to which religion would eventually lead him. He revolts against the idea of Christian acceptance of his humiliating lot. After having espoused the cause of socialism he says:

I had rejected God and with God, the love, the charity, the assured faith in goodness that I had learnt in my own home. Now under another name, that of humanity, He was restored to his full grandeur and majesty as ruler of the world. For the miseries of that world were shown as the just and inevitable punishment of those who had turned their faces from that fundamental law of brotherhood. How should the world have joy which lived in joyless fear for its possessions?¹

On this basis the movement gives him what he wants--release from drudgery, education, a cause to fight for--and elevates him to the status of a union official. It is only after the strike that he helps to instigate is broken that he suffers disillusionment. He is directly responsible for the beating up of a defecting union member and is forced to

1. Joyce Cary, Except the Lord., p. 141.

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lie under oath and to cause a friend of his also to lie for him in order to save himself from prosecution. The horror of these incidents and the moral shock, as well as the breaking of the strike, hurls him into the depths of despair. From this low point, his eyes are reopened to the significance of the moral values that he had rejected.

Just as the theme of the book is Chester's rejection and final re-acceptance of grace, so the climax of the story is achieved with the realization of his error and the apotheosis of his motivation. Henceforth he is a man transformed. The repulsive and drearily commonplace young bolshevik caterpillar is changed into the brilliant political butterfly who can always base his actions in morality. We are, however, not released from the tension of perplexity, for Nimmo's character becomes henceforth an enigma. His every action is colored with the cast of morality and we are left considering the question of whether he is using his religious conversion to deceive the world or to deceive himself, or whether the moral conviction which he invariably displays is genuine.

The title of the novel is taken from one of the psalms, "Except the Lord build the house, their labor is but lost that build it", and this essentially is what Nimmo claims as his guiding principle after his return to the faith. Never again does he act in a manner which cannot be

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given moral explanation at least by himself, and for this reason he is even more exasperating and provoking to his enemies. His sister Georgina renounces marriage to a wealthy man whom she loves and eventually dies of consumption as a result of her determination to remain and nurse her dying father. Nimmo publicly admits his debt to her moral example and claims to base his own conversion upon it, an act which drives his political enemies into a frenzy. The more they accuse him of being a liar and a hypocrite, the serener he appears. From this time onward he has the power of baffling and frustrating his enemies with the belief that his "strength is as the strength of ten because his heart is pure!"

There are other evidences of Cary's theory of politics besides those which directly affect Nimmo. For example, the business about a drunkard who regularly made a nuisance of himself while Nimmo's father was trying to conduct his Methodist services. The man is too dangerous to be told to stop even by any of the many neighbors who disapprove of his actions. At last, a neighbor-woman who had been in the habit of cooking a small piece of meat for the drunkard's mother each week failed to do so one week, giving as a reason that her head ached as a result of his noisy conduct. In this way, pressure was brought to bear upon him via his mother, and the situation was restored. Cary describes an incident very like this one in Britain and West Africa and

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uses it to illustrate the technique of diplomatic manipulation which a politician or colonial administrator must employ in seeking to further his own interests peacefully. The object lesson is not lost on young Nimmo. His besetting interest throughout his life is influence over people and how to attain it i.e. the theory and practice of politics. Here and later, even in his relationships with his wife, he never misses an opportunity to perfect himself in the arts of his calling.

Being an observant child, Nimmo gains a good basic political education from observing Georgina, the family autocrat, in action. She handles both the younger children and her father with consummate skill and shows a maturity beyond her years. When something is amiss between herself and the grocer for whom she works, she quietly leaves his employ showing that:

... she was a girl of character who did not make a foolish fuss, and knew how to keep her self-respect without the indignity of public accusations or the unreasonableness of bringing [the grocer] to public shame.²

In other words, she demonstrates the political art of avoiding public scandal and the principle of not making enemies unnecessarily. Through the ups and downs of his family relationships Chester also learns that "The allies of yesterday are implacable enemies of to-day, and after a long history of events, friends again tomorrow".³

2. Id., Ibid., p. 56.

3. Id., Ibid., p. 97.

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In addition to his observations of family life, Nimmo has more than ample opportunity to observe the motives and factors which influence large masses of the population. It is the time when the labor movements were still embryonic but daily struggling to move forward. He witnesses the effects of the miner's strikes in the eighteen-sixties in which not just men but women and children starved to death, when only the charity of the common people represented by the "chapel" movement kept the soup-kitchens operating; when drunkenness, poverty, social disruption and degradation were the common lot of the working classes. That he should become a socialist and a radical is a foregone conclusion. In accordance with Cary's political theory, as an elected representative Nimmo becomes an expression of one aspect of the united will of the people who elected him. He must be, like that will, reactionary and socialistic.

Except the Lord is written in the "flashback" form: Nimmo recalls the events of his childhood and early manhood from a point just before his death as an old man. The narrative ends with his moral conversion. The next volume, Prisoner of Grace, deals with the events of his life after his marriage to Nina and with the flowering of his political career. He becomes a protégé for Nina's radical aunt and marries Nina after she has become pregnant by her erratic cousin, Jim Latter. The marriage into a family of gentry is

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a major stepping-stone in Nimmo's rise in the field of national politics. Over a career that spans thirty years he rises from being a small-town Methodist preacher to become a fiery young radical M.P., then a cabinet minister. He is touted as a future Prime Minister just before the post-war crash of his party sends him back into the oblivion from whence he is trying to re-emerge as the story breaks off. The narrative is recounted by Nina and ends at the same point as that of Except the Lord--at the height of the domestic crisis whose tragic denouement is revealed in Not Honour More.

The Chester Nimmo of Prisoner of Grace is a fully-matured personality. He has left his youthful doubts and enthusiasms behind him and has set his foot upon the path which will lead him to the peak of his career. The secrets of his existence are henceforth hidden from us. We have neither glimpses nor full-scale confessions of his inner thoughts by which to judge his actions as we had in Except the Lord. He has attained that sine qua non of political success-self-sufficiency, and presents to the world an impenetrable surface apparently unified around an unshakeable conviction of moral righteousness. Even his wife is baffled by the workings of his mind, for he seems to see events in the light of an inner experience which qualifies and modifies them in a manner incomprehensible to the world at large. From time to time the veil almost seems to slip, revealing him as

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a hypocrite or a megalomaniac, but he always comes to the rescue by refusing to admit that he recognizes the evidence presented before his eyes. We are never sure whether we are observing the struggles of a righteous and misunderstood man or a slick performance by a wily political manipulator.

As his wife, Nina learns very early that married life is a political education. Even before the honeymoon is over she realizes vividly for the first time that courtesy oils the wheels of diplomacy and that, in a match like hers, where love is lacking, diplomacy is the factor which makes life bearable and almost pleasant. Her relationship with him actually is in three stages. In the first, she comes to know him through marriage and finds that his personality and background are almost incompatible with her own. She is still romantically in love with Jim Latter and finally, feeling that Nimmo's influence over her is becoming too pervasive, she decides to run off to Jim. The control which Nimmo has established over her is too great however, and she turns back from the railway station in acknowledgement of her defeat. Essentially, it is Nimmo's assurance of his moral righteousness that has conquered her confusion.

She then enters the second stage of her relationship with him in which she becomes an ardently "political" wife doing her utmost to support his interests during his sojourn in London. She has become a willing slave, desirous only of

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being obediently compliant in the interests of domestic harmony. The third stage results in a way from this feeling of enforced submissiveness, for as Nina finds more and more evidence of the harsher aspects of Nimmo's politicking she comes to hate him and to fear the effect he is having on herself and her son. She feels that Nimmo's engineering of Jim's exile, his destruction of Goold and his apparent part in the Brome case are indications of a ruthlessness that will eventually destroy her as well. She flees to her family home but, when Nimmo sends his physician to tell her that her absence will seriously affect his health, she admits defeat and once more is drawn back into the field of his magnetic force. She even is able to laugh at her terrors and, as a result, undergoes a "conversion" once more to his way of thinking. She comes to understand the political fact that a situation which one day is horrifying and utterly unacceptable may, with the passage of time, be seen in another light and become quite acceptable to all. Most important, she comes to admit that "He was, in fact, far wiser and deeper in his 'political' idea of human ties than I had been in my romantic one".⁴ She sees that the marriage relationship is composed of a thousand factors, other than romantic love, as intricately interwoven as those which keep a state within a union.

4. Id., Prisoner of Grace, p. 315.

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The passage of time and Nimmo's cleverness have made the bond unbreakable. Nina's tragedy stems from the fact that, even when she finally divorces Nimmo and flees to Jim Latter, she can never really free herself from his power.

Nimmo, on the other hand, is the protagonist in the action. His reasons for marrying her are based upon the requirements of his political career. Initially he needs her money to get his campaign under way. Her family connections are equally important as he moves from the county to the federal plane. Finally, her presence in his London household lends an air of prestige which he could obtain by no other means and which is vitally important to the "image" which he must create. Added to these factors, of course, is the powerful physical attraction which she has for him, but basically he plans his marriage as an integral part of his political career.

He goes about establishing control over Nina with the same care and in much the same way that a governor seeks to gain permanent control of a subjugated state. He convinces her of his moral rectitude and of the rightness of his cause. He extolls the virtue of loyalty and makes much of the idea that he is surrounded by enemies. Thereafter if she wishes to break away she can only do so by being disloyal and morally wrong. When she is docile and compliant he praises and flatters her and gives her little tasks and responsibilities

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which will make her feel part of the inner circle. When she rebels or criticizes him he treats her with such scorn and contempt that she, lacking moral and intellectual defenses of her own hastens to humble herself in the interests of restoring peace to the domestic state.

Nimmo establishes his influence over his son and daughter as subtly as he had over Nina. He works politics even into their bedtime stories, showing himself and his party always in the right, the political opponents always in the wrong. He exerts his powers as an orator to win them to his side. Eventually he loses Tom, but he never loses the support of Sally. Nina, faced with such opposition and surrounded by the spies which Nimmo has set over her, is like a state riddled with informers and deserted by its army. She can do nothing but succumb. Especially after the crisis in which she tries to kill herself as a result of Nimmo's refusal to send Tom to a private school, she becomes less and less his confidant and increasingly a servant of his whims.

Nimmo himself is what might be called a natural politician in that the subtleties of political life come to him almost instinctively. As a liberal and a radical reformer he always travels third class even though he insists that his wife travel first. He builds homely touches into his wife's Red Cross speeches to womens' clubs that will help to create the image he desires. He even wears nightshirts

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instead of "upper class" pyjamas. However, success has a modifying influence upon him. He moves not toward conservatism but away from his old, violent radicalism. He begins to go to church rather than chapel. He is bitter and resentful of the new "extremists" in his party who, one suspects, are only young radicals as he once was himself.

The major crisis of his political life hinges upon whether or not he will join a pacifist group within the Cabinet just previous to World War I. Pacifism has two main attractions to him. It is easily reconcilable with his religious views and politically it may be the key to the Prime Ministership. There is a strong pacifist movement afoot in the country and he knows that if he should succeed in drawing a sufficiently large section of the cabinet with him he could precipitate a general election that he is almost sure to win. He makes a public pledge never to sit as a member of a "war" government. Then, at the crucial moment, war starts. He is offered an important ministry and accepts it. Even Nina is caught unawares by his sudden change of policy. He explains it all away by saying that in time of crisis no one has the right to hold back from the national interest. He has been "deeply misled" and only the dastardly German invasion of Belgium has made him realize the enormity of the threat which faces England. We are faced here again with the question of whether Nimmo has betrayed his principles and his

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party. Cary seems to tell us that Nimmo has really demonstrated more political insight and has acted more realistically by far than those who shout "traitor" at him.

Similarly, when Nimmo ruins his old colleague, Ted Goold, by bringing up an ancient scandal against him, he is accused of baseness and treachery. He explains his action by pointing out the gravity of the times: the war could be won or lost by either side and the side whose confidence in its government wavers first is sure to lose. To him, the future of the country is at stake and he has seized any weapon at hand to defend himself in a time of mortal danger. To him, men like Goold and Jim Latter are anachronisms. They have failed to keep pace with the times and have become victims of progress. Much as Nina loves Jim, she is forced to admit the truth of this argument and to realize that Nimmo has far greater perspicacity than any one of them.

If Nimmo has a political flaw it is that he gradually loses his own personality and becomes more and more a political machine. He ceases to be a radical, a defender of the downtrodden masses and becomes an autocrat. Toward the end of the war Nina says:

He showed me not only his enormous ambition and self-confidence, his contempt for the "masses" and fear of the 'mob', his distrust of all his colleagues, his jealousy of the Prime Minister, his belief that 'freedom' had gone too far and the country needed 'strong government'...⁵

5. Id., Ibid., p. 314.

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This in itself is no indictment of his character. It merely proves that a man who gives himself body and soul to the study and practice of politics throughout his life must eventually become a creature of his own desires. The battle for survival has been so intense and so prolonged that he has not been able to retain his original values. Self-preservation has come before idealism. As Nina says of him after his post-war defeat:

... he really was alone. It was impossible any longer to reach him. He had, so to speak, in thirty years of war, made such devastation round himself that to talk to him at all was like calling across a waste full of broken walls and rusty wire and swamps of poisoned water; full of dead bodies too, like that of poor Brome.⁶

The message that Cary seems to be trying to transmit is that a man can be very honest and idealistic and be a politician, but not for long.

The simplest of the three main characters in this trilogy is Jim Latter. In actuality he is not a 'political' person at all. Cary contrasts his simple and rather priggish personality with the complexity of Nina and Nimmo. He is an example of what Cary considers to be a politically retarded mentality. After he is sent to Africa to avoid having to pay his debts he becomes the champion of one of the local cannibal tribes and talks endless claptrap about "nature's

6. Id., Ibid., p. 334.

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gentlemen" who know how to live a better life than "any of your professors". He is in fact a believer in the "noble savage" myth which Cary so ardently decries; a proponent of the idea that man was a great deal happier and better off in the savage state. Eventually, he and his family get up a committee to look into the interests of his "exploited" tribe and he manages to bring a few of them to England at his own expense to show everyone what splendid chaps they are. Unfortunately, the splendid chaps like civilization so much and find it so much more interesting than tribal life that they refuse to go home. The Colonial Office has to deport them, and they leave, villifying Jim Latter as an oppressor. He thinks that he is protecting the interests of the downtrodden when actually he is only hindering progress.

Nina says of him:

(Jim may be thought very Tory, but he was really not political at all--he simply followed his convictions and instincts).⁷

He represents archaism in political thought: blind conservation of old traditions coupled with a J.S. Mill-type concept that liberty means freedom from all restraint. Jim is that curious political animal, the conservative anarchist. He is conservative in that he cannot keep pace with new developments and new ideas. He is an anarchist in his opposition

7. Id., Ibid., p. 230.

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to the restraint and guidance exercised upon any minority by the government. The incredible anomaly is that he is proud to proclaim his Liberalism and his membership in an old Liberal family. If Jim Latter's character is considered only from a political viewpoint the inconsistencies far outweigh the rationalities.

For example, he talks all sorts of nonsense about Nimmo's political practices, of which he really knows very little, and yet refuses to recognize Nimmo's real and immediately evident misconduct with his own wife in his own house. Also, he has a conception, ironically similar to Nimmo's fixation about an upper-class autocratic entente, that all politicians are in league together to rule the country, regardless of party interests. He sees crookedness and chicanery in every political act. To him, Nimmo is the great manipulator operating unseen and devious forces even when his actions appear to be most innocent. Despite this deep-rooted conviction of the Machiavellian nature of all politicians, his own experience in Africa prompts him to say:

I have been a soldier and do not hesitate to say about half [the] patrols could be avoided by use of more political officers and attending to their advice, being men on the spot.⁸

In other words, the politician usually has a better grasp of the facts than does the layman and is therefore better

8. Cary, Not Honour More, p. 150.

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qualified to govern. These and incongruities in Jim Latter's thoughts on the subject of politics make it impossible to give him serious consideration solely as a person of political significance. His importance to the trilogy stems in fact from the apolitical nature of his mentality. He is the foil against which Cary illustrates the true complexities of political action.

Not Honour More, the volume which deals most explicitly with him and which terminates the trilogy, covers the period just prior to the death of Nimmo and Nina. Latter writes it from a police cell where he is awaiting trial for Nina's murder. He tells of the events of the general strike which followed the war and upon which Nimmo, now a down and out ex-Cabinet Minister, as well as the communists and the fascists tried to capitalize. Latter was in charge of a special police force, one of whom severely injured the local communist leader in trying to arrest him. The special policeman is brought to trial and sentenced to three years' imprisonment. Latter, already enraged at what he considers to be a flagrant injustice to one of his own men, later learns that evidence which could have saved him was suppressed by Nimmo and Nina for reasons of political advancement. Nimmo, faced with the facts, dies of a heart attack brought on by terror and over-exertion. Latter cuts Nina's throat with his own razor.

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The flaws in Latter's character which prompt him to do this pitiful and horrifying act are twofold. In the first place, he is a political ignoramus, eager to see evil where there is none and blind to the real values of tact and diplomacy. The second flaw is summed up in the title of the book, Not Honour More, which is of course taken from the line in Lovelace's poem, To Lucasta, on Going to the Wars. Jim Latter acts according to his sense of honour and tradition in interpreting what he finds good or bad in society. Unfortunately, he also believes himself to be a man of forthrightness and action, a simple old-soldier who is ready to act as judge and jury and to do execution upon anyone if he feels he can thereby help stem the rush of society toward moral bankruptcy. He feels that, having found incontrovertible proof that his wife and Nimmo contributed to a dishonest action and that Nimmo has been philandering with her under his very nose, he has no recourse left but to kill them. He thinks that in this way he will demonstrate a degree of honesty and noble action that will be an example to all England. The fact that he loves Nina more than anything on earth, and she him, and knows her to be a weak, easily-influenced character does not deter him. In this and in all his actions he sees himself as the model of honest and ethical conduct.

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At one point Nimmo shrieks at him:

What you are is a fool. That's what you are. A fool and a fool and a fool. An everlasting unlimited goddam wooden-headed fool. And I've had enough of your pistol waving. I'm sick of the whole lot of you. For God's sake make a finish. Go away--or shoot. Of course we didn't tell you anything. Because we knew you'd get it all wrong, because you are our biggest headache. Because you are a kept man. Because you have to be kept by people with some glimmer of common sapience--kept or you'd starve.⁹

All of which is essentially true. Latter's honour would have received an insurmountable shock if he had ever learned of the manipulations by his family to pay his debts and keep him out of trouble. It is only these manipulations which leave him free to carry on about dishonest politicians and corruption and heartlessness in the administration. The subject becomes a real mania with him and, driven eventually to the point where he sees rottenness in every aspect of public and private life, he performs his last, sacrificial, tragic action.

Jim Latter is Cary's picture of the too-honest man, the superficially civilized man hemmed in by half-misunderstood traditions and archaic concepts of social conduct. In the complexity and intricacy of modern society he is an anachronism, adept at riding, sailing and shooting, but badly educated and with no grasp of the functioning of democratic government. He reacts to a given situation in accordance

9. Id., Ibid., p. 164.

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with his family's beliefs, his schoolboy idealism, his regiment's traditions and his personal, deep-seated prejudices. Sometimes his reaction is startlingly accurate in its instinctual acumen. It is rarely based upon reason. As a person he is far more admirable than Nimmo. He is also far more pitiful. He is a human being ill-equipped to conduct his affairs in the modern world, who blunders along tilting against windmills, blind to his real perils, lashing out at what he thinks is deviousness and cunning, coming finally to a tragic culmination of all his frustrations. Jim Latter does the wrong thing for the right reason. The reverse is true of Chester Nimmo.

Not Honour More deals with the events of Nimmo's life after the collapse of his party and his career. His political maneuvering, once so effective and important in the national scene, is now futile. He is ignored in Downing Street, where once he was met with obsequities. Even his anxious offers to serve in a nationalist government without pay are met with polished boredom. He is reduced to starting again from the beginning, even as low as attempting to make himself the leader of the local section of a national strike. He complains:

We have been flouted and ignored--the men who brought this country through the agony of war--the most tremendous, the most bloody in the history of man.¹⁰

10. Id., Ibid., p. 166.

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It is strange that a man of Nimmo's perspicacity should fail to recognize the old order changing. The ideas which created the war, the idealism that saw the nation through the war, are now hated and despised. The nation feels cheated and let-down when, after four years of sacrifice and horror, the new Jerusalem is not achieved. It wants a new government and a new concept of society that will lift it out of the despair and defeatism engendered by pre-war governments and pre-war policies. It is Nimmo's tragedy that he fails to see this, to recognize that history has swept on and left him behind forever.

In his desperate eagerness to regain power at any cost, Nimmo makes the fatal error of destroying a man in order to further his own interests. His excuse is that if the truth about the Maufe business had been known it would have been misunderstood and would have prevented him from achieving power and saving the nation. As it turns out, he never had a hope of achieving power in any case and it is his dishonesty in the Maufe affair which triggers the tragic climax. It is Cary's thesis that a politician's deviousness must be judged in the light of his integrity. In this instance Nimmo's action is completely wrong, no matter how he excuses it. As Cary says:

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... the destruction of one individual or a million are equally great crimes, even for the best of purposes.¹¹

Up to this point there was always an excuse for his actions in that they were in the interest of the nation and that he did them without thought for personal gain. In this case he is a private individual once more, acting purely for his own advancement. He deliberately suppresses evidence that could have saved Maufe, as his letters prove, and, worse, he involves Nina in his wrong-doing. Nina knows eventually that she cannot go on accepting Latter's love under the shadow of a lie and deliberately gives him the letters which she could easily have destroyed, an action that leads to the destruction of all three.

The closest assessment it is possible to make of Nimmo's true character is one based upon Cary's own concept of the politician. In the introduction to Prisoner of Grace he says:

Nimmo has been called a crook. He is not meant for a crook. A crook is essentially a man who is out for himself, who has no principles. Crooks are uninteresting people because their range is so narrow. In state politics they are especially dull. The question had to be how does a real politician, the handler, the manager of people, who is also a man of principle, keep his principles? How far do his ends justify his means?¹²

This last is an astounding question to come from a man of Cary's idealism, but it is revelatory of his approach to

11. Id., Politics and Personal Morality, p. 6.

12. Id., Prisoner of Grace, p. 5.

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politics as a practical science. In another essay on the subject he examines the traditional treatment of the politicians in fiction and finds that whereas the story-book politician is almost invariably treated as a crook, the real-life one is a much more acceptable person. In fact, there exists a dichotomy of thought on the subject. People automatically label the fictional politician as unsavory, but they are usually quite ready to admit the good qualities of real ones. To Cary, then, the real question in politics is:

... when is a statesman entitled to break promises, to change a policy which, often, is the one he was elected to carry out? And an even bigger and more formidable question is this: when is he entitled to deceive?¹³

The concept that one individual, particularly an elected representative, has a right to deceive anyone else is rather staggering. But in Cary's view the practice of day-to-day politics involves the use of deceit that is not necessarily motivated by dishonesty. For example, the press may ask questions of a politician that are embarrassing or downright dangerous to the welfare of the country to answer directly at that moment. The politician is therefore forced to dissemble, to give equivocal answers which he knows may very probably be misleading.

13. Id., Political and Personal Morality, p. 6.

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The only criterion of judgment which may be validly applied in such cases is that of integrity. If the political leader has acted in the best interests of the country his actions must be accepted as just and honorable. If he has acted only in the interests of the party or of himself his actions cannot be condoned. The breaking of a promise by such a leader may often be forced upon him by circumstances, and every mature person recognizes that change and compromise are necessary facts of life. A democracy is based upon the concept of faith in elected representatives. Without this faith it could no more function than could a bank which had lost the confidence of its depositors. Most people know and accept this in their ideas of real politicians, but forget it when they are considering the actions of fictional ones.

Cary sums up the position with these words:

Before we call any statesman a fool or a crook we should ask what problems he faced, what kind of people he had to handle, what kind of support he got, what pressure he withstood, what risks he took.

But our final question will be still 'Was he an honest man?'.¹⁴

This is the question which provides the basic tension in the political trilogy. Was Chester Nimmo an honest man? George Woodcock, writing in the Queen's Quarterly has this to say about him:

14. Id., Ibid., p. 32.

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In human terms the cost of that journey to political power is terrible; it involves the adoption of causes, not for their rectitude, but for the political capital that can be wrung from them, it involves the jettisoning of ideals at the psychological moment when they may become embarrassing, the abandonment of friends when their usefulness has been exhausted, the desecration and destruction of family relationships in the cause of personal advancement.¹⁵

There is only one thing wrong with this approach--there is no real proof that it is true. It is what might be called the "Jim Latter" approach and for that reason is suspect from the start. It must be remembered that despite Latter's hot-eyed accusations in the vein quoted above, Nimmo, even in his memoirs, never allows any corroborating evidence to exist, and even his own wife, while she may have the most agonizing doubts, never can bring herself to state that Nimmo is a crooked politician. The one out-and-out piece of dishonesty of which she is certain, the Maufe business and the deal with the Communists during the strike, takes place after Nimmo's career is finished. In effect, at this time, he is no longer an effective politician, but a has-been trying futilely to make a comeback. This is proven by his actions.

Nina has no doubts that he is a philanderer and an exasperatingly selfish man, but to the very end she is unwilling to accuse him of political chicanery. The reason for this is essentially one of the political facts of life and, indeed, of life in general that Cary is trying to make,

15. George Woodcock, Citizens of Babel: a Study of Joyce Cary, p. 244.

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namely that a given set of facts is interpreted differently by different people. It is possible that Nimmo really believes that his actions are always morally justified, that he is an honest man who acts according to a set of principles unknown to the common herd. This would accord perfectly with Cary's concept of the political leader who is sometimes wrapped in an air of deceit because he must conceal his true purposes for the common good. Two things that we do know are that Jim Latter's judgment is demonstrably faulty and that Nina's is almost too easily swayed by her intuitions. Although Nimmo's innocence is far from proven, it would take more than the evidence of these two to find him guilty.

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Process of Real Freedom is a pamphlet rather than a full-size book. It was written in 1943 during the darkest period of World War II and it contains a rather cryptic passage in which Cary states:

I write with diffidence on a complex subject, because I write sooner than I had meant. But I am told that I ought to write now, even at the risk of overstating a case, which is the usual fault of premature hypothesis.¹

From this passage one infers that the writing of Process of Real Freedom was prompted by two motives. On the one hand, Cary indicates that he had intended eventually to set down his theories regarding the evolutionary process of democratic government and on the other hand he says that he has been prompted by external forces to take up the task sooner than he had intended. From the section quoted above and from certain other passages it is possible to postulate that these external influences had their origin in the government and that Cary was urged to write this pamphlet as an encouragement to the faltering morale of the besieged island. This theory gains credence as one comes to realize the liberal, optimistic and deeply democratic nature of Cary's political philosophy.

1. Joyce Cary, Process of Real Freedom, p. 4.

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Like The Case for African Freedom, Process of Real Freedom was created as a vehicle for a specific argument. Here Cary says to the free world, "Take hope! Although your efforts seem to be in vain you are really on the path of progress". In an age when it was the vogue to condemn national leaders for their lack of foresight in failing to prepare for the second World War Cary refuses absolutely to participate in the criticism. To him the Western statesmen, in abiding by the agreements made within the League of Nations, were representative of the true spirit of the times. It was not fear of war or war-weariness that caused them to diminish the national defense budgets but rather a belief in democracy as a power for peace in the world. To be sure, this faith was unreasoning and in many ways unreasonable, and when the peace collapsed it gave way to a violent pessimism. It is this pessimism which Cary is trying to counteract. He is attempting to stabilize the pendulum-like swings of popular emotion, to make people realize that where they were wrong in being over-optimistic before, they are now equally wrong in being over-pessimistic. The approach to freedom is an evolutionary process and the democracies are on the right track if only they will have faith and forge ahead.

As Cary sees it, the pessimism of the forties is the result of a misunderstanding of the nature of democracy. Most people think of democracy as a form of government

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operating solely through the medium of elected representatives. Furthermore, it is generally regarded as a good, but not necessarily a final, form of government. To Cary this view is far from being optimistic enough. He sees democracy as the final form of government, just as the true Communist foresees the government of the proletariat as the final stage in world organization. He says quite plainly:

What I suggest is that a certain kind of government may be, in a crude form, a final kind of government; that all nations tend inevitably, though by winding paths, toward that form of government. That this kind of democracy is essentially peace seeking. That the world, therefore, may look forward with confidence to an international peace founded upon the most solid base, a universal unfitness and disinclination for organized warfare.²

This is an intriguing statement and one which merits thorough consideration. Where Marxism has carefully worked out the progress of mankind through the stages of revolution, dictatorship and finally free communism, Cary opposes the claim that democracy will in the end prevail. His belief that permanent peace will eventually result from sheer inability to wage war could be regarded as an ingenious excuse for the lack of military preparedness on the part of the Allies in 1939. Taken in the light of our own experience, it seems to give some hope for a solution of the perpetual deadlock at Geneva. If it were argued that the events of the

2. Id., Ibid., p. 4.

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nineteen-fifties have shown Cary's theory to be hopelessly naive it could equally well be argued that, like the communist countries which are still under the rule of totalitarian governments because they have not yet achieved the conditions necessary for free Communism, the democracies are still entangled in wars and threats of wars because they and the rest of the world have still a long way to go on the path to perfect democracy. For the moment it would be brash to condemn Cary's hypothesis on the evidence of the conflicts which have taken place in the world since he wrote this book. For, if the nations of the world have shown themselves to be far from the perfection to which he aspires, there have at least been significant developments, as, for example, the forthcoming European political union, which attest that his hypothesis may have been sound.

Apart from the error of regarding democracy only as a partially effective form of government in an inevitably strife-ridden world, Cary feels that the commonly-held view of the democratic process is also faulty. Democratic government is not "people governing themselves". It is government by officers elected for that purpose by popular vote and answerable to the public for their actions. That is to say, rather than having complete absence of restraint, there is an agreement by the populace to place themselves under the guidance and control of a governing body. The essential

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means of guaranteeing that that body will carry out the will of the people is the elective vote. But as modern society has become more complex, new and powerful forms for the expression of the popular will have evolved.

Everyone is familiar with the influence of lobbyists in modern government. The important aspect of such pressure groups as labor unions, professional associations, clubs and societies, even of the most non-political nature, is that each one of them represents a different aspect of the individual. As Cary says "One man is not wholly represented by any one society."³ Nor is it possible for him to be wholly represented by his vote for a given political party. Often he loses his vote when his party is defeated or else the party, while generally presenting a platform to which he can subscribe, may also carry out legislation of which he does not approve. Therefore to depend purely upon the elective vote as an expression of public approval or disapproval is a mistake. Yet, the individual is still able to express his desires and to bring pressures to bear upon the government in a multitude of ways through the medium of the associations to which he inevitably belongs. No modern government would dare ignore these official and unofficial voices of public feeling. They express from day to day the temper of the nation, and the government must guide its

3. Id., Ibid., p. 5.

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policies by them. If an individual is a conservative, he can join an association whose common denominator is the conservatism of its members. If he is against the possession of nuclear weapons, he can also find a group whose collective voice will effectively express his opinion. Thus, every aspect of the individual's character can find expression through one medium or another. In fact, the true process of government consists in the execution by parliament of the demands of the various pressure groups in the nation. The individual is therefore actually better and more truly represented through the medium of associations than he is by his simple vote for a rather nebulous thing called a political party.

As always, Cary's intense concern is with the individual, and in this he reveals himself to be completely anti-Hegelian. For him the State is an abstraction. It lacks force, meaning, reality, without the individual. Without the individual it does not even exist. All it is is an expression of the will of a group of individuals and the very idea of a National Idea or a National Soul is a fallacy. Democratic government was not called into being by any "world historical process", it is purely a pragmatic attempt on the part of a group of individuals to retain control of their own political affairs. As always, Cary recognizes and asserts the essential fact of democratic as opposed to

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Hegelian theories of government: the individual created it and the individual is responsible for it. In a democracy the individual successfully demands that his right to express his will be respected, but he must consequently bear the burden of responsibility for his choices of action.

Cary regards the rise of unions and societies of all kinds as part of the process of real freedom, not as chance phenomena. Real freedom, as he observed both in The Case for African Freedom and Power in Men is the ability to do as one likes rather than a mere absence of restraint. He says:

"Complete freedom does not exist and is, in fact, a mere notion."⁴ but every person is continuously striving to increase the amount of freedom that he has. As an individual his chances of success are greatly handicapped due to many factors including ignorance, folly and the opposing demands of others, whereas as a member of a group they are vastly strengthened. The realization i.e. the actual putting into practise, of this fact has taken centuries and even yet is far from perfect, but it is a phenomenon which must and will eventually evolve in every society because it is an expression of the basic power which is natural to every man--the power of the free will. Even in a slave society the individual has at least the power to live or die, the power of free

4. Id., Ibid., p. 7.

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thought if not of free speech and the power of passive disobedience. That these are enormously potent factors cannot be denied. In our own day we can observe the tremendous efforts made by totalitarian powers to control these factors by means of slogans, propaganda, brainwashing. If merely beating or terrorizing people into submission were suitable or efficient means of control, the totalitarian governments would rely on these means. That they do not do so is ample proof of Cary's contention that the power of the individual is an innate and potent force which cannot be destroyed, except by death, and which is the basic factor in every society.

In regard to the present-day distaste for strikes, Cary also has an answer. Strikers and the unions which represent them are looked upon as being supremely egotistical; selfish at the expense of society. Cary holds that if they were anything else they would not be doing their job. It is the object of the association to present a common need or desire. It can only be truly democratic, truly representative by presenting the demands of its members. It is the duty of the union leaders to put the consideration of the members' desires before all others. The government, which directs its policies in the light of information received from the various pressure groups, must decide what is best and suitable for the nation as a whole, but the club

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committees, the presidents of societies, the union stewards, have no such choice. They are elected to represent the wishes of the group and they must do it to the best of their ability. On the other hand, the demagogic union official who would attempt to lead his organization into a mutually ruinous strike must always face the eventuality that he may be deposed by a membership enraged over the loss of its earnings.

The process of acquiring freedom cannot be stopped in the modern world. The only thing which can retard it is ignorance and lack of education, and in the modern society the worker must be trained for his task. Once he is trained he becomes too valuable to lose i.e. his work is something which the state must have. By denying his work to the employer he can bring pressure to bear upon the government. Thus the state is obliged to train and educate the worker and by so doing it places in the individual's hands the power of exercising his will and thereby of moving toward a government which is an expression of the will of the people--a democracy.

Cary states his belief in the free nature of man when he says:

Man therefore is free because he has power to work, to plan, to fight. This power is inborn and indestructible. We can call it... a force of nature.⁵

5. Id., Ibid., p. 8.

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The process of democratic evolution is a result of this quality in mankind. It depends however upon the right of free association. Human beings must have the right to form associations, unions or clubs, each of which will express and further a specific interest held in common by the group. Development toward democracy may be temporarily inhibited by the restriction of the right of free association but, as has been noted above, the interests of the people must come in the end to be recognized. Sooner or later the various individuals who have an interest in common will bring their desires to the attention of the government. If strikes are forbidden, they may resort to work slowdowns or, on the other hand, the professional classes may exercise a form of boycott that will bring their wishes to light.

The actual state of real democracy may be avoided almost indefinitely by oligarchs astute enough to maintain themselves in power. Cary does not claim that the tendency toward democratic government is all-powerful, that it will sweep all before it as the advent of pure communism is supposed to do. He merely claims that it is a natural tendency, that it springs automatically from the nature of man who will always associate with kindred spirits to express a common desire. He also postulates, optimistically, that it will in the end prevail as a form of final government and that that government will be a peaceful one. As he says:

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Freedom was born without a name. It began its work before man was known, and it continues upon it, in silence and secrecy, even when no one dares to speak of it.⁶

In Cary's opinion the apparently irresponsible lack of preparation for either World War on the part of the democracies is an example of this power working toward peace. It is incorrect to think that the democracies have learned their lesson, that pacifism is cured, that they will never again be caught in a state of unpreparedness. To him, pacifism in the sense of a tendency toward lack of preparation for war is a characteristic of democracy as the end form of government.

He says:

Ordinary men, living under a democracy,... are also inclined to seek any excuse for avoiding the wasteful expense of preparing for a war that may never happen. In fact, if they avert one war by preparation, they almost invariably say that the preparations were unnecessary: that war would not have happened in any case.⁷ And they will refuse to prepare for the next one.⁷

In support of this theory he argues that the majority of the population of any country are against war at any given time. The only way they can be stimulated to active support of a war effort is by being convinced of the moral rectitude of the war and of the necessity for it. The presentation of such ideas depends upon sheer demagogery and is most largely

6. Id., Ibid., p. 9.

7. Id., Ibid., p. 13.

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successful in a dictatorship or an oligarchy. In a democracy there is always a faction which has the privilege of publicly disagreeing and opposing the war movement. And there is always a certain element who will oppose the war effort on the grounds of waste and expense.

Cary recognizes the weakness inherent in the democratic disinclination for war. Democracy is in one sense a system of selfishness, a system in which large moral ideas and grandiose national schemes are often scuttled by the individual's concern for his own desires and lack of interest in the larger issues. This is all very well in itself. In our own day we see emerging the understanding that nationalism is a war-mongering and impracticable concept. Internationalism is the new and vital idea of this day, but while the democracies move toward peaceful cooperation and concern for the requirements of humanity some power must keep at bay those forces which would destroy them if they become too weak. Cary sees the answer to this problem in the international police force: the forthcoming United Nations which, although capable of defending itself against aggression, would be controlled by all the checks and balances of the democratic process from initiating aggressive action of its own.

In Process of Real Freedom Cary revealed a new facet of his political doctrine. As always he is liberal,

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humanitarian, intensely interested in the welfare of the individual. He is also something of a romantic. But here he shows the truly progressive aspect of his nature. In an era when pessimism and cynical abuse of the inefficiency of democracy was rampant, he boldly made a public attestation of his faith in the rightness of democracy. Moreover, he called upon the world to see in the democratic process the hope for a peaceful future for all nations. There is something courageous in his outright assertion of the dignity and importance of democracy. The validity of his arguments can only be verified by time. To date, even the advent of factors which he may not have known of or fully considered--nuclear weapons and the criminal nature of certain labor union organizations--have not invalidated them. One hopes that the future will prove him right. After all, if he was wrong the reasons for nations to continue their plodding attempts toward peace are slim indeed.

CONCLUSION

The object of this thesis was to examine the political element in the works of Joyce Cary. In order to do this, a collation and analysis of the political ideas expressed in his treatises and novels was made. Although a summary of these ideas would necessarily involve a restatement of practically the whole thesis, it may be worthwhile, by way of conclusion, to touch briefly upon the factors found to be essential in Cary's political thought.

We have seen that Cary's political works fell into two main categories: those dealing with the functioning of colonial territories and their development in the modern world, and those dealing with the politics of modern democracy in general. There are both novels and full-scale political treatises in both categories. In the case of the politics of colonial government there were two treatises -- The Case for African Freedom and Britain and West Africa, and four 'African' novels. Those works dealing with politics as a factor in modern society were Power in Men and Process of Real Freedom as well as the trilogy of political novels.

The two treatises on colonial politics deal with two distinct aspects of the situation. Britain and West Africa provides a short history of the development of British and European colonial policy in Africa and the process of involvement by which these powers came to interest themselves

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in what had previously been considered to be a barren continent. Cary argues that the British involvement in Africa was largely accidental and involuntary. It is also his contention that, once entangled in the politics of the African possessions, Britain adopted a technique of government that was eminently suited to the situation and gave the best hope of eventual self-determination. This rather dispassionate assessment of a series of historical facts is amplified in The Case for African Freedom to a full-scale argument in favor of an accelerated program of emancipation for the African states into the modern world. It is at this point that Cary departs from a rehearsal of recorded facts and enters upon the discussion of those political ideals which are an integral part of so much of his work, both fiction and non-fiction. Although his arguments were immediately applicable to the particular political situation of his time, he was in fact discussing principles of human association that infused his work as a whole.

Let us briefly review what some of these principles were. The chief one is stated implicitly in the title Power in Men. It is an article of Cary's faith that freedom is not merely an abstract concept or Platonic ideal. To him it is a very real and imminent force. It is the power that all human beings are born with, and manifests itself in an immediately perceptible manner through the various means

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chosen by individuals to realize themselves. Besides the necessity for physical freedom to act in a chosen manner the human being must have mental freedom as well. In both cases, contrary to the proponents of the 'noble savage' myth, Cary believes the condition of primitive man to be the least satisfactory in terms of real freedom. Freedom is not mere absence of restraint. It is a conditioning and training of the human faculties toward the most gratifying expression of the human will. Cary contends that the conditions necessary for the realization of these aims obtain only in the modern, highly organized, democratic state. Only there is it possible to free the mind from the trammels of primitive superstition and to provide the multiplicity of avenues for self-expression necessary to the infinite variations in the human character. In keeping with this line of thought, it is not surprising to see that Cary places his emphasis upon the individual as the basic significant unit in the structure of society. To him the family, the state, the organization of any kind, are secondary to the individual in importance. The merits of any of these organizations will be a function of the successful realization of the individual characters of which it is composed.

In the larger field of national and international politics Cary sees democracy as the end form of government. This belief is predicated upon the concept that the intricacies

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of modern society create a mutual dependence between the individual and the state. As we have seen, the individual looks to the modern organized society to provide him with the means to increase his freedom i.e. to find the fullest measure of self-realization and self-expression. On the other hand, the state depends upon the trained and skilled individual as an indispensable factor in its prosperity in a mechanized world. It is Cary's contention that this pervasive and unavoidable inter-dependence must inevitably lead to the establishment of democracy as a lasting and peaceful form of government in the world. Most important of all, Cary's outlook is essentially an optimistic one. He believes that not only will the increasing education standard of the modern man assure the evolution of world democracy, but it will also obviate the likelihood of autocracy or bureaucratic tyranny. On this point Andrew Wright has made a significant observation:

...in a democracy which can steer the dangerous middle course between anarchy and any kind of fixed system, Cary sees the most substantial hope for man. He does not believe in 1984, because he does not believe that twentieth-century man, having been freed by education, by technological advance, by travel--having, that is, been given scope to exercise the freedom which is innate--Cary does not believe that twentieth-century man can acquiesce in what Orwell so grimly prophesies.¹

1. Andrew Wright, Joyce Cary, pp. 40-41.

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We have seen that Cary is only too fully aware of the existence of evil and injustice in the world. The smashing of Bewsher's attempts at progress in An American Visitor, the slaughter of the young boy, Ali, in Aissa Saved, the indifference and harshness with which the world treats its artists, as in the case of Gulley Jimson in The Horse's Mouth, are all examples in which Cary illustrates his awareness of the element of injustice in human affairs. What is significant, however, is not that Cary makes us aware of this factor but that he remains optimistic in spite of it. He still reassures himself with the belief that, despite these setbacks, the human character is capable of progress. This element of hope and optimism, so characteristic and integral a part of his work, is immediately derived from his political theories. To him, freedom is the power in men which allows them to move toward democracy as nations and self-realization as individuals. Freedom in this sense is the immediate product of modern education and the opportunities inherent in a highly organized world, but the inevitable adjunct of freedom is always the possibility of bad luck, suffering, injustice. Cary accepts this possibility and looks to the basic goodness and intelligence of mankind to make progress in spite of it.

Cary's politics, then, are those of a man who has a liberal's desire for departures into new avenues of progress; for advancement without hesitation or undue pessimism as a

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result of previous setbacks. He sees the world not as a static organization or a recurring pattern of national and social progress and decline, but as a developing entity still far from the millennium but making steady progress toward it. The basis of his political theory is his belief in the freedom of the individual and this concept pervades not only those works of fiction dealt with in this thesis but, to a certain extent, nearly all of his writing. There are very few, if any, of his books which cannot be seen as backdrops against which the interplay of free character is projected. By understanding the essentials of Cary's political theory we are better able to grasp the significance of the situations in which his characters find themselves and their reaction to those situations. The power for freedom in the human character and the channels through which it seeks to express itself are the basic factors in Cary's concept of politics. It is a concept that infuses his political treatises and his works of fiction as well.

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SYNOPSIS

The Political Element in the Works of Joyce Cary.

Joyce Cary wrote four full-length political treatises and a trilogy whose central theme is politics. In addition, he wrote four novels about Africa in which, although not necessarily forming the central theme, politics are extensively dealt with. It is the object of this thesis to examine and to establish the extent of the political element in Cary's works, and to ascertain the direction taken by Cary's political thought.

The first two chapters deal with the progress of British colonial politics in Africa. A brief history of the five stages of African colonial development and the policy of Indirect rule is given. Cary's opinion of the system is that it was essentially correct but that the modern era demands a more progressive approach and a radically accelerated movement toward self-government. It is shown that his interest in the realities of colonial government is always subordinated to and coordinated with his desire for liberty for the individual.

Chapter Three deals with the African novels. The discussion is restricted to the manifestations of Cary's political ideas that appear in these novels. It is shown that the quality of the novels improved as the amount of political polemics diminished. Essentially, the political

ideas expounded by Cary in these novels are reproductions of the major themes of Britain and West Africa and The Case for African Freedom.

Chapter Four is an examination of Cary's ideas on the practical and theoretical aspects of government in the modern world. The central element in the chapter is the discussion of Cary's definition of freedom and his theory of the greatest liberty for the greatest number.

Chapter Five deals with Cary's political trilogy. The trilogy's unifying theme is the life of Chester Nimmo and it is this aspect which is most extensively examined in this chapter. Cary's ideas of domestic politics and his relating of them to national politics as a theme for a novel trilogy are dealt with.

Chapter Six considers the most central and universal of Cary's political theories as expressed in his book Process of Real Freedom. The most important idea dealt with in this chapter is Cary's theory of the inevitable expansion and progress of democracy as the final system of government in the world. This chapter also serves as a conclusion for the thesis as a whole.